


12-2016

Increasing Superintendent Longevity in Kansas

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Increasing Superintendent Longevity in Kansas

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

by

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to illuminate the factors that may impact a superintendent's longevity in the same district. Specifically, this study is motivated by four research questions: (1) What factors do superintendents in Kansas attribute to remaining in the same position greater than six years? (2) What factors do superintendents in Kansas attribute as the causes for leaving a district? (3) What is the current level of satisfaction of Kansas school superintendents within their current roles? and (4) What are some changes in policy or practice that may increase superintendent longevity in Kansas?

According to Dale Dennis, Kansas Deputy Commissioner of Education, the 2016-2017 school year had the greatest amount of superintendent turnover in Kansas history. The average tenure of a Kansas superintendent in recent years has hovered around the five to six-year mark. Frequent turnover of superintendents can negatively impact student achievement, staff morale, and long-term reform efforts. Selecting a new chief executive impacts the district's resources, both time and money.

This explanatory mixed methods study began with a Superintendent Turnover Survey Questionnaire. The electronic survey was distributed to 284 Kansas superintendents in the spring of 2016. The results from 129 superintendents that completed the questionnaire were thoroughly analyzed. Based on demographic and experiential differences, eight superintendents were then selected and interviewed to further explain the data found in the survey.

The results from this study found that the majority of superintendents remain in the same district for several years due to the fact that they have positive connections to the board of education, staff, and community. Family connections to the school or region also have an enormous amount of influence as well. Most Kansas superintendents are satisfied with their job,

with primary dissatisfaction coming in the areas of politics, outside influences, and a lack of human and fiscal resources.

Based on the results of this study, policy and practice recommendations are made. Such recommendations include; professional development of superintendents and board members, changes in retirements laws, salary commensurate with responsibilities, and growing support structures for superintendents.

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated in memory of my grandfather, Kenneth Arthur Pfeiffer, who served as a great mentor and supporter of my educational and professional endeavors. In his words, “We waste a lot of money on things, but education is not one of them.”

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would not have succeeded in completing this study without the support of my advisor and dissertation chair, Dr. Ed Bengston, and dissertation committee members Dr. James (Chris) Christman and Dr. Carleton Holt. I appreciate all the support and guidance provided by professors at the University of Arkansas and Pittsburg State University. I would like to thank the Valley Center School Board members and fellow colleagues, for their unwavering support of my professional growth.

I am forever appreciative of my wife, Jennifer, and our two kids Ashtyn and Jayton for their understanding and encouragement during the completion of this study. A special thank you to the rest of my family, particularly my mother, for providing a foundation that catapulted me into a career where I can truly make a difference.

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CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Wanted: A miracle worker who can do more with less, pacify rival groups, endure chronic second-guessing, tolerate low levels of support, process large volumes of paper and work double shifts (75 nights a year out). He or she will have carte blanche to innovate, but cannot spend much money, replace any personnel, or upset any constituency (Fullan, 1998, p. 6).

This introduction to an article was written by Fullan. He paints the picture of the daunting task of serving as an educational leader in the 21st century. These challenges have created a reluctance for some people to consider a position in educational leadership, thereby decreasing the number of qualified educational leaders, particularly at the superintendent level. For this reason and a multitude of others, turnover in Kansas superintendents have become more frequent in nature.

The purpose of this explanatory sequential mixed-methods design is to gain an increased understanding of the factors influencing superintendent longevity. Specifically, this study will examine the problem of practice found in the frequent turnover of school superintendents within the state of Kansas. The study will seek to identify practices and policies that may increase superintendent longevity throughout the state. Initially, this problem of practice was identified in consultation with staff members of the Kansas Association of School Boards (KASB). KASB provides training and support for boards of education and superintendents. The organization leads the greatest number of superintendent searches in the state of Kansas. Alongside KASB, another organization known as the Kansas School Superintendent's Association (KSSA) will benefit from the findings. KSSA is the primary professional organization for Kansas superintendents.

One out of every five Kansas school districts began the 2015-2016 school year with a new district leader (59 out of 286). When speaking of the 2016-2017 school year, Dale Dennis, Deputy of Commissioner of Education, shares “This is the highest turnover in superintendents in the history of our state” (D. Dennis, personal communication, July 26, 2016). This problem of practice may not be unique to Kansas, as Kowalski, McCord, Peterson, Young & Ellerson (2011) found that only 59% of superintendents nationwide remain in their first position as superintendent throughout their entire career.

Long-standing chief executive officers led many of the nation's most successful companies. For example, Steve Jobs served as CEO of Apple for 14 years. Bill Gates served as CEO of Microsoft for twenty-five years. Charles Koch has been the CEO of Koch Industries for over forty-five years. According to Feintzeig (2014), the average tenure of a Fortune 500 company CEO was around 9.7 years in 2013. With this in mind, why then is it that the average tenure of a Kansas superintendent is over 35% less? Hays (2014) and Carter (2015) found that that average tenure for a Kansas superintendent has hovered around 5.2-5.8 years over a recent four-year span (see Table 1.1).

Table 1.1

Superintendent Longevity in the Same Position: Kansas

Schools Year	Length of Tenure in Same District
2011-2012	5.2 years
2013-2014	5.6 years
2014-2015	5.8 years
2015-2016	5.4 years

This trend of frequent superintendent turnover is not only a concern in Kansas but rather a nation-wide trend. According to Giaquinto (2010), “the average superintendents’ longevity decreased by approximately 16 years from reported rates of 1950’s to the early 1980’s through the present” (p.18). This study will begin to identify the reasons why superintendents elect to remain in the same position for greater than six years or choose to change districts. This study will provide the field an opportunity to examine the problem and make changes to current practices, policies, and conditions in an effort to increase superintendent longevity in the state of Kansas.

Although comparable studies exist in other states, I was unable to find any similar studies conducted in Kansas within the last twenty-five years. The most similar study discovered was a dissertation titled, *Situational factors contributing to administrator turnover in small Kansas school districts and high schools*. Dr. John Heim produced this dissertation in 1987. Dr. Heim now serves as the Executive Director of the Kansas Association of School Boards. In this study, Heim (1987) found that location of the district, responsibilities of the superintendent, relationships with staff members, and salary impacted longevity of Kansas superintendents. The study conducted by Dr. Heim focused on all school administrative roles, particularly smaller

Kansas districts. The role of the superintendent, accountability, political context, and the rate of superintendent turnover has changed since 1987. Therefore, this study will provide more up to date results, using different data collection instruments and data analysis tools.

Problem Statement

Focus on Systematic Issues

In 2015-2016, superintendent turnover in Kansas occurred at the highest rate on record, that record was short lived, as over 60 districts began the 2016-2017 school year with a new superintendent. The decline of the average number of years in the same position for a superintendent has a direct impact on the operations and achievement of school districts within the state. Current political pressures, declining resources, an aging workforce, changes in legislation related to working after retirement, and an influx of rookie superintendents leads many to believe that turnover will likely be a problem for many years to come.

Is Directly Observable

There is evidence of superintendent turnover and lack of longevity in the state of Kansas (Hays, 2014; Carter, 2015). The average tenure of a Kansas superintendent is less than six years in the same district. This was more prevalent than ever in the past few years. At the start of the 2015-2016 school year, 59 out of the 284 Kansas school districts began the year with a new superintendent. Data is collected annually on this topic by KASB.

Is Actionable

This study will not make a specific program recommendation as to how to increase the longevity of a Kansas superintendent within the same position. However, it will provide data as to why superintendents elect to remain or change districts. These data will lead to a list of possible policy or practice recommendations that may increase superintendent longevity in

Kansas. The findings of this study will be shared with KASB and KSSA, both of which have influence of matters related to policy, practice, and professional development at the state level.

Connects to Broader Strategy of Improvement

Schools are under pressure to improve in almost every facet from academics to athletics. There exist many findings in the research that superintendent turnover has a negative impact on academics, reform, and culture (Borman, 2003; Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Patillo, 2008; Walters & Marzano, 2006). This concept is further explored in the literature review. It is for this reason that the study of superintendent longevity in Kansas has a broad impact on the state's desire to maintain and improve as one of the nation's top performing states in the nation (Tallman & Carter, 2015).

Is High Leverage

Superintendent turnover can impact long-term change, decrease student achievement, negatively influence the culture of a district, and cost taxpayers' valuable resources. Patillo (2008) stated:

It behooves the school district and the community to maintain leadership within the superintendency. Each time a superintendent leaves a school district the school and community experience financial loss by bringing the new superintendent in for close to or above the same salary of the previous superintendent. Increased administrative turnover results in concerns with school culture and preparatory programs that depend heavily on the continuity of teaching and learning. The superintendent is the primary leader of a school district and provides leadership in every aspect of the organization. Leaders who change school districts every three years create instability in the system which results in decreased continuity of learning across grade levels, increased teacher and staff turnover, increased administrative turnover with principals and other leaders in the district, and an inability for the school district to implement long-range school reform initiatives (p. 16).

Without consistent leadership at the district level, comprehensive school reform is unlikely to result in long-term school improvement. Borman (2003) concluded through a meta-analysis of comprehensive school reform research that significant increases in student achievement do not occur until years five-fourteen following implementation. Borman (2003)

also found that superintendent tenure of five to seven years may result in positive outcomes and changes, but even that length of time may not be long enough to make significant improvements. Long lasting system-wide change and reform takes many years, but could falter when the district's leadership changes.

Looking beyond the impact superintendent longevity has on student achievement and districts goals, Fullan and Miles (1992) found, "Frequent administrative turnover may adversely affect a school's ability to provide staff with a feeling of stability and continuation of purpose, especially in an environment of change" (as cited in Alsbury, 2003, p. 667). These studies and several others reinforce the notion that superintendent longevity has a positive impact on a school district and student learning.

Research Questions

The main guiding question for this study was, what factors may impact a superintendent's longevity in the same district? Clarifying questions are stated below:

1. What factors do superintendents in Kansas attribute to remaining in the same position greater than six years?
2. What factors do superintendents in Kansas attribute as the causes for leaving a district?
3. What is the current level of satisfaction of Kansas school superintendents within their current roles?
4. What are some changes in policy or practice that may increase superintendent longevity in Kansas?

Methodology

The study will be conducted using an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design (Creswell, 2015). The study will explore the experiences of superintendents in Kansas that have

remained in their current position for a time frame greater than six years versus the experiences of superintendents who changed positions within the past two years. Other designs explored were grounded theory and case study. After reviewing the various designs, and consulting with other researchers, it was determined that an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design would be most appropriate for this study. This design allows for a greater number of superintendents to share their perspectives through a survey, which will be followed up by an in person semi-structured interview of eight superintendents. The interviews will provide a deeper level of understanding regarding the data collected through the survey.

In an effort to administer a survey that was previously found to be internally reliable, I elected to use a survey that had been used in another dissertation. I received written permission by Dr. Kathy Berryhill to use the questionnaire she designed with any modifications that I see fit. The survey will be administered to all superintendents within the state of Kansas. The survey will capture demographic data and solicit responses regarding superintendent longevity. These data will be used as part of the study; responses will also identify potential candidates for the qualitative portion of the study. The qualitative survey responses will be coded and used to determine common themes. The data from this mixed methods approach will then be used to answer the research questions cited above.

Definitions

Adequacy of Funding: amount of funds appropriated and/or available.

Board - an elected board charged with the responsibility to oversee the district and to hire and evaluate the superintendent. Within the state of Kansas, each school board is comprised of seven members.

Dissatisfaction Theory – a belief that a board and/or board's dissatisfaction with the leadership of the superintendent may result in the dismissal of the superintendent. Many times related to the political whims of the board.

Equity of Funding: if funds are dispensed in an equitable fashion.

Longevity: The amount of time a person remains in the same position.

KASB – Kansas Association of School Boards.

KSSA – Kansas School Superintendents Association.

Superintendent – a school district's top leader.

Tenure: The length of time a person remains in the same position

Turnover – when an employee changes positions and is replaced.

Assumptions

Although found in large scale studies throughout the literature, the underlying assumption of this study is that superintendent longevity has a positive impact on student achievement, sustainable reform efforts, and the climate and culture of a school district. There also exists an assumption that the participants will be honest in completing the survey. Likewise, it is assumed that the data provided in the interviews and survey will be accurate, and will not be influenced due to fear of personal judgment based on professional connections between the subjects and the researcher.

Delimitations

The findings of this study will be limited in scope due to the fact that not all superintendents will respond to the survey, and less than 2% will be interviewed. The sample size and confinement of participants to Kansas does not allow the findings to be generalized to a broader population.

Positionality

In full disclosure, I am a practicing superintendent in the state of Kansas. In fact, my own employment history could certainly be considered “short-tenured.” I was a teacher for three years, a principal for six years in three different buildings, an assistant superintendent for two years, a superintendent in a small rural district for two years, and currently in my fifth year as superintendent of a suburban school district with approximately 2,900 students. In 2014-2015, I began a four-year term on the Kansas School Superintendent Association’s (KSSA) Board of Directors. In 2014-2016 I served as the chair-elect then chair of the KSSA’s Council of Superintendents (COS). COS serves as the connection between superintendents and the State Department of Education and other elected officials. In 2015-2018 I will serve as executive officers of KSSA, first as president-elect, then president, then past-president of KSSA. This position is based on nomination and election by peers. I am also serving as a member of the United School Administrators Board of Directors (USA) from 2015-2018. USA is the umbrella organization representing all school-based leadership groups in Kansas. These roles require me to be actively engaged in the organizations’ missions to serve and support the educational leaders within the state. It also provides me an opportunity to visit with policymakers from around the state about this and various other topics. This extended role provides me easy access to practicing superintendents and their perceptions on this subject.

Context

This study was conducted during a timeframe in which Kansas school district operational budgets were reduced by lawmakers through a series of cuts beginning in 2009. Many educators feel there has been a deterioration of legislative support and public education has been devalued over the last several years. In 2014, lawmakers reversed course on tenure, removing due process

rights for teachers and began incentivizing private schools through tax exemptions. Viviani (2015) captured this sentiment while in his article about Dr. Julie Ford's announcement to retire as superintendent of Topeka Public Schools. In this article, Dr. Ford is quoted as saying, "I have prided myself in being an effective administrator, but the current political environment in Kansas makes it nearly impossible to lead a school district. The challenges are unlike any challenges I have experienced in my 35-year career" (p.1).

In a report produced by Kansas Center for Economic Growth titled "Quality at Risk: Impact of Education Cuts" the introduction to the report states:

Kansas' public schools are struggling with crowded classrooms, fewer teachers, and other challenges after seeing their state funding repeatedly cut since the recession in 2009 -- with no relief in sight because of ongoing, scheduled tax cuts. Educators are being asked to do more with less, challenging their ability to provide a quality education to Kansas kids. This situation threatens the state's economic future, because a well-educated, highly skilled workforce is increasingly critical to attracting jobs that pay well and create widespread prosperity (p.1).

Leachman and Mai (2014) analyzed the levels of educational spending by each state in the U.S. from 2008 to 2014. In the report, Kansas experienced the fourth greatest reduction in spending per student of all 50 states. When adjusted for inflation, the report indicated that Kansas spending per student had been reduced by 16.5%. That equates to a decrease of around \$950 per student, after inflation. In 1992, Kansas lawmakers created a school finance formula that was in existence until 2015, until which time the *block grant* was passed. Shorman (2015) explains, "The block grant system will sunset in two years. The measure is intended only as a temporary system while a new, permanent formula is crafted" (p.1). The previous formula was constructed on the premise of state funds being allocated on a base state aid per student (BSAPP) amount. Additional funding was available based on the number of students receiving additional services

including transportation, at-risk, etc. The actual changes in Kansas base state aid per student can be found in table 1.2

Table 1.2

2000 – 2016 Kansas Base State Aid Per Student (not adjusted for inflation)

Fiscal Year	Base State Aid Per Pupil
2000	3770
2001	3820
2002	3870
2003	3863
2004	3863
2005	3863
2006	4257
2007	4316
2008	4374
2009	4400
2010	4012
2011	3937
2012	3780
2013	3838
2014	3838
2015	3852
2016	Block Grant
2017	Block Grant

Funding in fiscal years 2016 and 2017 is flat as a result of Senate Bill 7. “SB 7 replaces the state’s 23-year-old school funding formula, which allocated money based on districts’ specific needs, with flexible block grants.” (Lowry, 2015, p.1). Under the Block Grant, districts are frozen for two years at the amount they received in 2014 minus .04%. No adjustments in state funding were allocated based on changes in student population or demographics.

The increases in funding from 2006-2009 came as a result of the 2005 Kansas Supreme Court Decision in *Montoy vs. State*. In that decision, funding was determined to be inadequate thereby unconstitutional, requiring legislators to appropriate additional funds. As a result of the cuts made beginning in 2009, a new case was filed in 2010, *Gannon vs State*. This lawsuit was brought forth by more than forty districts to restore the level of funding found to be constitutional (Robb, 2015). The Kansas Supreme court split the case into two parts, *adequacy* and *equity*. Oral arguments regarding adequacy occurred on September 21, 2016. The Kansas Supreme Court ruled in the Spring of 2016, that the funding for Kansas Schools was inequitable, in other words, funding was somewhat contingent based on the amount of funds made available by local property values. The Supreme Court ruled that funding for Kansas schools was unconstitutional without legislative remedy. Ritter (2016) explains:

Kansas school districts face the possibility of shutting down after June 30 if the Legislature does not change the plan for education spending. On Friday, the Kansas Supreme Court ruled in *Gannon v. Kansas* that the Legislature failed to solve inequities with the state's school finance formula. The Legislature is unable to demonstrate that school funding is constitutional, "then a lifting of the stay of today's mandate will mean no constitutionally valid school finance system exists through which funds for fiscal year 2017 can lawfully be raised, distributed, or spent. ... Without a constitutionally equitable school finance system, the schools in Kansas will be unable to operate beyond June 30 (p.1).

Legislators did comply with the court order regarding equity, with less than a week left before a potential shutdown of all public schools in the state.

It is important to note that not only were superintendents handling many fiscal and political challenges during this study, but also all eight of the qualitative interviews transpired in a four-week period between the Supreme Court's finding and the potential school shut-down and the final action taken by the legislative body to comply with the court order. Superintendents not only faced the potential consequences of a temporary school shutdown, but their own livelihood was at stake. The level of uncertainty of funding and schools' closures may have impacted some responses in this study.

Organization of the Dissertation

The first chapter of this study provides background information and provides a stated purpose for the work. Brief reviews of research are shared. Research questions and hypotheses are found in this section. General terminology is defined, and assumptions regarding the study are articulated.

Chapter two contains a comprehensive review of related literature. The primary focus of the review is to provide findings from similar studies, as well as, articles related to this problem of practice. The literature review covers such areas as, the ever changing role of a school superintendent, superintendent impact on reform efforts, superintendent connection to student learning, superintendent longevity, policies and practices that impact superintendent tenure, dissatisfaction theory, and other negative implications superintendent turnover has on the district and community.

Chapter three focuses on the research methods used to conduct this study. This section outlines the survey instrument, interview protocols, and procedures used for analysis of the data.

Chapter four highlights the results of the study. The research questions as identified in chapter one are reviewed and answered in this chapter. Narratives with graphs, charts, and visual representations are utilized to describe the findings.

The fifth and final chapter provides a summary of the study. Limitations of this study are expressed, followed up by recommendations for further research. Implications for the field are summarized in this chapter.

CHAPTER TWO – LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Is the school superintendency still an attractive, workable profession for educators dedicated to school reform? The popular perception of the superintendency is that of an impossible job few want to undertake in which even the best and the brightest confront escalating and competing demands, find themselves besieged by confusing and conflicting interest groups, and enjoy little or no job security (Cooper, Fusarelli, & Carella., 2000, p. 6).

The quoted text above portrays the challenging role that many public school superintendents experience. The purpose of this literature review is to provide the foundation and conceptual framework for this study which seeks to examine the problem of practice found in the frequent turnover of school superintendents in Kansas.

Review of Literature

The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) serves as the primary national organization representing school superintendents. According to the American Association of School Administrators website (n.d.), there are over 14,000 public school districts in the nation. Not all school districts are served by full-time superintendents. The Kansas State Department of Education currently lists 286 school districts, all of which are served by a full or part time superintendent.

Although this study is focused on Kansas superintendent longevity, there is substantial evidence that this is a problem of practice in many states. Related studies on this topic began to appear in journal articles and dissertations in the 1980's and 1990's. In reviewing national trends in superintendent longevity, Giaquinto (2010) found that "the average superintendents' longevity decreased by approximately 16 years from reported rates in the 1950's to the 1980's through the present" (p. 18). There are many places where a revolving door of top district leadership exists. Kansas City, Missouri is one of the most cited examples. As reported by Reese (2014),

Superintendent R. Stephen Green is the 27th person to lead the Kansas City, Missouri School District in the last 40 years. True reform is very difficult when the average superintendent lasts 1.5 years over a forty-year period. In this case, the Missouri State Department of Education has become directly involved in helping the district experience greater success by providing direct support and oversight. Although one might conclude that a diverse, at-risk, urban district would result in frequent turnover, this data is not unique to large school systems. In reviewing evidence of superintendent turnover and the lack of longevity in Kansas, turnover currently occurs in most districts around the five to six-year mark.

The role of a superintendent is both highly rewarding and challenging as Edwards (2007) explains:

Over the decades the superintendency has long held the reputation for being a difficult profession in which to survive, with a lack of security and many times short tenure. This is the result of number of factors including, the growing expectations of education by critical public, the heightened role of employee organizations in administration and policy decisions, and the view that educational leadership is also community leadership. (p. 11)

There is considerable evidence, which will be explored in this chapter, that turnover has a negative impact on student learning, the culture of the district, district finances, and long-term reform and goal attainment. This chapter is divided into five sections. The first section analyzes the evolving role of the superintendent. The second section highlights the impact of superintendent turnover. The third section shares information related to job satisfaction. The fourth section shares factors that impacts a superintendents' longevity in a school system. The fifth section shares examined solutions to superintendent turnover. Following the five sections, a conceptual framework is shared connecting the literature to my experiences. These sections closely align the research questions cited in this study.

The literature was obtained using various databases, including ProQuest, ERIC, Google Scholar, and additional text sources. The number and types of sources reviewed and used as part of the literature review are presented in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1

Types of Literature and Number Reviewed

Type of source	Number reviewed
Peer reviewed articles/journals	14
Scholarly books	6
Dissertations	3
Websites/blogs	3
News sources	2
Reports/databases	1

Library specialists at the University of Arkansas also assisted with obtaining print only resources. The majority of the artifacts were located by using phrase and advanced key term searches. Terms used in these searches included *superintendency*, *school superintendent*, *superintendent longevity*, *superintendent tenure*, *superintendent experiences*, *superintendent turnover*. Examination of related articles and studies led to additional sources that are also located within this literature review.

Currently in Kansas, as superintendents leave a district, the number of qualified applicants is less than many other states. In an article by Valverde (2016) the author states, “At the same time as more superintendents leave the position, there are also fewer people interested in taking their jobs” (p.2). The author goes on to make the following statement based on an interview with a representative from McPherson & Jacobson, a national superintendent search firm,

Jacobson has also been noting a trend in Kansas. The firm, which is based in Omaha, Neb., has consultants nationwide and has been doing superintendent searches in Kansas for the past ten years. Jacobson said that the firm began seeing fewer applications in Kansas beginning about five years ago. Nationally, Jacobson said that the firm usually gets 25 to 35 applications for each open superintendent position, but in Kansas, districts only receives 15 to 20 applicants (p.3).

This statement by Jacobson cites a disturbing trend in Kansas, which may be linked to the current challenges Kansas superintendents are experiencing. This was explored in the “context” section of Chapter 1.

The Evolving Role of Superintendents

On the plains of Kansas, it is still possible to see the remnants of a one-room school house. The school house of the early 1800’s typically employed one teacher, who was responsible for the management and learning of the school. According to the Kansas Historical Society Website, (n.d.) “In the late 1800s, school districts began to be consolidated. Consolidation improved the quality of services at rural schools by merging several districts. Buses were often provided for taking the children to and from school” (para 4). This consolidation required additional management. Early on, this new position was called a head teacher, which evolved into the position of school principal. In the mid to latter 1800’s the role morphed into the role of a superintendent. Superintendents were first found in larger districts, then filtered down to smaller districts. The first superintendents were layman charged with the task to oversee the management and policy responsibilities of school districts. At that time, the principals were paid more than the superintendent, and were responsible for the educational oversight. It was not until the 1900’s that the superintendency became a profession that included expertise in educational policies and practice (Edwards, 2007). The profession continues to evolve today.

The demographics and expectations of schools in the United States have dramatically changed over time. Those expectations have resulted in changes to the roles and responsibilities of a school superintendent. Lashway (2002), attempts to explain what a superintendent does by stating:

In truth, superintendents themselves may sometimes wonder. Their once imposing authority has eroded considerably in the last several decades. State and federal policymakers have not hesitated to impose major mandates on districts, and a variety of special-interest groups have become assertive about advancing their agenda through the schools. Parents and teachers are more inclined to demand a seat at the decision-making table, and a growing number of charter schools are public but not fully answerable to the district. Most of all, standards-based accountability has made reform not just the trademark of progressive superintendents but a minimum expectation for the job. (p. 2)

The description of the role of a superintendent by Lashway was written over a decade ago, yet relevant today. In addition, other societal issues compound the challenge of leading schools today. Maxwell (2014) states, “This fall, for the first time, the overall number of Latino, African-American, and Asian students in public K-12 classrooms is expected to surpass the number of non-Hispanic whites” (p. 1). The author goes on to state, “The enrollment milestone underscores a host of challenges for educators, including more students living in poverty, more who will require English-language instruction, and more whose life experiences will differ from those of their teachers, who remain overwhelmingly white” (p. 1). These additional challenges are compounded when looking at the increasing level of accountability while at the same time districts are experiencing a decrease in funding and resources. Berryhill (2010) stated, “Many administrators may not have adequate knowledge, materials, or skills to deal with sensitive issues related to poverty, language minority, special needs, gender, race and sexuality” (p. 26).

These challenges set up a perfect storm which may perpetuate the turnover of school superintendents. The superintendent of today is not only expected to manage the district and maintain results but to improve learning and instruction amidst these challenges. Recognizing

these challenges, the Council of Chief State School Officers, alongside various partners continue to change the professional standards or expectations for school leaders. Universities typically mold their graduate level programs in educational administration around these standards. These standards are also used by assessment firms designed to evaluate practitioners for licensure purposes. The updated Professional Standards for Educational Leaders 2015, formerly known as ISLLC standards, shared by the Chief Council of State School Officers website (n.d.) includes the following components:

- Effective educational leaders develop, advocate, and enact a shared mission, vision, and core values of high-quality education and academic success and well-being of each student.
- Effective educational leaders act ethically and according to professional norms to promote each student's academic success and well-being.
- Effective educational leaders strive for equity of educational opportunity and culturally responsive practices to promote each student's academic success and well-being.
- Effective educational leaders develop and support intellectually rigorous and coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment to promote each student's academic success and well-being.
- Effective educational leaders cultivate an inclusive, caring, and supportive school community that promotes the academic success and well-being of each student.
- Effective educational leaders develop the professional capacity and practice of school personnel to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

- Effective educational leaders foster a professional community of teachers and other professional staff to promote each student's academic success and well-being.
- Effective educational leaders engage families and the community in meaningful, reciprocal, and mutually beneficial ways to promote each student's academic success and well-being.
- Effective educational leaders manage school operations and resources to promote each student's academic success and well-being.
- Effective educational leaders act as agents of continuous improvement to promote each student's academic success and well-being (para. 6).

These standards serve as evidence as to the diversified role of an educational leader in the 21st century. Although the job description of a superintendent is broad, Edwards (2007) defined the role as:

- Serving as the chief executive officer of the school board and thus assuming responsibility for all aspects of the work.
- Providing leadership planning and evaluating all phases of the instructional program.
- Selecting and recommending all personnel to the school board for appointment and guiding the growth of said personnel.
- Preparing the budget for submission to the board and administering it after its adoption.
- Determining building needs and administering building programs, construction, operations, and maintenance.

- Serving as the leader of the school board, the staff, and the community in improving the education system (pp. 10-11).

The role of the superintendent is increasingly viewed as not only an internal leader but one that impacts and involves the broader community. Kowalski (1999) stated, “A superintendent’s role in providing leadership beyond the school district is associated with political realities and professional responsibilities” (p. 314). Many stakeholders expect a superintendent to be visible and involved in community groups and decisions. This not only adds time and demands to an already busy schedule but places the superintendent in which to be at odds with some stakeholders.

Many people, including legislators, make the comparison of running a school district to running a business. Although there exist some similarities between a superintendent and a business executive, there are differences. In most cases, both are expected to yield positive results or face termination. A significant difference exists, however, in that a superintendent must keep a wider variety of stakeholders happy, including federal officials, state officials, school board members, business owners, community stakeholders, staff members, students, and their families. In many cases, these various stakeholders have competing values, desires, and expectations of the superintendent.

The Impact of Superintendent Turnover

Superintendent turnover can impact long-term change, decrease student achievement, negatively influence the culture of a district, and costs taxpayers’ valuable resources (Patillo, 2008).

Although not directly related to the superintendency, reviewing a meta-analysis of data collected by the Gallup organization, Robinson (2008) writes, “It’s generally estimated that

replacing an employee costs a business one-half to five times that employee's annual salary” (p. 8). Outside search firms charge districts several thousand dollars to facilitate a search for an open superintendent position. This does not take into account additional costs for focus group meetings, staff overtime, and associated recruiting and reimbursable expenses throughout the search process.

The superintendent is in the driver seat when it comes to setting the expectation and path towards improvement. “Good schools remain the exception rather than the rule. What is needed is effective school-site and district-level leadership that provides a path to a coherent, productive, and forward-looking educational system” (Grogan & Andrews, 2002, p. 241). Without consistent leadership at the district level, comprehensive school reform is unlikely to result in long-term school improvement. Borman (2003) concluded through a meta-analysis of comprehensive school reform research that significant increases in student achievement do not occur until years five to fourteen following implementation. Borman also found that superintendent tenure of five to seven years may be great, but even that length of time may not be long enough to make significant improvements. Long lasting system-wide change and reform takes many years, and a “false start” may be inevitable when the district’s leadership changes. Waters and Marzano (2006), reinforces the importance of superintendent longevity by stating:

In addition, the positive correlations that appear between the length of superintendent service and student achievement confirms the value of leadership stability. Superintendents should note the importance of remaining in a district long enough to see the positive impact of their leadership on student learning and achievement. Of equal significance is the implication of this finding for school boards as they frequently determine the length of superintendent tenure in their districts. (p. 20)

This implies that board members should be aware of the possibility that their actions regarding the employment of the superintendent may have a direct impact on student learning and achievement.

Looking beyond the impact superintendent longevity has on student achievement and district goals, Fullan and Miles (1992) found, “Frequent administrative turnover may adversely affect a school’s ability to provide staff with a feeling of stability and continuation of purpose, especially in an environment of change” (as cited in Alsbury, 2003, p. 667). These studies and several others reinforce the notion that superintendent longevity has a positive impact on a school district and student learning.

Job Satisfaction

According to Clegg (1983), multiple studies have found that job satisfaction and the feeling that a person was connected and contributing to their place of employment increased the likelihood that they would stay in the same position. Job satisfaction or dissatisfaction likely has a direct impact on the length of time a superintendent elects to remain in the same position.

A study that included survey responses of over 1,900 superintendents found that 91% of superintendents felt satisfied in their role as superintendent, however, only 65% would recommend the job to someone else (Cooper et al., 2000). This paints the picture that although many superintendents find the career satisfying, they do not feel that the majority of others would enjoy it. The same survey identified the following top three areas as ways that job satisfaction could be improved. The first action item was for the district to provide emotional support to the superintendent. The second recommendation was for better pay and benefits. The third was more professional development (Cooper et.al., 2000). In other words, to increase superintendents’ job satisfaction, they need to feel supported professionally, personally, and financially.

Harris, Lowery, Hopson, and Marshall (2004) attempted to determine why superintendents in Texas remained in the profession. They found the following motivating factors:

- desire to make a difference,
- desire to positively impact people,
- professional challenge,
- personal challenge,
- ability to initiate change,
- increased salary and fringe benefits,
- support and encouragement from others,
- teacher of teachers,
- increased prestige and status,
- relocate to a desired location (p. 115).

Contributing Factors to Superintendent Turnover

There are many potential causes for superintendent turnover. One of the common threads throughout the literature is related to board-superintendent relationships. Grissom (2012) writes:

The story of school superintendent turnover is a well-known one: Energetic new leader assumes positions with plans for revitalization, only to clash with a dysfunctional school board or impatient community and move on to greener pastures before the plans can be fully carried out, leaving the district once again searching the next great leader bearing the requisite comprehensive reform plans. (pp. 1146-1147)

Like a stable marriage, both parties have to give and take a bit but ultimately trust and support one another. Grissom (2012) conducted a study within the state of California and found that among the 215 superintendents, forty-five percent of them exited their seat in 2006. Grissom (2012) states, “Echoing findings from prior work, poor relationships with the school board –

pegged to board operational ineffectiveness and conflict generally are important predictors of superintendents exists in our study” (p. 1174). Furthermore, Grissom (2012) states, “School board members’ subjective evaluations of the superintendent’s performance predicted turnover, but district performance did not” (p. 1175).

The literature has connected *Dissatisfaction Theory* to superintendent turnover over the past fifty years. Callhan (1962), is given credit for the term *Dissatisfaction Theory* that first originated as a “vulnerability” thesis. This theory suggests

... the professional behavior of the school superintendent is subject to the political winds of local school boards dominated by the economic values of the American businessmen. It portrays the plight of the talented, well-educated professional trying to do the job. Even the best may be fired for finally refusing to take action demanded by a school board for the sake of economic efficiency. (as cited by Lutz, 1986, p. 3)

This theory is based on the premise that superintendent longevity may have nothing to do with effectiveness as a leader but rather pressure applied by the community and/or board based on political views and desires. Over the past five decades, some studies have validated this theory, while others have disputed the notion.

In 2010, the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) conducted a national survey of superintendents, one of the areas surveyed related to why superintendents changed districts. Summarized in Table 2.2 are the top five reasons shared by Kowalski (2011).

Table 2.2

Top Five Reasons for Changing Positions as Superintendent:AASA

Reason Cited	% of Respondents
Assume a New Challenge	30.3%
School Board Conflict	15.3%
To Supplement a Pension	13.7%
Sought Out a Higher Performing School District	11.4%
Increase Compensation	8.6%

Kowalski found that *assuming a new challenge* was the principal reason for turnover. That response, however, is fairly broad. Further clarification may be necessary to drill down specific reasons for the decision to change positions. The second most leading cause of turnover, *school board conflict* is fairly prevalent in the literature (Alsbury, 2003), and relates to the aforementioned *Dissatisfaction Theory*. The third leading cause of superintendent turnover was *to supplement a pension*.

Harris et al. (2004), attempted to determine why superintendents in Texas left the profession and found the following reasons given. The reasons are listed in order of most to least common responses:

- the amount of paperwork/bureaucracy
- community politics
- working with the school board
- increased commitment
- isolation/alienation from campus setting
- increased emphasis on standardized tests

- litigation surrounding education
- no tenure/lack of security
- salary too small
- job opportunities outside superintendency
- fear of failure (p. 117).

There are some common themes in the literature regarding possible reasons why superintendent's change position including: (a) the challenging role / stress of being a superintendent, (b) a lack of board and community support and connections, (c) potential retirement policies that impacts longevity, (d) less than expected salary, and (e) dissatisfaction with the current role (Cooper et al., 2000; Harris et al., 2004; Grissom, 2012).

Potential Solutions

The recommended solutions to superintendent turnover vary. In 2000, AASA endorsed a national study that resulted in 1,719 superintendent survey responses regarding job satisfaction and turnover. Specific recommendations from the study to improve the attractiveness of the role included the following:

- de-segment the job market
- encourage easier access across the job market by types of districts
- open up the market
- reorganize the superintendency: superintendents want more support and clearer expectations
- better pay
- respondents want to move away from a strictly management role to a more supportive one

- make pensions more portable
- initiatives should guarantee regional or national reciprocity for pension plans, much like the university model whereby university faculty can work at any U.S. university and the vesting and pension "follows" the employee
- expand and improve doctoral programs: Sixty-four percent of superintendents overall in the United States have their doctorate, but only 43 percent of leaders in rural and smaller districts have the Ed.D. or Ph.D. To improve and equalize access to advanced graduate degrees, states and communities, in collaboration with universities, should extend opportunities to school leaders in all types of communities to engage in graduate work through paid leave, distance learning, and special programs;
- improve economic benefits: superintendents are suffering from a lack of salary increases relative to raises for teachers and principals.
- adjustments should be made to make the top jobs more attractive
- increase opportunities for women and minorities: The lack of female (only 12 percent in this survey) and minority superintendents (only 6 percent in the survey) remains a continuing professional concern.
- more active efforts to recruit women and minorities into the superintendency should be undertaken;
- enhance superintendents' technical skills: Preparation programs should help superintendents improve their knowledge of technology and systems analysis.
- value, recognize, and reward superintendents' contributions: state, regional, and national organizations should do more to recognize outstanding superintendents. In addition to overall "superintendent of the year" awards, associations should highlight "best practices"

in vital areas such as improved standards, new technology, alignment of assessment, curriculum, and instructional leadership. Visible, meaningful rewards are powerful incentives to motivate incumbents to improve and to draw new talent into the superintendency well into the 21' century (Cooper et.al., 2000, p. 9).

In reviewing common policies and practices throughout the nation, Tallerico (2003) contends that districts may be "...underutilizing or inadequately tapping existing pools of potential leadership within the educational system" (p. 348). The author clarifies by suggesting that new leaders may be available if districts began to "grow their own" and prepare the next leaders within the district. Some districts have found it beneficial to launch leadership academies and formal mentoring programs. Although somewhat controversial, the idea of hiring superintendents from the business and military sectors is another possible solution. The author suggests, however, many states would have to change their current licensure policies to allow this practice.

When approaching the topic of increasing administrative work's attractiveness, Tallerico (2003) states that research has found that the greater the salary of the position, the more applicants. Tallerico (2003) shared that raising salary and benefits for superintendents is not always achievable in some districts, but changing policies and practices may be easier. Non-monetary changes may include enhancement of job titles, creating a climate that the board frequently expresses their appreciation of leadership, adding leadership support staff, decreasing responsibilities particularly at night and weekends, and allowing superintendents to play to their own strengths and interests. These recommended policy changes may increase superintendent longevity in many cases.

Early retirement incentives can significantly alter administrative employment needs (Tallerico, 2003). The median age of a superintendent is around mid-fifties which intersect with early retirement. This intersection makes many superintendents eligible for retirement early in their superintendency. This, of course, leads to a quick turnover. State policy changes, including additional retirement incentives for working past eligible retirement dates, may increase superintendent longevity and decrease turnover. In 2004, the average age of a Kansas superintendent according to Hays (2014) was fifty-four. In most cases, if an educator has spent their entire career working in Kansas, they are eligible to retire at age fifty-four. Changes made in the 2015 legislative session will not allow superintendents to “double-dip” or work after retirement while receiving retirement benefits beginning in 2017. Dale Dennis, Kansas Deputy Commissioner of Education, stated in the Council of Superintendents Meeting on April 15, 2015, that 10% of Kansas superintendents are retired yet continue to work. Unless changes are made, all 10% will be forced to retire at the end of the 2016-2017 school year. It is too early to tell what impact this new law may have on longevity in the coming years.

Cunningham and Burdick (1999) suggest the following solutions to reduce superintendent turnover:

- Get the facts straight by supplying the public with accurate information.
- Educators must become more vocal and respond to flawed thinking about the educational process.
- School board should take the long view, creating a shared vision of continuous improvement.
- Show respect for the superintendent accepting the position as an equal partner in the community.

- Let the superintendent put first things first; fundamental leadership on issues which affect student achievement the most.
- Talk about the finances of school districts accurately with the public.
- Take care of old superintendents on the issue of state retirement portability.
- Pay superintendents what they are worth; consider the gap between public school superintendents and CEO's with comparable levels of responsibility.
- Protect the physical and emotional health of the superintendent. (p.30)

A common theme throughout the literature is the importance of a positive working relationship between the superintendent and the board. Many superintendent preparation programs focus on legal requirements, organization, instructional leadership, systems, and budget - with little to no specific training on superintendent and board relationships. As stated by Cambron-McCabe, Cunningham, Harvey, and Koff (2005), "Like any relationship, the one between you and your board requires work. It requires a lot of work, over a long period of time" (p.83). Marzano (2009) states that the relationship between the superintendent and board president is absolutely critical to the district's success and superintendent's longevity.

Increasing the longevity of effective superintendents should be the goal of every board member. Research has indicated that student achievement, staff continuity in programs, and significant reform methods are more likely to occur when the district's leader is in place for many years.

Although there is no guarantee that a highly effective superintendent will not lose their position due to political motivation or other factors, Marzano (2009) shares the following findings that could decrease the odds a superintendent would be removed or choose to leave a district due to perceived ineffectiveness:

- Ensuring collaborative goal setting
- Establishing nonnegotiable goals for achievement and instruction
- Creating board alignment with and support of district goals
- Monitoring achievement and instruction goals
- Allocating resources for achievement and instruction (Marzano, Loc 568).

Realizing the importance of longevity, the majority of states now require a formal mentoring program for new-to-the-profession superintendents. A well-researched and quality mentoring program may assist a superintendent in learning the skills necessary to be successful in a politically charged environment. As cited in Alsbury (2006), “This evaluation study confirms previous research that notes the most important component of mentoring programs is the development of the supportive mentor-protégé relationships...” (p. 183). Although mentoring is important, ongoing professional development may lead to a better trained and supported superintendent, in which case they may remain in the same position for a longer period. Grissom (2012) suggest that professional development for both the superintendent and board members combined with board support may be the best predictors of longevity.

Conceptual Framework

As a practicing superintendent, many of the items discussed in this chapter rang true to my experiences and the experiences of superintendents I know throughout the state of Kansas. The role of the superintendent is challenging and arduous. The responsibility of leading a district means you are on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. The hours regularly exceed 65 hours a week. Colleagues within the role of superintendent frequently share their frustrations and challenges with me. Based on the literature review, my experiences as a superintendent, and perceptions of other superintendents within the state, I believe there are

many possible connections between my study and the findings of other researchers on the topic of superintendent longevity. These studies served as a guide to further develop and refine the purpose of this study. The research questions attempt to identify the factors superintendents in Kansas attribute to remaining in the same position or elect to change positions. No matter the career choice, job satisfaction directly relates the length of time a person typically remains in the same position. Lastly, the study will attempt to identify policies or practices that may increase superintendent longevity in Kansas. Similar studies have found a variety of factors; however, this study will primarily contextualize the factors within the State of Kansas during the timeframe of this study.

Figure 2.1 on the next page, serves as a graphic representation of the connection between the literature review and the direction of this study.

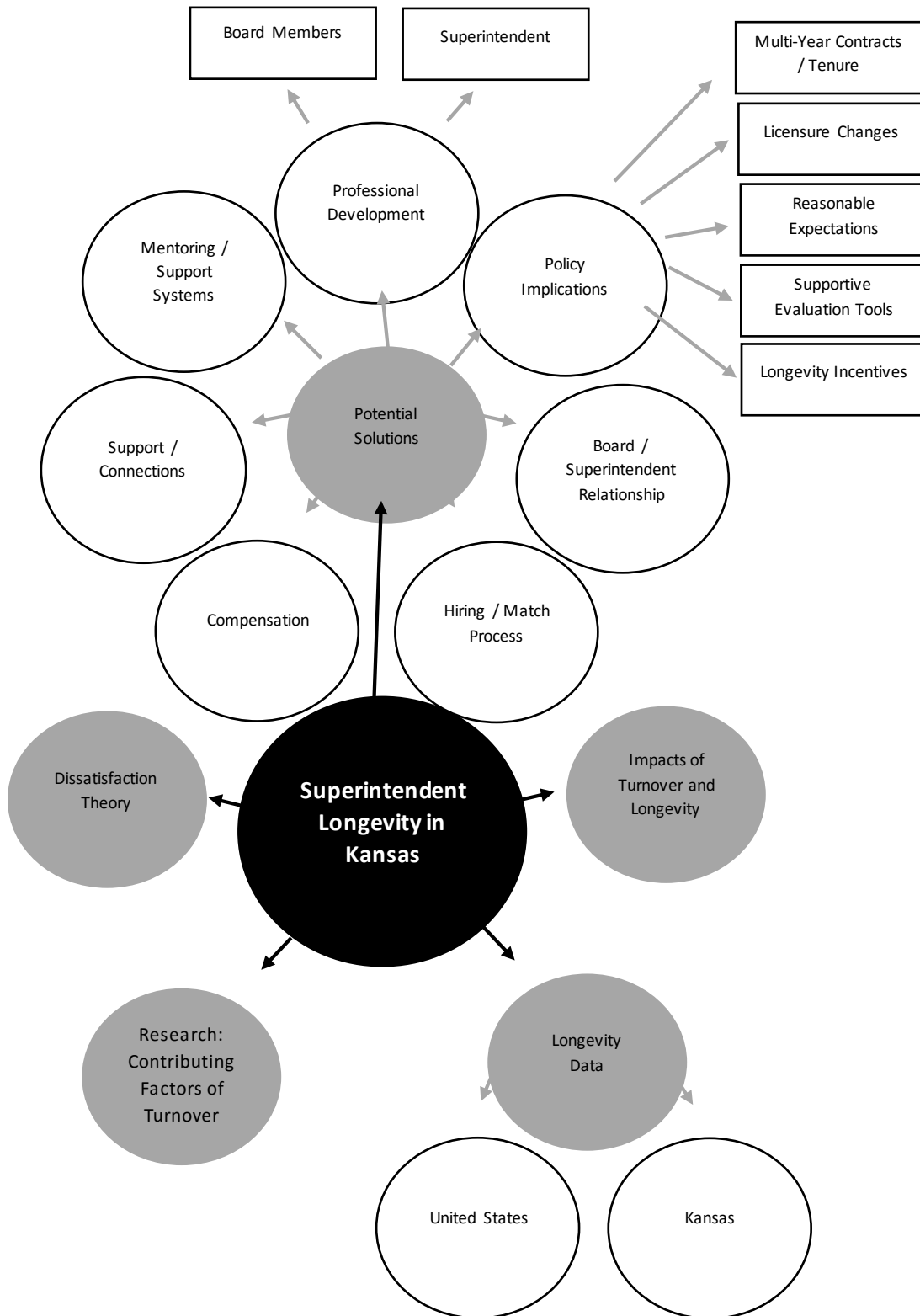


Figure 2.1 Concept Map of Study: Superintendent Longevity in Kansas

This chapter provided an overview of related literature including the history of the superintendency, superintendent job satisfaction, related theory, possible reasons for superintendent turnover, and potential solutions to increase superintendent longevity. Chapter 3 will describe the design and methodology to be used in this study.

CHAPTER THREE – INQUIRY METHODS

Introduction

The purpose of this explanatory sequential mixed-methods design is to gain an increased understanding of the factors influencing superintendent longevity. Specifically, this study will examine the problem of practice found in the frequent turnover of school superintendents within the state of Kansas. The main guiding question for this study is, “what perceived factors might impact a superintendent’s longevity in the same district?” Clarifying questions are stated below:

1. What factors do superintendents in Kansas attribute to remaining in the same position greater than six years?
2. What factors do superintendents in Kansas attribute as the causes for leaving a district?
3. What is the level of satisfaction of Kansas school superintendents within their current roles?
4. What are some changes in policy or practice that may increase superintendent longevity in Kansas?

This study will be conducted using an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. Creswell (2015) defines the explanatory sequential mixed-methods design as:

The intent of the explanatory sequential design is to study a problem by beginning with a quantitative strand (a strand refers to either the quantitative or qualitative component of a study) to both collect and analyze data and then to conduct qualitative research to explain the quantitative results. Quantitative results yield statistical significance, confidence intervals, and effect sizes and provide the general outcomes of a study. However, when we obtain such results, we often do not know how the findings occurred. Therefore, we engage qualitative phase to help explain the quantitative research results. Hence, this design is called an explanatory sequential design. (Creswell, Loc 925)

The quantitative data will be collected through a voluntary survey administered to all Kansas public school superintendents. Descriptive statistics will be utilized to analyze the data collected from the survey. The data from the survey will also be used to select the voluntary participants for a one-on-one interview. Data from those interviews will be analyzed using qualitative coding

methods to find emerging themes. The quantitative and qualitative data will be analyzed separately, but later combined to identify significant findings from the study. Those findings will be cross references to similar studies explored in chapter 2.

This chapter is focused on the inquiry methods that will be used in this study. The chapter is divided into eight sections. The first section will share the rationale for the research methodology selected. The second section will highlight the problem setting and context for which the problem exists. The third section will share how the research sample and data sources will be selected. The fourth section will examine the data collection tools and methods planned for this study. The fifth section will explore how the data will be analyzed. The sixth section will cover how the threats to the validity of the study will be handled. The seventh section will examine conditions that may restrict the study also known as limitations and delimitations. The last part will wrap up with a summary of the methodological design of the study.

Rationale

A mixed method study will be conducted to collect both quantitative and qualitative data.

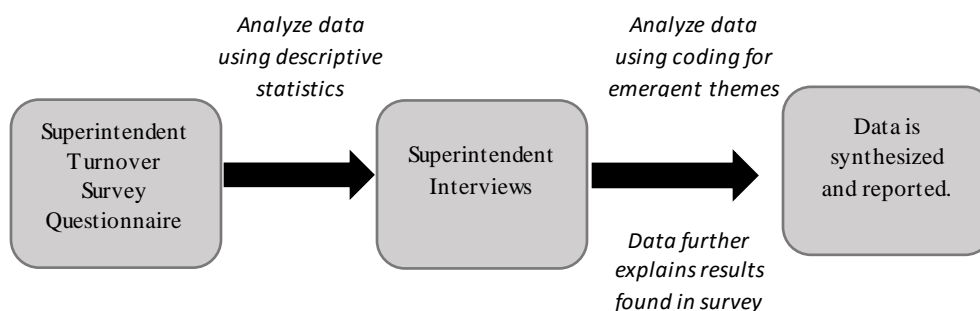
According to Tashakkori and Teddlie (2002):

A mixed methods study involves the collection or analysis of both quantitative and/or qualitative data in a single study in which the data are collected concurrently or sequentially, are given a priority, and involve the integration of the data at one or more stages in the process of research. (p. 212)

Some researchers also refer to mixed methods as *triangulation*. Jick (1979) explains that "...the effectiveness of triangulation rests on the premise that the weaknesses in each single method will be compensated by the counter-balancing strengths of another" (p. 604). This design will allow for collection and analyzation of data and ratings from the field through a survey to gather broad information about superintendent longevity in Kansas. Following the survey, more in-depth interviews will follow. The data from these interviews will be used to explain the findings from

the survey and yield a deeper understanding as to why superintendents choose to leave or remain in the same district. Figure 3.1 below illustrates this explanatory sequential mixed method study.

Figure 3.1. Study Design of Superintendent Longevity in Kansas.



Quantitative data will be obtained by utilizing the Superintendent Turnover Survey Questionnaire (STSQ) found in Appendix C. The survey will be administered online through the online tool, *Qualtrics*. All Kansas superintendents in the state will be encouraged to participate in the survey. The survey will gather information regarding longevity as it relates to rural versus urban contexts, affluent versus at-risk districts, superintendent experiences in the area of turnover, and satisfaction in their current role. The survey will also be used to gather information as to the reasons superintendents have remained in their current position or reasons they left their previous positions.

Job satisfaction plays a significant role in turnover in all career areas. Therefore, this study will embed job satisfaction questions within the survey. These questions will attempt to determine roles and responsibilities within the superintendency that superintendents find satisfying or dissatisfying. The survey will also attempt to identify reasons why superintendents in Kansas have elected to remain in the same district or changed districts. The multiple choice options are derived from related studies and their findings regarding reasons why superintendents have chosen to change districts.

The qualitative portion of the study will seek a deeper understanding of superintendents who have experienced long or short term tenure in their current role. The interview questions were adapted from similar research studies. Common themes from the survey and interviews will result in policy or practice recommendations to increase superintendent longevity in Kansas. This quantifiable survey data will allow me to select superintendents that meet the established criteria for a semi-structured follow-up interview. The semi-structured interview questions can be found in Appendix B.

Problem Setting/Context

One out of every five Kansas school districts began the 2015-2016 school year with a new district leader (59 out of 286). Carter (2015), research specialist for KASB, found that the average age of a superintendent in Kansas is nearly 53. The average number of years in the same district was slightly less than six years. Sixteen percent of respondents were female and 84% male. Average total years of experience as a superintendent in all districts were less than 10. Refer to table 3.1 for more detailed demographic information as compiled by Carter (2015).

Table 3.1

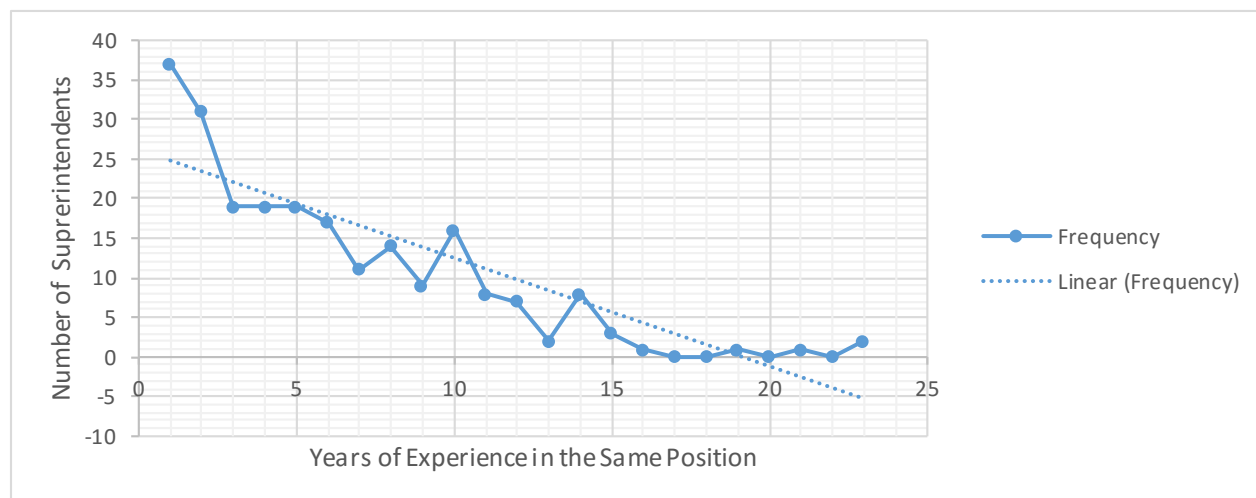
2014-2015 Kansas School Superintendent Demographic Information

Demographic Data Point	Average	Range
Age in Years	52.77	34 – 73
Total years in the Same Position	5.85	1 – 23
Total Years as Superintendent	9.59	1 – 47

The difference between total years in the same position (5.85) and total years as a superintendent (9.59) is 3.74 years. On average, superintendents have served a district different than the one they are currently serving for a little less than four years.

To gain additional perspective as to the demographic make-up of a Kansas Superintendent, one must also review the frequency in the number of years in the same position. Based on Carter's (2015) work, Figure 3.2 illustrates the frequency of the total number of years in the same position.

Figure 3.2. 2014-2015 Kansas School Superintendent Frequency in the Same Position



The frequency graph above displays a downward trend. As the number of years increased in the same position, the number of superintendents in that tenure range decreased. In fact, 125 out of the 225 superintendents that completed Carter's survey are within the first five years of serving the district in which they are currently employed. As cited in Chapter 2, the frequent turnover of superintendents has a negative impact on a district's efforts to improve culture, climate, finances, reform, and student achievement. This was substantiated by many researchers including, Waters and Marzano (2006) who stated, "In addition, the positive correlations that appear between the length of superintendent service and student achievement confirms the value of leadership stability" (p. 20).

Research Sample and Data Sources

The participants for this study are currently public school superintendents in the state of Kansas. The names and email addresses of all 284 Kansas superintendents will be collected through databases created by the Kansas State Department of Education and Kansas School Superintendent's Association. An introductory email explaining the purpose of the study will be sent approximately seven days before the actual survey link being shared. Reminders to complete the survey will be distributed via email reminders, KSSA online community forum, and in person at meetings. Electronic consent to participate in the survey will be obtained prior to collecting any data from an individual. The survey will remain open for a period of three weeks.

Using the data provided from the survey, eight superintendents will be selected for a confidential follow-up interview. Four superintendents will be selected that have served in their current role for greater than six years. This group will provide insight as to the factors they attribute to remaining in the same position. Two superintendents will be selected based on the enrollment of the district being less than 1,000 students; two superintendents will be selected based on the enrollment of the district they serve being greater than 1,000 students. Four superintendents will also be selected who have served as superintendent in two or more districts but changed districts within the last two years. These three interviews will provide insight as to factors that caused the superintendent to change positions. The selections will be based on the same enrollment classifications as mentioned above.

The instrumentation and selection process will be reviewed and approved by the Institution Review Board (IRB) at the University of Arkansas. All identifiable data collected will only be viewable by the researcher, and will be password protected. Only aggregate data

will be shared publically, and pseudonyms will be used to protect the identity of the individual and school district when included in this study.

No foreseeable ethical concerns should arise; however, political concerns may arise as a result of this study. In today's world, public administrators are commonly attacked not only for the decisions they make but the salary and benefits received. The general public, boards of education, and political activist groups may use the findings to attack the perceptions and beliefs of Kansas superintendents. I believe that the intent of the study needs to be clearly articulated and shared in a transparent manner to reduce the potential political concerns.

Data Collection Methods

Data collection will be twofold in this study. The first will be through the administration of an online survey titled, Superintendent Turnover Survey Questionnaire (STSQ). STSQ was developed and validated by Dr. Kathy S. Berryhill (2009). Written permission was obtained with slight modifications approved by Dr. Berryhill September, 2015. The survey can be found in Appendix C.

The survey is comprised of four sections. The first part of the STSQ will ask participants the importance of 10 factors which may impact turnover. The responses are based on a 4-point scale from not important to very important. The second section focuses on job satisfaction. The participants will be asked to indicate their perceptions on a 4-point scale from strongly disagree to strong agree. The third section of the survey gauges the superintendent's belief that they will leave their current position in a selected time frame. The fourth and final section of the survey will collect basic demographic data about the superintendent and the district they currently serve.

An adequate response rate (sample size) will increase the confidence in the findings. Utilizing the frequently used calculation in surveys to determine the needed sample size to

represent the general population (sample size = (distribution of 50%) / ((margin of error% / confidence level score) squared)), I found that the study needs to have a response rate of at least 26% to obtain a 5% confidence interval (+/- 10%). Informal surveys conducted recently on behalf of KSSA yielded a response rate greater than 30% of all superintendents in Kansas. A 26% response rate would be adequate to meet the objectives of this study.

The second portion of the study will be conducted using semi-structured interviews. The core questions asked of each of the six participants are found in Appendix E. The interview protocol was piloted before commencing this study, with adjustments made based on the feedback from experienced researchers. All interviews will be conducted in person in a confidential setting of the participant's choosing. The interviews will be arranged in advance, and permission to record the interview using electronic means will be requested of each participant. In addition to the electronic recording, notes will be taken throughout the interview to capture non-verbal cues. All interviews will be transcribed for data analysis. Interviewees will have the opportunity to review the transcribed notes to ensure accuracy.

Data Analysis Methods

Quantitative

The quantitative data will be collected using the online survey. The data will be exported from the survey instrument and imported into the Statistical Package for the Social Science 23 (SPSS 23). The statistical measure, Cronbach's Alpha, will be used to confirm the internal reliability of the STSQ survey questions regarding superintendent job satisfaction and turnover. In a similar study, the survey was initially administered by Berryhill (2009), using the Cronbach's Alpha statistical measure, the survey achieved an internal reliability of .74 (p. 64). This rating is considered to be above the required limit to be considered reliable.

Descriptive statistics will be utilized to analyze the survey data. Surveys naturally lend themselves to descriptive statistics (Salkind, 2004, p. 35). Data will be interpreted using measures of central tendency such as a mean, median, and mode. Range and frequency will also be utilized in some of the analyses.

Qualitative

Creswell (2013) describes the process of analyzing qualitative data as the data analysis spiral. The author includes the following five steps (a) organizing the data, (b) reading and memoing, (c) describing, classifying, and interpreting data into codes and themes, (d) interpreting the data, and (e) representing and visualizing the data. This process will allow codes and themes to emerge using an inductive approach, which allows the data to determine the codes and themes naturally. The first round of coding will use a blend of both *in vivo coding* and *descriptive coding*. Saldana (2013), defines *in vivo coding* as “literal coding” (p. 91) or other words capturing the exact words used during the interview. He defines *descriptive coding* as coding that “summarizes in a word or short phrase – most often as a noun – the basic topic of a passage of qualitative data” (p. 88). *Code Landscaping* will be also be used occasionally. “Code landscaping integrates textual and visual methods to see both the forest and the trees” (Saldana, 2013, p. 199). Code landscaping can be used to create an outline of common themes and even identify most common words used in a visual graphic. These multiple rounds of coding will identify emerging patterns and themes to reach the study’s conclusions and recommendations.

Trustworthiness

There are two identifiable threats to the validity of this study. The first is my biases towards the factors that may impact my longevity in the same district as a superintendent. The literature provides many reasons for superintendent turnover, which has broadened my lens as a

researcher. The collection of both quantitative and qualitative data and the analysis methods described earlier in this chapter will reduce any validity threats due to potential personal biases.

Due to my affiliation with KSSA, I know most superintendents within the state of Kansas. This could have an impact on how interviewees respond. However, an established professional relationship before the interview will likely increase the level of trust between the interviewee and interviewer. High levels of comfort and trust will likely result in more honest responses. The transcribed notes will be sent back to the interviewee to confirm accuracy. The semi-structured interview alongside the identified survey data will allow me to compare survey and interview responses to determine if there are any blatant inconsistencies between responses. In relationship to mixed method designs, Maxwell (2013) states, “This strategy reduces the risk that your conclusions will reflect only the biases of a specific method, and allow you to gain a more secure understanding of the issue you are investigating” (p. 102). The validity of the survey will be accomplished by utilizing Cronbach’s Alpha, an internal reliability scale. The research methodology proposed for this study was selected to increase the trustworthiness of the results.

Limitations and Delimitations

The study focuses on superintendent turnover within the state of Kansas. Thus, broad generalizations to other states may not be appropriate. It should also be noted that the superintendents’ responses may be impacted by current events, particularly in the political realm, therefore having an influence on superintendents’ responses. The results may look different if the study was conducted during a different time frame. Although all 286 superintendents will be provided an opportunity to respond to the survey, the rate of reply may impact how well certain demographic groups are represented. Eight superintendents will be interviewed for more in-

depth qualitative data. However, this is a small sample comparatively speaking to all superintendents. Most superintendents answer questions in a politically correct manner, therefore, some may be guarded with some of their responses as to not offend the researcher or those that may read the study.

The design of this study relies on both quantitative and qualitative data collection and interpretation. Although there are many strengths of a mixed methods research design, the weaknesses include the fact that it takes additional time and effort, a greater understanding of both design approaches by the researcher, and a way to systematically handle any conflicts in results that may arise (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Delimitations of the study include the decision to select only superintendents within the state of Kansas. Although the role of the superintendent in other states may have any similarities, the context, demands, and political realities of the current role in Kansas may have a direct influence on superintendent turnover. Furthermore, the results of the study can be used to help provide potential policy and practice recommendations from organizations that serve Kansas boards of education and superintendents. The selection of eight superintendents to be interviewed will allow the researcher to conduct an in-depth interview and analysis of the transcriptions

Additional researchers will be consulted for advice throughout the design and implementation of this study.

Summary

The purpose of this explanatory sequential mixed-methods design mixed methods study is to gain an increased understanding of the factors influencing superintendent longevity in Kansas. This mixed method design will rely on both quantitative and qualitative research. As a review,

the four research questions are listed below. Following each question, there is an explanation as to what data will be utilized to answer that question.

1. What factors do superintendents in Kansas attribute to remaining in the same position greater than six years? The analyses of the survey data will provide some insight, however, the qualitative nature of the interview will provide greater insight into this question.
2. What factors do superintendents in Kansas attribute as the causes for leaving a district? Like question 1, the analyses of the survey data will provide some insight, however, the qualitative nature of the interview will provide greater insight into this question.
3. What is the level of satisfaction of Kansas school superintendents within their current roles? Section two of the survey will provide data to be used to answer this question.
4. What are some changes in policy or practice that may increase superintendent longevity in Kansas? Combined information gleaned from the literature review, survey, and interviews will be utilized to respond to this question.

Chapter 3 described the methods used to explore superintendent longevity in the proposed study. This chapter shared the purpose, methods, selection, and analytical processes planned for this study. Information regarding both the survey administration and interview protocol were included in this chapter. Chapter 4 will present the findings, analyses, and summary of the data collected.

CHAPTER FOUR - RESULTS

Introduction

Chapter 4 reviews the purpose of the study, summarizes data collected and shares the quantitative and qualitative results of the study. This chapter is divided into two main sections, with several subsections. The first section serves as a reintroduction of the purpose and design of the study. The second section of the study shares the results of the study including background information of the survey, survey responses, a description of the subjects included in the study, quantitative and qualitative findings, and lastly a summary of the findings through the lenses of a mixed method approach.

Review of Study

The purpose of this mixed methods descriptive study was to gain an increased understanding of the factors influencing superintendent longevity. Specifically, this study examined the problem of practice found in the frequent turnover of school superintendents within the state of Kansas. The main guiding question for the study was, “what perceived factors may impact a superintendent’s longevity in the same district?” Clarifying questions are stated below:

1. What factors do superintendents in Kansas attribute to remaining in the same position greater than six years?
2. What factors do superintendents in Kansas attribute as the causes for leaving a district?
3. What is the level of satisfaction of Kansas school superintendents within their current roles?
4. What are some changes in policy or practice that may increase superintendent longevity in Kansas?

Summary of Research Design

The study was conducted by means of an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. This design allowed for the surveying of all superintendents in the state collecting their perceptions of the role, job satisfaction, and superintendent longevity. Using predefined demographic criteria, eight superintendents were interviewed using a semi-structured protocol. The analyses of the survey data are then enhanced by the validation of the words found following the survey.

The focus of this chapter is to provide the results and the analyses of the survey and interview data. Demographic information about the participants involved is shared, followed by the results of the study. Quantitative data from the survey will be highlighted first, with qualitative interview data following. The final findings will meld both data sources together.

Findings

Background Information

Currently, there are 286 school districts in Kansas. According to Kansas Statute (72-8202b, 1973), “The board of education of each school district shall appoint a superintendent of schools for a term of not more than three (3) years.” It is current Kansas law that each district must have an acting superintendent. This does not, however, translate into each public school district in Kansas having their own full-time superintendent. There are many small rural schools within the state of Kansas. According to G.A. Buie, Director of United School Administrators and Kansas School Superintendents Association, the average school enrollment in Kansas is around 558 students (G.A. Buie, personal communication, November 24, 2015). Table 4.1 illustrates the size of most districts in Kansas.

Table 4.1

Size of Kansas School Districts as of 2014

Enrollment Breakdown	Number of Districts
Less than 100 students	4
Less than 200 students	30
Less than 300 students	65
Less than 500 students	130
Less than 1,000 students	199
1,000 or greater students	87

In many cases, the size of school districts has a direct impact on the roles and responsibilities of the superintendent. As of 2014, out of the 286 Kansas school districts, roughly 100 superintendents also served as a part-time principal. Two districts shared the same superintendent, and in 12 districts the superintendent was the only administrator in the district. As a result of the shared responsibilities as part time superintendent and part time building leader, Kansas had the equivalent of 253 full time superintendents (G.A. Buie, personal communication, November 24, 2015). As of the start of the 2016-2017 school year, a total of six

school districts were sharing a superintendent (G.A. Buie, personal communication, July 14, 2016).

This background information is relevant to understanding the makeup of the field of Kansas superintendents. In the following section, additional details will be shared in relationship to the demographics of those superintendents that completed the quantitative survey and considered for the qualitative semi-structured interview.

Survey Response

The online qualitative survey was administered in observance of the expectations established in Chapter 3 of this text and University of Arkansas Institutional Review Board. The letter of explanation and survey instrument were sent to 284 active 2015 – 2016 Kansas Superintendents. The survey was open for 21 days beginning on April 25th, 2016.

As stated in Chapter 3, an adequate response rate (sample size) would increase the confidence in the findings. Utilizing the calculation in surveys to determine the needed sample size to represent the general population (sample size = (distribution of 50%) / ((margin of error% / confidence level score) squared)), I found that the study needed to have a response rate of at least 26% to obtain a 5% confidence interval (+/- 10%). Out of the 284 superintendents that received the invitation to partake in the survey, 129 responded, which equated to a 45.4% response rate. The response rate exceeded the minimum rate of 26%.

A Profile of the Subjects

Out of the 129 superintendents that responded to the survey, the majority of respondents were male (80.6%) and had obtained a Masters plus additional hours (56.5%). The majority had served as a superintendent in only one district (62%) for an average of 6.12 years. On average, those that completed the survey had worked in education for a total of 28.8 years. The mean age

of the subjects was 53.5 years old. When asked to estimate the number of years until they planned to retire, the average response rate was seven years.

Gender demographics are shared in Table 4.2. Highest Level of Education can be found in Table 4.3. This data coincides fairly closely with state and national demographic statistics found in Chapter 2.

Table 4.2

Profile of Subjects – Gender

Gender	Number	Percent
Male	104	80.6%
Female	25	19.4%

Table 4.3

Profile of Subjects – Highest Level of Education

Educational Level	Number	Percent
Bachelor Degree	0	0%
Masters Degree	10	7.8%
Masters Degree Plus	73	56.6%
Specialist Degree	16	12.4%
Doctorate	27	20.9%
Doctorate Plus	3	2.3%

Displayed in Table 4.4 is the descriptive data for superintendent's educational experiences. The descriptive statistics for total years in education, are relatively consistent across all three measurers of central tendency, hovering around 29 years. The data found in total years in current position reflects a broad range of experiences from 1 – 21 years, with the most

common response being one year. This simply equates to the fact that there are more superintendents in this study that are in their first year than any other year, but the majority are hovering around the five to six-year mark. The anticipated years until retirement was reported across all three measurers to be in the range of five to seven years. In fact, 80% of superintendents in this study plan to retire within ten years. The average age across the three measurers of tendency was relatively consistent at 52 to 53 years of age. Although the range for the number of different superintendent positions varied greatly from one to four, most superintendents reported that they had only been in their most recent position.

Table 4.4

Profile of Subjects – Superintendent Experiential Level

Demographic Area	Range	Mean	Median	Mode
Total Years in Education	10 - 44	28.8	29	29
Total Years in Current Position	1 - 21	6.12	5	1
Anticipated Years Until Retirement	0 - 30	7.03	6	5
Age	34 - 66	53.2	53	52
Total Number of Superintendent Positions Held	1 – 4	1.5	1	1

Most state licensure programs require superintendents to have time in the classroom as a teacher before becoming a principal, and time as a principal before becoming a superintendent. According to the data presented in Table 4.5, the most common career path for a superintendent in this study was from the classroom as a teacher, to assistant principal, to principal, to the central office. The second most common pathway included being a teacher then principal, then to the central office. These two paths both include time in the classroom as well as time leading a

building. These two career paths accounted for nearly 93% of the superintendents that completed this survey.

Table 4.5

Profile of Subjects – Kansas Superintendent’s Career Path

Career Path	Number	Percentage
Teacher, Assistant Principal, Principal, & Central Office	63	49.2%
Teacher and Principal	56	43.7%
Other	5	3.9%
Teacher and Central Office	2	1.6%
Teacher Only	2	1.6%
Central Office Only	0	0%

Respondents to the survey shared that the position that best prepared them for the superintendency was that of a building principal. Nearly a quarter of the subjects stated that it was a combination of roles such as teaching and leading a building that best prepared them for the position as a superintendent. It is important to note, as indicated in Table 4.5, that not every superintendent has the same career path and professional experiences before assuming the role as superintendent. Table 4.6 identifies how subjects responded to the question, “Which past position in education was most beneficial in preparing you for the superintendency?”

Table 4.6

Profile of Subjects – Preparation as a Superintendent

Educational Level	Number	Percent
Principal	54	42%
Combination of roles listed	32	25%
Assistant Superintendent	18	14%
Coach	9	7%
Other	9	7%
Central Office Director / Coordinator	3	2.5%
Teacher	3	2.5%

When the superintendents in this study were asked if they were considering to leave their current positions within the next year, 38.2% responded “yes”. When asked if they were considering to leave their current positions within the next five years, 61.6% responded “yes”. When asked if they were considering to leave their current position within the next ten years, 76.1% responded years. Table 4.7 displays additional data related to superintendent future professional plans.

Table 4.7

Profile of Subjects – Superintendent Future Plans

Educational Level	Yes	No	Yes	No
			Percent	Percent
Are you considering leaving your position within 1 year?	49	79	38.2%	61.7%
Are you considering leaving your position within 5 years?	77	48	61.6%	38.4%
Are you considering leaving your positions within 10 years?	96	30	76.2%	23.8%

To further identify the future plans of superintendents, the question was asked “looking ahead, where do you see yourself in 5 years?” The most common response was that they planned to continue in their current role until retirement. The second most common responses were that they intend to carry on as a superintendent, however, in may be in a different district until reaching retirement age. These two responses combined equated to 82% of the subjects plan to serve in a superintendent position for at least five years. The detailed responses can be found in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8

Profile of Subjects – Five Year Plans of Superintendents

Plan Identified	Number	Percent
Plan to continue in current superintendent position until retirement	54	41.9%
Plan to continue in a superintendent position, in the current district or another district until retirement age.	52	40.3%
Plan to leave as soon as I find a suitable position outside of education	3	2.3%
Not sure, but current job is impossible	2	1.6%
Plan to leave as soon as I find a position in a university.	1	.8%
Other	17	13.1%

The section above provided demographic information of those subjects that completed the survey. The next section will provide information regarding how those subjects responded to the survey questions, and how those data relates to the research questions posed in this study.

Quantitative Findings

The Superintendent Turnover Survey Questionnaire (STSQ) provided data to answer the first three research questions in this study. The response to question four of this study will be

found in both chapters four and five, as it deals with recommendations based on data. The statistical findings will be organized around these questions.

1. What factors do superintendents in Kansas attribute to remaining in the same position greater than six years?
2. What factors do superintendents in Kansas attribute as the causes for leaving a district?
3. What is the level of satisfaction of Kansas school superintendents within their current roles?

Contributing Factors for Longevity – Quantitative.

To answer the research question, *What factors do superintendents in Kansas attribute to remaining in the same position greater than six years?* Superintendents were provided ten factors which could influence superintendents to stay or leave the role they currently hold. Respondents rated each of the factors on a four-point Likert scale. Each response on the scale was assigned a numerical value. A response of “not important” was assigned one point, “somewhat important” two points, “important” three points, and “very important” four points. Table 4.9 displays the findings.

Table 4.9

Job Components Rating of Importance

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance
Job description	1.00	4.00	2.48	0.90	0.82
Leadership opportunities	1.00	4.00	3.25	0.66	0.43
Autonomy	1.00	4.00	3.18	0.71	0.50
Salary	1.00	4.00	3.04	0.59	0.34
Benefits	2.00	4.00	3.05	0.58	0.34
Sense of responsibility	2.00	4.00	3.34	0.63	0.39
Implementation of school reform	1.00	4.00	3.03	0.70	0.49
Sense of achievement	2.00	4.00	3.47	0.65	0.42
Relationships with school board	2.00	4.00	3.83	0.41	0.17
Relationships with Community	2.00	4.00	3.65	0.52	0.27

The respondents identified all ten factors as being of some importance, with a range of mean scores from 2.48 to 3.83. The factors are listed below in the rank order of most important to least important.

- Relationships with school board
- Relationships with community
- Sense of achievement
- Sense of responsibilities
- Leadership opportunities

- Autonomy
- Benefits
- Salary
- Implementation of school reform
- Job description

According to data received, the most significant factors were identified in the area of relationships between the superintendent and the board of education and the community. Leadership qualities such as a sense of achievement, responsibility, opportunities, and autonomy followed relationships related factors. Benefits and salary were rated as important factors but ranked seven and eight out of ten factors. Implementation of school reform may have some negative connotation based on legislative reform efforts. Reform implies that something was done wrong and needs to be changed or improved. Although the meaning is similar, school improvement may have more positively impacted the results. The superintendency is driven based on current needs of the district and expectations of the board. Therefore, a set job description may not accurately depict the role and in many cases does not drive what the superintendent does or does not do as part of their job. The most significant takeaway from this portion of the survey is that connections may have the largest impact on longevity.

Contributing Factors for Leaving a District – Quantitative.

When asked what respondents believed would happen in the future regarding superintendent turnover, 19% of respondents think the turnover rate will remain about the same. 4% believe that the amount of turnover will decrease, and 77% believe the amount of turnover will increase.

To answer the research question, *what factors do superintendents in Kansas attribute as the causes for leaving a district*, respondents were asked to categorize the reason they left their previous position as a superintendent. Out of the 116 that responded to this question, 51 superintendents indicated that they had served in more than one district as superintendent, and shared their perspective as to why they left their previous position. Table 4.10 displays the data collected on reasons why superintendents stated they changed districts.

Table 4.10

Reason for Changing Districts

Response	Count	Percent
Board elections	2	3.9%
Career advancement with larger/more successful district	21	41.1%
Conflict with community groups	4	7.8%
Disagreements with board members	16	31.4%
Family dynamics	2	4%
Salary and fringe benefits	1	2%
Retirement	4	7.8%
Strained relationships with employee groups	0	0%
Stayed too long in district	1	2%

The most common response from superintendents that had transitioned between districts as superintendent was for *career advancement with larger/more successful district*. Forty-one percent stated that this was the reason they changed positions. The vast majority of Kansas school districts are relatively small, in fact, 70% of Kansas school districts are less than 1,000 students. When asked if superintendents felt like they would like to be in a different sized

district than the one they currently serve, 27% responded that they would like to be a larger district.

The second most common reason that a respondent stated they changed districts as a superintendent was due to *disagreements with board members*. Thirty-one percent of those that had made a transition between districts of one or more district stated is was due to superintendent-board conflict. When respondents were asked to characterize their overall relationship with the present school board, the vast majority feel that their relationship is positive with the board. See Table 4.11 for additional information related to perceptions of board and superintendent relationships.

Table 4.11

Board and Superintendent Relationships

Response	Count	Percent
Unbearable	2	1%
Strained	6	5%
Good	40	31%
Excellent	81	63%

Respondents were asked to characterize the members that comprise their local board of education. Board members that align with community interests tend to be more supportive of the superintendent than those that on the board to serve their own interests. Table 4.12 illustrates the characterizations made by superintendents of their current boards.

Table 4.12

Superintendent Characterization of Local Boards

Response	Count	Percentage
Aligned with community interest	98	77%
Dominated by the elite	3	2%
Not involved with critical school/community issues	2	1%
Represents key special groups	11	9%
Dominated by personal agendas	14	11%

Recruitment of Superintendents - Quantitative

Superintendents were asked to help identify ways that a shortage of superintendents may be decreased. Respondents were provided four possible responses, with an optional fill in the blank response. Table 4.13 displays the results from this question.

Table 4.13

Possible Solutions to a Superintendent Shortage.

Response	Count	Percentage
Certify business leaders outside of education	2	2%
Change or decrease certification requirements	0	0%
Develop district policies that support in-house leadership capacity building	41	32%
Increase recruitment of current administrators to certify for the superintendency.	59	46%
Other (please specify)	26	20%

In reviewing the possible solution to the shortage of superintendents, *develop district policies that support in-house leadership capacity building* and *increase recruitment of current administrators to certify for the superintendency* were the two most common solutions offered. Combined, these two solutions account for 78% of the responses. In other words, the solutions most offered are to increase the leadership capacity of those people in the field and encourage them to become licensed superintendents. The *other* category received one in five overall responses. Specific responses are listed below. Abbreviations and acronyms used were modified to clarify the response.

- Better/more supportive legislative decisions
- Increase pay and decrease Brownback
- Kansas legislators stop vilifying the profession and position
- Keep politicians out of decision-making

- A better state government, one that advocates for and funds public education
- Be treated like the professionals we are by the Kansas governing officials
- Fire the Governor and conservative legislators.
- State focus on valuing education and educators
- Minimize attack on education-same as teacher shortage (too risky)
- better climate for education
- No more unfunded mandates from government
- Stop Legislative negativity
- Stronger board policies and more training of appropriate board member roles
- Improve the climate of education statewide. Make the position more attractive.
- Working after retirements
- K-12 education needs to be fund appropriately
- Change the perception that the Superintendent is not necessary in public education.
- Retirement requirements hitting the position hard
- Improve Work Environment
- Increase public support of educational leaders
- Over-all education funding
- The State needs to provide a stable budget environment.
- Develop a more supportive environment
- Allow to draw retirement and work.
- Stability in the business is essential. Having to let people go that do a good job, or being unable to provide solid programs and support to kids is hard to live with.

was assigned a numerical value. A response of “strongly disagree” was assigned one point, “disagree” two points, “agree” three points, and “strongly agree” four points. Table 4.15 displays the results in regards to superintendents’ level of job satisfaction based on the ratings of nine sections.

Table 4.15

Superintendent Job Satisfaction

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance
There is too little variety in my job.	1.00	3.00	1.47	0.54	0.30
I tend to get bored on the job.	1.00	4.00	1.47	0.58	0.34
There must be better places to work.	1.00	4.00	1.98	0.73	0.53
I would like more freedom on the job.	1.00	4.00	1.98	0.73	0.53
I have too small a share in deciding matters that affect my work.	1.00	4.00	1.66	0.64	0.41
My job means more to me than just money.	1.00	4.00	3.55	0.58	0.34
I am satisfied with the work I do.	1.00	4.00	3.31	0.53	0.28
My job gives me a chance to do what I do best.	2.00	4.00	3.30	0.55	0.30
People feel they belong where I work.	2.00	4.00	3.32	0.48	0.23

In analyzing the results, the response, *there is too little variety in my job*, the mean response of superintendents indicates that most disagree with this statement, and feel that there is plenty of variety. A similar statement was; *I tend to get bored on the job*. The mean rating was identical with the first response. Most superintendents also disagreed with this statement. With a mean of 1.98 in regards to the statement, *there must be better places to work*, indicates that the majority of a number of superintendents disagree with the declaration. However, there was a greater variance in responses to this question, which indicates a wider range of responses to this question. Respondents rated the statement; *I would like more freedom on the job*, identical to the previous response. Although a variety of ratings, most disagreed with this statement. The statement, *I have too small a share in deciding matters that affect my work*, also resulted in a mean that indicates most respondents feel that they have the ability to decide matters that affects their work. A statement many superintendents hear when handling a challenging situation is “that is why you make the big bucks.” In most cases the superintendent is the highest paid staff member in the school district. In regards to pay and job satisfaction, the statement superintendents were asked to consider was, *my job means more to me than just money*. The average response was 3.55, which equates to an average response of agree to strongly agree. Although a factor of consideration, most superintendents believe that the role is much than just about pay. The following three statements received nearly identical average responses from participants; *I am satisfied with the work I do, my job gives me a chance to do what I do best, people feel they belong where I work*. The mean responses were agree to strongly agreed on each of these statements. Respondents felt satisfied with their work and that the work aligned to their skills. They also felt that people had a sense of belonging within their work environment.

Participants were also asked how they would rate their effectiveness as a superintendent on a four-point scale. Each response on the scale was assigned a numerical value. A response of “not successful” was assigned one point, “somewhat successful” two points, “successful” three points, and “very successful” four points. The mean response to that question was 3.16, which indicates that most superintendents feel successful within the role.

In summary, the majority of superintendents appear to be satisfied within the role of being a superintendent. With that being said, based on the range and variance, there are some superintendent respondents that are not as satisfied as others in their current roles.

Qualitative Findings

Following the survey, eight superintendents were selected for a follow-up in-person semi-structured interview. Four of the superintendents had changed districts within the past two years, four of the superintendents had been in the same position for several years. In the selection, a balance of superintendents serving districts less than 1,000 students and districts greater than 1,000 students was taken into consideration. Those subjects interviewed represented both rural and urban/suburban districts. The researcher traveled several hundred miles to conduct the interview in various parts of the state. Similar to the survey data shared below, the qualitative data will be organized around the first three questions of the study.

Contributing Factors for Longevity – Qualitative Data.

The four superintendents that were interviewed regarding longevity within the same position had served between 14 and 18 years in their current position. All four superintendents felt that longevity was important, particularly for school improvement purposes. Uber Latimer stated:

Well the simple word is consistency. However, if you have a good board with good leadership, and the superintendent and board click, and you've got a good team, it is

important to maintain... keep that flywheel moving in the same direction, especially if you have some good things coming; good programs, good people. A change in that leadership I think tends to slow down, start over and might take a little different direction.

Henry Apple shared a similar sentiment, when he stated, “think you can lead a district, but I am not sure that you can really make a difference in a district unless you have been there for some time.”

All four superintendents were asked to *identify the factors that they attribute to remaining in the same position* greater than six years. The common themes across all responses was centered around their family and connections to people in the district and community, particularly the board. In regards to the family being a contributing factor in their longevity, Urien Oppenheimer responded, “I have had opportunities to leave, but it is a great place to raise a family.” Henry Apple went on further to say, “If I did not have kids in the district, I mean I do not have a problem picking up and moving and going someplace else.” Not wishing to move their school aged kids, move away from their grown kids, or holding the responsibility to provide assistance to an aging relative in the community were the main family factors cited.

Beyond family, the connections to board members, staff members, and the community as a whole was also a common theme between the four superintendents. When asked why she remained in the same position for many years, Catrina Ulson stated, “Probably my relationships with the staff and the board.” Uber Latimer expanded on a similar thought by stating:

I'm in a progressive district that's got an outstanding school board and a very supportive community, and I know most communities around the state are very supportive of their schools. However, I don't believe everybody has a rock solid school board.

Although all four superintendents valued their time in the same district and believed that longevity matters, all four have considered or actively pursued a superintendent position in

another district. Two have even considered leaving the professional all together, and two have considered leaving the state.

Contributing Factors for Leaving a District – Qualitative.

Four superintendents were interviewed and asked to identify their thoughts about longevity and the reasons they had changed positions. Although all had recently changed positions, all four superintendents felt that longevity was important, particularly for school improvement purposes. In response to this question, Phillip Ranger stated, “You see the fruits of your labor, with the people that you hire, the good, the bad and the otherwise. You get to see how what you envisioned plays out...” Isaac Oden provided additional thoughts on this topic when he stated:

I think that having the ability to stay in the same district is important, because when you have constant change, it's very difficult to reach any type of strategic goals. As you know, with leaders, goals tend to change, and so I think the more you can have continuity with your leadership, the better.

When diving into the question, *what factors do superintendents in Kansas attribute as the causes for leaving a district?* Three out of the four superintendents interviewed shared that they enjoyed their previous district, and simply made the choice to go a different route. Those interviewed identified four separate reasons for their decision to change districts. Phillip Ranger shared that the reason he left was due to the budgetary constraints of the former district. He stated, “I built that thing, and then to have to start tearing it down, I couldn't do it.” Isaac Oden shared they he waited until his youngest son moved out of his home and the position he always wanted opened up. He made the choice to leave because, “Well, I really like that Jackson City is a very diverse and unique school district in the state.” His interest in the district was centered around the diversity. Ivan Hofer had a desire to lead a larger district, and the district that he now

is a superintendent in was one that was on his radar because his wife's family lived in the area.

Mr. Hofer stated:

For me, it was, as much as anything, it was a desire to lead. When you're in a smaller school district, you spend a lot of time managing. I feel like I can manage, I can organize, I can communicate. I can do those things, but at the end of the day... It is even funny when I was starting to write my resume for jobs a year ago, I just didn't feel like I could put anything new on my resume cause' I just felt like I was constantly managing.

Omar Eden shared that he had to leave his previous position due to a conflict with his board. He felt that he was not provided the autonomy and flexibility to do his job. Mr. Eden shared his thoughts when he said summarized the conflict as "...the micromanaging of a board, and their issues that are not necessarily my issues, I guess."

All four superintendents interviewed did not believe they would be changing positions within the next two years. However, two did state that they would consider it should the right door open. Three out of four have considered leaving the profession altogether, and three out of the four have considered jobs outside of the state of Kansas.

All participants were asked to identify the key issue that would push them out the door and actively begin seeking other opportunities. Seven of the eight identified the board of education as the primary factor in their decision to leave. Phillip Ranger shared, "you and I both know you're only one election and four votes away from being on the street." Omar Eden did not specifically identify the board as the reason to leave but did identify "opportunities for my children" as the primary reason he would leave. In his elaboration, he was mainly worried if his children would receive the same opportunities outside the school day that other youth may have in larger communities. Based on the data collected through the interviews, job satisfaction will be reviewed in the next section.

Job Satisfaction – Qualitative.

In this section, all eight superintendents were asked questions as it related to *job satisfaction*. Specifically, the interviewees were asked to identify those things that they enjoy the most about the job, and those things they find the most dissatisfying.

All eight superintendents interviewed stated that the part of the job that brings them the most satisfaction is making a difference in the lives of staff and/or students. Issac Oden responded to this question by stating, “I think meeting the needs of students. Anytime you see students that maybe are coming from a challenging home or background, and you're meeting those needs, and helping those students be successful; it's very gratifying. Same thing with really all of our staff. Just seeing young teachers blossom into great teachers, and seeing staff members grow, and learn, and become better. I think it all has to do with watching others be successful.” Catrina Ulson states, “You just have a sense of responsibility to do what's right for that community, and the students in that community. That gives me a lot of satisfaction to know that I'm doing the best I can.” Making a difference in the lives of others was the common theme interwoven in the responses as to why superintendents feel satisfied in their role.

When asked about the portion of the job that is most challenging or dissatisfying, seven out the eight connected it back to politics and budget challenges. Given the reduction in state funding for several years in Kansas, one may have assumed this might come into play. The other reason cited by one superintendent was centered around dealing with upset patrons. Sitting behind a desk and the amount of paperwork were also secondary concerns cited by two superintendents. In regards to politics and budgets, Isaac Oden stated:

Well, I think a lot of it is the politics of being a superintendent, the difficulty in weighing the needs of your local community and what's happening in your local district against what is happening in the state and national level. And trying to meet the needs of local school district when you have no control over what's happening at the state and national

level. And that's probably one of the most frustrating things that we have to deal with, is there are things we know are the best practice, they're what we should be doing, and we can't do them because we don't have the support to be able to do those things.

Ivan Hofer goes on to share his frustration with legislators and others that are anti-public education by stating:

I think just the constant frustration of people who believe they know our business, that really have no understanding of what goes on in schools. I'm so passionate about public schools and kids that I just don't get those that aren't just... It just doesn't make any sense.”

Catrina Ulson echoed these sentiments when she stated:

Well, definitely, the budget piece, dealing with the legislature. The sense that the Legislature doesn't trust us, that they feel like we're not being ethical and financially responsible. That's really frustrating to me. All of the Educators that I know are very responsible and caring, and they were not in it to hide money.

Mixed Methods Summary

The quantitative findings in this study were solidified and further explained with the qualitative data. Both the survey results and interviews found that the majority of superintendents remain in the same district for several years because they have positive connections to the board of education, staff, and community. Family connections to the school or area also have a large amount of influence as well. There are a wide variety of reasons why a superintendent elects to change districts, but both the quantitative and qualitative data reflects that career advancement and relationships are primary reasons. In regards to job satisfaction, most superintendents find the role rewarding. The survey did not explicitly ask about the budget or legislative challenges. However, this came out loud and clear in the open response sections of the survey and throughout the interviews as the most identified challenge superintendents in Kansas are currently facing.

Chapter 5 will summarize the findings, provide recommendations for future study, and implication on practice based on the findings.

CHAPTER FIVE - CONCLUSION

Consequently, when contemporary successful educational leaders “cast the die” and cross their metaphorical Rubicon and become a superintendent of schools, they need to be aware of the various factors, especially the key people, who will impact their tenure in that position. They must maintain a “beware of the Ides of March” approach in their personal and professional relationships, and they must especially reflect on Caesar’s last words, “Et Tu, Brute?” in terms of their relationship with the board of education. They must “know themselves” as a leader and maintain their personal values focus. They need to have a well-established personal support group to warn them when perils to their superintendency are on the horizon. They need understanding family relationships and support to help them overcome their leadership crises in a caring matter (Polka & Lichka 2008, p. 197).

Introduction

Chapter 5 is divided into four sections. The first section presents an overall summary of the study, including a review of the research questions, connections to the literature, and an overview of the findings. The second section shares the significance of the findings. The third section identifies the implications of the study, including practice, policy, and future research topics. The final section serves as a reflective component as to how the study is similar and different than other pieces of work as well as how the findings impact me personally and the field of education.

This study sought to identify the level of turnover in superintendent positions within the state of Kansas. The main guiding question for this study was, what factors may impact a superintendent’s longevity in the same district? Clarifying questions are stated below:

1. What factors do superintendents in Kansas attribute to remaining in the same position greater than six years?
2. What factors do superintendents in Kansas attribute as the causes for leaving a district?
3. What is the current level of satisfaction of Kansas school superintendents within their current roles?

4. What are some changes in policy or practice that may increase superintendent longevity in Kansas?

It is important to note that during the time of this study, there was a significant amount of superintendents changing positions, retiring, or leaving their position in Kansas for jobs outside of the state of Kansas. Superintendent turnover in recent years has increased in Kansas, thereby decreasing longevity that superintendents remain in the same district. Dale Dennis, Deputy of Commissioner of Education, states “This is the highest turnover in superintendents in the history of our state” (D. Dennis, personal communication, July 26, 2016). Waters and Marzano (2006), reinforces the importance of superintendent longevity by stating:

In addition, the positive correlations that appear between the length of superintendent service and student achievement confirms the value of leadership stability. Superintendents should note the importance of remaining in a district long enough to see the positive impact of their leadership on student learning and achievement. Of equal significance is the implication of this finding for school boards as they frequently determine the length of superintendent tenure in their districts (p. 20).

The impact of superintendent longevity on the climate, culture, and achievement of students adds value to the importance of this study.

This study was conducted during a timeframe in which Kansas school district operational budgets were reduced through a series of cuts beginning in 2009, as well as during a time that many educators felt there was a deterioration of legislative support for public education in Kansas. In reviewing national trends in superintendent longevity, Giaquinto (2010) found that “the average superintendents’ longevity decreased by approximately 16 years from reported rates in the 1950’s to the 1980’s through the present” (p. 18). These factors precipitated and reinforced the need for this study. Although the study is centered in Kansas, the decrease in superintendent longevity is not an anomaly for Kansas, as other similar studies have been conducted throughout the nation.

The study included a survey that was sent to 284 school superintendents during the last quarter of the 2015-2016 school year.

As shared in Chapter 2, there are some common themes in the literature regarding possible reasons why superintendent's change position including: (a) the challenging role / stress of being a superintendent, (b) a lack of board and community support and connections, (c) potential retirement policies that impacts longevity, (d) less than expected salary, and (e) dissatisfaction with the current role (Cooper et al., 2000; Harris et al., 2004; Grissom, 2012). In reviewing the data provided in both the quantitative and qualitative portion of this study, these themes seem to be pertinent in Kansas as well. Although there were many several different responses as to the reasons why superintendents have elected to change positions; this study found that the top two reasons why superintendents changed positions were for *career advancement with larger/more successful district* and *disagreements with board members*. Another common theme found in this particular study was the negative impact legislative decisions to decrease funding and support for schools had on turnover and job satisfaction.

On the other side of the coin, those superintendents who have elected to remain in the same position for several years have cited two main reasons. *A high functioning and supportive board of education* and family or community *connections*. Even those that have several years of longevity has considered changing districts, with some even interviewing outside of their district. All superintendents interviewed cited the importance of having a highly effective board of education that trusted the superintendents they hired to handle the tasks set before them. This sentiment is aligned with the work of Grissom (2012) which suggested that professional development for both the superintendent and board members combined with board support may be the best predictors of longevity.

The vast majority of superintendents in Kansas enjoy their job. According to Clegg (1983), multiple studies have found that job satisfaction and the feeling that a person was connected and contributing to their place of employment increased the likelihood that they would stay in the same position. Although confronted with challenges, the superintendents interviewed found the job very satisfying, particularly seeing staff and students grow and flourish. Respondents to the job satisfaction portion of the survey had an opportunity to rate several elements related to parts of the job they may find satisfying or dissatisfying. Although there was some variance in responses, the average scores on each indicator indicate that most superintendents find their job satisfying. To summarize their feelings regarding job satisfaction, participants were asked how they would rate their effectiveness as a superintendent on a four-point scale. Each response on the scale was assigned a numerical value. A response of “not successful” was assigned one point, “somewhat successful” two points, “successful” three points, and “very successful” four points. The mean response to that question was 3.16, which indicates an average feeling of success within their role.

In reflecting on the qualitative portion of the study, the parts of the job that brings the most dissatisfaction revolves around outside influences such as politics, lack of financial resources, and a lack of support by lawmakers. One person cited that the handling of upset constituents was the most dissatisfying part of the job.

Significance of the Findings

Leadership at the district level has a direct impact morale, district finances, long-term sustainable reforms, and most importantly student achievement. Patillo (2008) summarized this by stating:

It behooves the school district and the community to maintain leadership within the superintendency. Each time a superintendent leaves a school district the school and

community experience financial loss by bringing the new superintendent in for close to or above the same salary of the previous superintendent. Increased administrative turnover results in concerns with school culture and preparatory programs that depend heavily on the continuity of teaching and learning. The superintendent is the primary leader of a school district and provides leadership in every aspect of the organization. Leaders who change school districts every three years create instability in the school system which results in decreased continuity of learning across grade levels, increased teacher and staff turnover, increased administrative turnover with principals and other leaders in the district, and an inability for the school district to implement long-range school reform initiatives (p. 16).

Leadership at the district level has a direct impact on the organization and the students' learning; it is for that reason that these findings are of importance. The findings may also provide an opportunity for practicing and aspiring superintendents to reflect on the roles and responsibilities of the job.

Overarching Study Implications

This study has a wide range of implications. The implications will be summarized in three subsections: practice, policy, and future research.

Practice

This study has implications on the practice of superintendents and board members. First and foremost, it is important that search agents and superintendents both take the time to understand the needs of the district and qualities desired in a superintendent. The right match and a good first connection between the stakeholders and the superintendent is a fundamental component in how long a superintendent may stay in the same district. Once that match is made, it is essential that superintendents have a positive working relationship with the board, particularly the board president. The recommended solutions to superintendent turnover are multifaceted and intertwined. In 2000, AASA endorsed a national study that resulted in 1,719 superintendent survey responses regarding job satisfaction, turnover, and increasing the number

of candidates for the position. Specific recommendations from the study to improve the attractiveness of the role included the following:

- de-segment the job market
- encourage easier access to the job market by types of districts
- open up the market
- reorganize the superintendency: superintendents want more support and clearer expectations
- better pay
- respondents want to move away from a strictly management role to a more supportive one
- make pensions more portable
- initiatives should guarantee regional or national reciprocity for pension plans, much like the university model whereby university faculty can work at any U.S. university and the vesting and pension "follows" the employee
- expand and improve doctoral programs: Sixty-four percent of superintendents overall in the United States have their doctorate, but only 43 percent of leaders in rural and smaller districts have the Ed.D. or Ph.D. To improve and equalize access to advanced graduate degrees, states, and communities, in collaboration with universities, should extend opportunities to school leaders in all types of communities to engage in graduate work through paid leave, distance learning, and special programs;
- improve economic benefits: superintendents are suffering from a lack of salary increases relative to raises for teachers and principals.
- adjustments should be made to make the top jobs more attractive

- increase opportunities for women and minorities: The lack of female (only 12 percent in this survey) and minority superintendents (only 6 percent in the survey) remains a continuing professional concern.
- more active efforts to recruit women and minorities into the superintendency should be undertaken;
- enhance superintendents' technical skills: Preparation programs should help superintendents improve their knowledge of technology and systems analysis.
- value, recognize, and reward superintendents' contributions: state, regional, and national organizations should do more to recognize outstanding superintendents. In addition to overall "superintendent of the year" awards, associations should highlight "best practices" in vital areas such as improved standards, new technology, alignment of assessment, curriculum, and instructional leadership. Visible, meaningful rewards are powerful incentives to motivate incumbents to improve and to draw new talent into the superintendency well into the 21st century (Cooper et.al., 2000, p. 9).

The factors above were found in the review of the literature, and many align with the recommendations in practices based on this study, which included the following factors identified by superintendents in rank order of most important to least important.

- relationships with school board
- relationships with community
- sense of achievement
- sense of responsibilities
- leadership opportunities
- autonomy

- benefits
- salary
- implementation of school reform
- job description

When approaching the topic of increasing administrative work's attractiveness, Tallerico (2003) states that research has found that the greater the salary of the position, the more applicants. Tallerico (2003) shared that raising salary and benefits for superintendents is not always achievable in some districts, but changing policies and practices may be easier. Non-monetary changes may include enhancement of job titles, creating a climate that the board frequently expresses their appreciation of leadership, adding leadership support staff, decreasing responsibilities particularly at night and weekends, and allowing superintendents to play to their strengths and interests. These recommended policy changes may increase superintendent longevity in many cases.

Cunningham and Burdick (1999) suggest the following solutions to reduce superintendent turnover:

- Get the facts straight by supplying the public with accurate information.
- Educators must become more vocal and respond to flawed thinking about the educational process.
- School board should take the long view, creating a shared vision of continuous improvement.
- Show respect for the superintendent accepting the position as an equal partner in the community.

- Let the superintendent put first things first; fundamental leadership on issues which affect student achievement the most.
- Talk about the finances of school districts accurately with the public.
- Take care of old superintendents on the issue of state retirement portability.
- Pay superintendents what they are worth; consider the gap between public school superintendents and CEO's with comparable levels of responsibility.
- Protect the physical and emotional health of the superintendent. (p.30)

Policy

Policies at the local, state, and even the federal level may have an impact on the longevity of superintendents. Early retirement incentives can significantly alter administrative employment needs (Tallerico, 2003). The median age of a superintendent is around mid-fifties which intersect with early retirement. This intersection makes many superintendents eligible for retirement early in their superintendency. This, of course, leads to a quick turnover. State policy changes, including additional retirement incentives for working past eligible retirement dates, may increase superintendent longevity and decrease turnover. In 2004, the average age of a Kansas superintendent according to Hays (2014) was fifty-four. In most cases, if an educator has spent their entire career working in Kansas, they are eligible to retire at age fifty-four. Changes made in the 2015 legislative session will not allow superintendents to “double-dip” or work after retirement while receiving retirement benefits beginning in 2017. Dale Dennis, Kansas Deputy Commissioner of Education, stated in the Council of Superintendents Meeting on April 15, 2015, that 10% of Kansas superintendents are retired yet continue to work. Unless changes are made, all 10% will be forced to retire at the end of the 2016-2017 school year. Local or state incentives for superintendents not to retire when they are first eligible may decrease the amount of turnover.

Consideration of the reversal of the working after retirement law in Kansas, may allow superintendents, principals, and teachers an opportunity to receive the financial benefits of retiring, then returning to the workforce for several years as a superintendent.

A common theme throughout the literature is the importance of a positive working relationship between the superintendent and the board. Many superintendent preparation programs focus on legal requirements, organization, instructional leadership, systems, and budget - with little to no specific training on superintendent and board relationships. As stated by Cambron-McCabe, Cunningham, Harvey, and Koff (2005), "Like any relationship, the one between you and your board requires work. It requires a lot of work, over a long period of time" (p.83). Marzano (2009) states that the relationship between the superintendent and board president is critical to the district's success and superintendent's longevity. Grissom (2012) suggest that professional development for both the superintendent and board members combined with board support may be the best predictors for longevity. Increasing the longevity of effective superintendents should be the goal of every board member. Research has indicated that student achievement, staff continuity in programs, and significant reform methods are more likely to occur when the district's leader is in place for many years.

Although there is no guarantee that a highly effective superintendent will not lose their position due to political motivation or other factors, Marzano (2009) shares the following findings that could decrease the odds a superintendent would be removed or choose to leave a district due to perceived ineffectiveness:

- Ensuring collaborate goal setting
- Establishing nonnegotiable goals for achievement and instruction
- Creating board alignment with and support of district goals

- Monitoring achievement and instruction goals
- Allocating resources for achievement and instruction (Marzano, Loc 568).

Policies that require the ongoing professional development of both the superintendent and board of education in the areas mentioned above may increase the odds of a continued and long-lasting relationship between a board and superintendent.

Laws or policies that clearly identify the role and responsibilities of a superintendent and board of education may provide additional clarity, and decrease the odds of a conflict between the two parties. Additionally, changes in laws or policies related to the dismissal of a superintendent based on perceptions, rumors, or the political whim of the board may better protect superintendents from unfair or unfounded dismissal. Many states have statutes that provide additional protections for teachers that are not afforded to administrators. Kansas laws allow for boards to have up to a three-year contract with superintendents, which allows for some protection against boards of education making a quick change in leadership based on board membership changes. A multi-year contract also allows the superintendent time to make board initiated improvement or changes over a period of time.

Realizing the importance of longevity, the majority of states now require a formal mentoring program for new-to-the-profession superintendents. A well-researched and quality mentoring program may assist a superintendent in learning the skills necessary to be successful in a politically charged environment. As cited in Alsbury (2006), “This evaluation study confirms previous research that notes the most important component of mentoring programs is the development of the supportive mentor-protégé relationships...” (p. 183). Although mentoring is important, ongoing professional development may lead to a better trained and

supported superintendent, in which case they may remain in the same position for a longer period of time.

Summary of Recommendations

In summary, the following recommendations in policy and practice are being made to increase superintendent longevity in Kansas based on the literature review and findings of this research study.

1. Proper selection of a superintendent that will meet the needs and expectations of the district, board of education, and community.
2. Initial and ongoing professional development of superintendents and board members in regards to roles and responsibilities of both parties and ways to support and work collaboratively towards shared vision and goals.
3. Ongoing support for a superintendent, such as induction and mentoring programs, membership to professional organizations, adequate resources, support personnel, etc.
4. Professional development for superintendents in the area of maneuvering politics at the state and local level.
5. Changes in retirement laws and policies that may incentivize superintendents to leave the professional/district or prohibit them from working after retirement.
6. Multi-year contracts or additional due process provisions for superintendents.
7. Efforts that add value and appreciation for superintendents and public schools at the local, state, and national level.
8. Salary and benefits that are commensurate with the roles and responsibilities of a superintendent in today's world.

9. Practices that strengthens connections and support between the superintendent, their family, and the community.

Future Research

The findings from this study warrants additional study with implementable solutions. The decrease in longevity of superintendents has an adverse effect on districts. Further study may provide scholars a deeper understanding as to contributing factors of turnover, and more importantly solutions that can provide for long-term stable leadership. Suggestions for future study and refinement include the following items.

1. In order to broaden the implications of this study, this study could be replicated in additional states. Additional data would need to be collected from other states to generalize the findings.
2. Replication of the study during a timeframe when Kansas schools are receiving additional resources and support from lawmakers may yield different results. Many of the responses in this study in regards to challenges referred to a lack of support by current lawmakers, and those feelings may have impacted both job satisfaction and longevity.
3. Future research projects regarding superintendent longevity in Kansas may look closer at the relationship of school boards members and superintendents, particularly identifying what characteristics may improve this relationship and foster a collaborative relationship.
4. Due to significant differences in size of districts and responsibilities in Kansas, additional study of the differences in job satisfaction and mobility between

superintendents that serve small rural school districts versus medium to large suburban and urban school districts.

5. Further study as to how connections to the community, particularly those connections of superintendents' family members, impacts longevity.
6. Studies that provides search agents and board members guidance to identify the best superintendent candidate for the role. A candidate that will find satisfaction in the role, meet the needs of the board and district, and generally supported by the community.
7. Studies that provides additional guidance and training for both superintendent licensure coursework and ongoing professional development in the area of working collaboratively with board members.
8. Additional study in the area of board member development, particularly in the area of understanding the roles and responsibilities of both the board of education and the superintendent.
9. Further study in what personal and professional support systems exists for superintendents, and how they may play a role in longevity.

Implications for Personal Practice

This study has had many positive implications for my personal practice. The entire process from literature review to data synthesis expanded my understanding of research practices, and has helped me become a better consumer of research. As a district, we have conducted many small-scale research projects over the last year using both quantitative and qualitative methods. These small-scale research projects have assisted our entire leadership cabinet in developing a better understanding of how to use research to improve practice.

As president of the Kansas School Superintendent's Association and a board member of the United School Administrators, I believe the information gained through this study will help me in guiding future professional development and support structures throughout the state of Kansas for superintendents. This year, our organization has doubled the amount time new superintendents are provided face to face training throughout the year, as well as, I am hosting a monthly "phone a friend" opportunity for new superintendents to video conference before their monthly board meeting with myself and one special guest. It is our goal to provide support to new to the profession superintendents in hopes that they experience success and increase leadership stability throughout our state.

This particular study has assisted me in reflecting on my practice as a superintendent, particularly in comparing my beliefs and views to other superintendents that participated in the study. Furthermore, it validated my beliefs regarding the reasons why superintendents elect to stay or leave a position, which may impact my future career decisions.

Implications for the Field of Education

The role of a school superintendent is complex, demanding, and continuously evolving. This study found similar results as previous studies, with a few nuisances such as the challenges superintendents openly expressed as a result of the perceived lack of support by Kansas lawmakers. The implications of this study may provide additional direction to organizations and colleges that prepare, train, and support superintendents and board members. The final three subsections of this dissertation will cover how this study compares to similar studies, new information for the field of education, and considerations for training and support organizations.

How This Study Compares to Similar Studies

Although this study was constricted to the state of Kansas during a specific time frame, there existed many similarities to the findings of this study compared to those findings of other studies. In the one of the largest surveys on this topic, Kowalski (2011), found that the top two reasons for a superintendent to change position was to *assume a new challenge* or due to *school board conflict*. Although the terminology was not identical, this study found the top two reasons to be *advancement with a larger/more successful district*, followed by *disagreements with board members*. This reaffirms the most common reasons why superintendents elect to change positions in Kansas. The positive relationship and outward support between a superintendent and board members is one of the most cited reasons why superintendents elect to remain in the same position (Cambron-McCabe et.al., 2005; Grissom, 2012; Marzano, 2009). This sentiment was once again reinforced in this study. Superintendents expressed that there is always an underlying fear that the next board election may be the factor that causes them to uproot their family, leave their friends and colleagues, and find a new district to serve.

New Information for the Field of Education

There were many similarities in the findings between this study and ones published previously, however, this study is unique as it is centered around the perceptions of superintendents in Kansas. This study found that not only do board members have a tremendous amount of influence on how long a superintendent chooses to remain in the same position, but also the superintendent's and his/her family's connections to the community also play a vital role in longevity. A superintendent's kids, spouse, and/or proximity to extended family also has a tremendous amount of influence. Further study in this arena would be of great value to the field.

Unique to this study was the time frame in which the research was conducted. The challenges superintendents are facing in Kansas regarding adequate support and resources has

influenced both longevity and job satisfaction. Superintendents cite that the actions by lawmakers of cutting funding and support for schools has made the job more stressful, less enjoyable, and increasingly difficult. Advocating for the school district in which you serve, also requires that superintendents take on additional roles as a lobbyist, policy expert, and public advocate, which adds to the roles they serve in their districts. Although local connections have a significant impact on longevity, it has become clearer through his study that external influences such as decisions being made at the state level has also impacted superintendent longevity in Kansas. Lastly, districts should establish long range strategic plans and clear operating principles to lessen the impact when leadership changes do occur.

Considerations for Training and Support Organizations

Current superintendents and college professors must encourage and support educators with leadership potential to become district educational leaders in Kansas. District level licensure programs should include specific opportunities for leadership candidates to experience and develop an understanding of the multiple facets of superintendent leadership. A specific area of training that may positively impact longevity is within the area of politics. Candidates for the superintendency could benefit from additional learning opportunities that will help them successfully navigate the political waters at both the state and local level. Specifically, ongoing training on how to build a trusting and unified relationship between the superintendent and board of education is important for board members and superintendents.

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Appendix A
IRB Protocol and Approval Forms

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
PROTOCOL FORM

The University Institutional Review Board recommends policies and monitors their implementation, on the use of human beings as subjects for physical, mental, and social experimentation, in and out of class. . . . Protocols for the use of human subjects in research and in class experiments, whether funded internally or externally, must be approved by the (IRB) or in accordance with IRB policies and procedures prior to the implementation of the human subject protocol. . . . Violation of procedures and approved protocols can result in the loss of funding from the sponsoring agency or the University of Arkansas and may be interpreted as scientific misconduct. (*see Faculty Handbook*)

Supply the information requested in items 1-14 as appropriate. **Type** entries in the spaces provided using additional pages as needed. In accordance with college/departmental policy, submit the original **and** one copy of this completed protocol form and all attached materials to the appropriate Human Subjects Committee. In the absence of an IRB-authorized Human Subjects Committee, submit the original of this completed protocol form and all attached materials to the IRB, Attn: Compliance Officer, MLKG 109, 575-2208. Completed form and additional materials may be emailed to irb@uark.edu. The fully signed signature page may be scanned and submitted with the protocol, by FAX (575-6527) or via campus mail.

1. Title of Project: Increasing Superintendent Longevity in Kansas
2. (Students **must** have a faculty member supervise the research. The faculty member must sign this form and all researchers and the faculty advisor should provide a campus phone number.)

	Name	Department	Email Address
Campus Phone			
Principal Researcher	Cory L. Gibson	EDLE	clg018@uark.edu
620-704-1222			
Co-Researcher			
Co-Researcher			
Co-Researcher			

Faculty Advisor
(479) 575-5092

Dr. Ed Bengston

EDLE

egbengts@uark.edu

3. Researcher(s) status. Check all that apply.

Faculty Staff Graduate Student(s) Undergraduate Student(s)

4. Project type

Faculty Research Thesis / Dissertation Class Project Independent Study
 Staff Research M.A.T. Research Honors Project Educ. Spec. Project

5. Is the project receiving extramural funding? (Extramural funding is funding from an external research sponsor.)

No Yes. Specify the source of funds

6. Brief description of the purpose of proposed research and all procedures involving people. Be specific. Use additional pages if needed. (**Do not** send thesis or dissertation proposals. Proposals for extramural funding must be submitted in full.)

Purpose of research: The purpose of this explanatory sequential mixed methods study is to gain an increased understanding of the factors influencing superintendent longevity. Specifically, this study will examine the problem of practice found in the frequent turnover of school superintendents within the state of Kansas.

Procedures involving people:

Prior to the survey being conducted, all Kansas superintendents will receive the following message via e-mail.

Greetings Colleagues,

In the next two weeks you will receive a survey link. Although participation is voluntary, I am hopeful that I receive enough responses for my study (dissertation) to be considered valid and reliable. A study of this size and magnitude regarding the state of the Kansas superintendency has not been completed in recent history. The results of the study will be made available sometime after December 2016 . Below is a bit more information regarding the study.

Thank you in advance! Cory

Introduction

The purpose of this explanatory sequential mixed-method study is to gain an increased understanding of the factors influencing superintendent longevity. Specifically, this study will examine the problem of practice found in the frequent turnover of school superintendents within the state of Kansas. The main guiding question for this study is, “what perceived factors may impact a superintendent’s longevity in the same district?” Clarifying questions are stated below:

1. What factors do superintendents in Kansas attribute to remaining in the same position greater than six years?
2. What factors do superintendents in Kansas attribute as the causes for leaving a district?
3. What is the level of satisfaction of Kansas school superintendents within their current roles?
4. What are some changes in policy or practice that may increase superintendent longevity in Kansas?

Quantitative data will be collected through an online password protected survey administered to all Kansas public school superintendents. The link will remain open for three weeks. A reminder e-mail will be sent to all Kansas superintendents one week prior to the survey closing. Descriptive statistics will be utilized to analyze the data collected from the survey. The data from the survey will also be used to select the voluntary participants for a one-on-one interview. No more than eight participants will be selected for the interview. Participants will be selected based on demographic information including years of experience, years in the current position, size of district, and/or district setting (rural/urban). The interviews will take place in person. The interviewee will select the setting based on comfort, convenience, and confidentiality. The interviews will be audibly recorded. During the interview transcription process, names will be kept identifiable only for the researcher’s records. Data from those semi structured interviews will be analyzed using qualitative coding methods to find emerging themes. All participants will be asked to acknowledge the informed consent form before taking the survey and prior to the interview.

7. Estimated **number of participants** (complete all that apply)

_____	Children under	_____	Children 14-	_____	UA students	<u>286</u>	Adult non-
14		17			(18yrs and older)		students

8. Anticipated dates for contact with participants:

First Contact: February, 2016

Last Contact: December, 2016

9. Informed Consent procedures: The following information must be included in any procedure: identification of researcher, institutional affiliation and contact information; identification of Compliance Officer and contact information; purpose of the research, expected duration of the subject's participation; description of procedures; risks and/or benefits; how confidentiality will be ensured; that participation is voluntary and that refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled. See *Policies and Procedures Governing Research with Human Subjects*, section 5.0 Requirements for Consent.

- Signed informed consent will be obtained. **Attach copy of form.**
- Modified informed consent will be obtained. **Attach copy of form.**
- Other method (e.g., implied consent). **Please explain on attached sheet.**
- Not applicable to this project. **Please explain on attached sheet.**

10. Confidentiality of Data: All data collected that can be associated with a subject/respondent must remain confidential. Describe the methods to be used to ensure the confidentiality of data obtained.

All data gathered will be maintained on a personal computer, which is password protected. Individual documents containing identifiable data will be individually password protected.

In this mixed methods study anonymity is not possible because participant names from the survey must be known since they are tied to the selection process for the qualitative phase of the study. To further protect participant identity, once interviewees are identified, a pseudonym will be assigned to them using a coding system commonly used in qualitative research. For example, if a participant's actual name is James Brown, his code name will be Randall Anderson. In this case, actual names of participants are changed to pseudonyms using the second letter of their last name to be the first letter of their first name and the second letter of their first name becomes the first letter of their last name). This technique allows only the researcher to know which participant the qualitative data comes from within the study. The same coding scheme can be used if there are multiple names of places and organizations. In any publication of this study, pseudonyms will be cited when referencing specific individuals or locations to maintain participants' anonymity. No responses will be shared that would cause a superintendent to be identified by any means including: age, gender, race, size of district, years of experience, opinions, or any other manner

11. Risks and/or Benefits:

Risks: Will participants in the research be exposed to more than minimal risk? Yes **X**
 No Minimal risk is defined as risks of harm not greater, considering probability and magnitude, than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the

performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests. Describe any such risks or discomforts associated with the study and precautions that will be taken to minimize them.

There are no anticipated risks for participating in this study.

Benefits: Other than the contribution of new knowledge, describe the benefits of this research, especially any benefits to those participating.

There are no anticipated direct benefits to the participant, other than self-reflection.

12. Check all of the following that apply to the proposed research. Supply the requested information below or on attached sheets:

- A. Deception of or withholding information from participants. Justify the use of deception or the withholding of information. Describe the debriefing procedure: how and when will the subject be informed of the deception and/or the information withheld?
- B. Medical clearance necessary prior to participation. Describe the procedures and note the safety precautions to be taken.
- C. Samples (blood, tissue, etc.) from participants. Describe the procedures and note the safety precautions to be taken.
- D. Administration of substances (foods, drugs, etc.) to participants. Describe the procedures and note the safety precautions to be taken.
- E. Physical exercise or conditioning for subjects. Describe the procedures and note the safety precautions to be taken.
- F. Research involving children. How will informed consent from parents or legally authorized representatives as well as from subjects be obtained?
- G. Research involving pregnant women or fetuses. How will informed consent be obtained from both parents of the fetus?
- H. Research involving participants in institutions (cognitive impairments, prisoners, etc.). Specify agencies or institutions involved. Attach letters of approval. Letters must be on letterhead with original signature; electronic transmission is acceptable.
- I. Research approved by an IRB at another institution. Specify agencies or institutions involved. Attach letters of approval. Letters must be on letterhead with original signature; electronic transmission is acceptable.

- J. Research that must be approved by another institution or agency. Specify agencies or institutions involved. Attach letters of approval. Letters must be on letterhead with original signature; electronic transmission is acceptable.

13. Checklist for Attachments

The following are attached:

- Consent form (if applicable) or
- Letter to participants, written instructions, and/or script of oral protocols indicating clearly the information in item #9.
- Letter(s) of approval from cooperating institution(s) and/or other IRB approvals (if applicable)
- Data collection instruments



Office of Research Compliance
Institutional Review Board

April 22, 2016

MEMORANDUM

TO: Cory Gibson
Ed Bengtson

FROM: Ro Windwalker
IRB Coordinator

RE: New Protocol Approval

IRB Protocol #: 16-02-528

Protocol Title: *Increasing Superintendent Longevity in Kansas*

Review Type: EXEMPT EXPEDITED FULL IRB

Approved Project Period: Start Date: 04/21/2016 Expiration Date: 03/27/2017

Your protocol has been approved by the IRB. Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. If you wish to continue the project past the approved project period (see above), you must submit a request, using the form *Continuing Review for IRB Approved Projects*, prior to the expiration date. This form is available from the IRB Coordinator or on the Research Compliance website (<https://vpred.uark.edu/units/rscp/index.php>). As a courtesy, you will be sent a reminder two months in advance of that date. However, failure to receive a reminder does not negate your obligation to make the request in sufficient time for review and approval. Federal regulations prohibit retroactive approval of continuation. Failure to receive approval to continue the project prior to the expiration date will result in Termination of the protocol approval. The IRB Coordinator can give you guidance on submission times.

This protocol has been approved for 286 participants. If you wish to make *any* modifications in the approved protocol, including enrolling more than this number, you must seek approval *prior to* implementing those changes. All modifications should be requested in writing (email is acceptable) and must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact me at 109 MLKG Building, 5-2208, or irb@uark.edu.

Appendix B Consent Forms

Superintendent Longevity in Kansas

Survey Consent

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

(Online Survey)

Principal Researcher: Cory L. Gibson

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Ed Bengston

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

You are invited to participate in a research study about superintendent longevity in Kansas. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a practicing superintendent in Kansas.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE RESEARCH STUDY

Who is the Principal Researcher?

Cory L. Gibson

130 N. Valley Creek Drive

Valley Center, KS 67147

(620)704-1222

clg018@uark.edu

Who is the Faculty Advisor?

Dr. Ed Bengston

egbengts@uark.edu

(479) 575-5092

What is the purpose of this research study?

The purpose of this study is study superintendent longevity in the state of Kansas.

Who will participate in this study?

All superintendents within the state of Kansas representing the 286 school districts will be invited to participate in this study.

What am I being asked to do?

Your participation will require the following: To complete the online Superintendent Turnover Survey Questionnaire (STSQ). Some participants may be asked to participate in a follow-up interview.

What are the possible risks or discomforts?

There are no anticipated risks for participating in this study.

What are the possible benefits of this study?

There are no anticipated direct benefits to the participant.

How long will the study last?

The completion of the Superintendent Turnover Survey Questionnaire will take participants approximately 20 minutes. Selected participants for the interview can expect the interview will take approximately one hour.

Will I receive compensation for my time and inconvenience if I choose to participate in this study?

No.

Will I have to pay for anything?

No, there will be no cost associated with your participation.

What are the options if I do not want to be in the study?

If you do not want to be in this study, you may refuse to participate. Also, you may refuse to participate at any time during the study.

How will my confidentiality be protected?

All information will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by applicable State and Federal law.

All data gathered will be maintained on a personal computer, which is password protected. Individual documents containing identifiable data will be individually password protected. Personal identifiers on the survey will be needed to determine which survey respondents might be invited to participate in the interview process; however, once interview participants are identified, all personal identifiers on the surveys will be removed from the survey data. Within the study, pseudonyms will be cited when referencing specific individuals or locations to maintain participants' anonymity.

Will I know the results of the study?

At the conclusion of the study you will have the right to request feedback about the results. You may contact the faculty advisor, Dr. Ed Bengston egbengst@uark.edu (479) 575-5092 or Principal Researcher, Cory Gibson clg018@uark.edu (620)704-1222. You will receive a copy of this form for your files.

What do I do if I have questions about the research study?

You have the right to contact the Principal Researcher or Faculty Advisor as listed below for any concerns that you may have.

Principal Research's name and contact information

Cory L. Gibson

130 N. Valley Creek Drive

Valley Center, KS 67147

(620)704-1222

clg018@uark.edu

Faculty Advisor's name and contact information

Dr. Ed Bengston

egbengts@uark.edu

(479) 575-5092

You may also contact the University of Arkansas Research Compliance office listed below if you have questions about your rights as a participant, or to discuss any concerns about, or problems with the research.

Ro Windwalker, CIP

Institutional Review Board Coordinator

Research Compliance

University of Arkansas

109 MLKG Building

Fayetteville, AR 72701-1201

479-575-2208

irb@uark.edu

I have read the above statement and have been able to ask questions and express concerns, which have been satisfactorily responded to by the investigator. I understand the purpose of the study as well as the potential benefits and risks that are involved. I understand that participation is voluntary. I understand that significant new findings developed during this research will be shared with the participant. I understand that no rights have been waived by signing the consent form. I have been given a copy of the consent form.

Electronic Signature (embedded in the survey): _____

Date: _____

Interview Consent

Superintendent Longevity in Kansas

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

(Semi Structure Interviews)

Principal Researcher: Cory L. Gibson

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Ed Bengston

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

You are invited to participate in a research study about superintendent longevity in Kansas. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a practicing superintendent in Kansas.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE RESEARCH STUDY

Who is the Principal Researcher?

Cory L. Gibson

130 N. Valley Creek Drive

Valley Center, KS 67147

(620)704-1222

clg018@uark.edu

Who is the Faculty Advisor?

Dr. Ed Bengston

egbengts@uark.edu

(479) 575-5092

What is the purpose of this research study?

The purpose of this study is study superintendent longevity in the state of Kansas.

Who will participate in this study?

All superintendents within the state of Kansas representing the 286 school districts will be invited to participate in this study. No greater than eight participants were selected to participate in this follow up interview. Participants were selected based on responses to demographic questions in the survey including years of experience, years in the current position, size of district, and/or district setting (rural/urban).

What am I being asked to do?

Your participation will require the following: Participate in an interview with the researcher. The interviews will be audibly recorded. During the interview transcription process, names will be kept identifiable only for the researcher's records.

What are the possible risks or discomforts?

There are no anticipated risks for participating in this study.

What are the possible benefits of this study?

There are no anticipated direct benefits to the participant.

How long will the study last?

Selected participants for the interview can expect the interview will take approximately one hour.

Will I receive compensation for my time and inconvenience if I choose to participate in this study?

No.

Will I have to pay for anything?

No, there will be no cost associated with your participation.

What are the options if I do not want to be in the study?

If you do not want to be in this study, you may refuse to participate. Also, you may refuse to participate at any time during the study.

How will my confidentiality be protected?

All information will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by applicable State and Federal law.

All data gathered will be maintained on a personal computer, which is password protected. Individual documents containing identifiable data will be individually password protected. Once all interviews have been transcribed, pseudonyms will be used to replace any actual participant names, organizations, and places that might appear in the transcripts. Within the writing of the study, pseudonyms will be cited when referencing specific individuals or locations to maintain participants' anonymity.

Will I know the results of the study?

At the conclusion of the study you will have the right to request feedback about the results. You may contact the faculty advisor, Dr. Ed Bengston egbengst@uark.edu (479) 575-5092 or Principal Researcher, Cory Gibson clg018@uark.edu (620)704-1222. You will receive a copy of this form for your files.

What do I do if I have questions about the research study?

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Principal Research's name and contact information

Cory L. Gibson

130 N. Valley Creek Drive

Valley Center, KS 67147

(620)704-1222

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Faculty Advisor's name and contact information

Dr. Ed Bengston

egbengts@uark.edu

(479) 575-5092

You may also contact the University of Arkansas Research Compliance office listed below if you have questions about your rights as a participant, or to discuss any concerns about, or problems with the research.

Ro Windwalker, CIP

Institutional Review Board Coordinator

Research Compliance

University of Arkansas

109 MLKG Building

Fayetteville, AR 72701-1201

479-575-2208

irb@uark.edu

I have read the above statement and have been able to ask questions and express concerns, which have been satisfactorily responded to by the investigator. I understand the purpose of the study as well as the potential benefits and risks that are involved. I understand that participation is voluntary. I understand that significant new findings developed during this research will be shared with the participant. I understand that no rights have been waived by signing the consent form. I have been given a copy of the consent form.

Signed _____

Date: _____

Appendix C Superintendent Turnover Survey Questionnaire

Superintendent Turnover Survey Questionnaire (STSQ)

Developed and validated by Dr. Kathy S. Berryhill (2009). Written permission obtained with slight modifications approved by Dr. Berryhill September, 2015.

The following are factors which may influence job turnover among superintendents.

Please rate the importance of each factor:

1) "Job description":

- Not Important
- Somewhat Important
- Important
- Very Important

2) "Leadership opportunities":

- Not Important
- Somewhat Important
- Important
- Very Important

3) "Autonomy":

- Not Important
- Somewhat Important
- Important
- Very Important

4) "Salary":

- Not Important
- Somewhat Important
- Important
- Very Important

5) "Benefits":

- Not Important
- Somewhat Important
- Important
- Very Important

6) "Sense of responsibility":

- Not Important
- Somewhat Important
- Important

Very Important

7) "Implementation of school reform":

Not Important

Somewhat Important

Important

Very Important

8) "Sense of achievement":

Not Important

Somewhat Important

Important

Very Important

9) "Relationships with school board":

Not Important

Somewhat Important

Important

Very Important

10) "Relationships with community":

Not Important

Somewhat Important

Important

Very Important

The following items are developed to measure job satisfaction with your current superintendent position.

Please indicate your level of agreement with each statement.

11) There is too little variety in my job.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

12) I tend to get bored on the job.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

13) There must be better places to work.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

14) I would like more freedom on the job.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

15) I have too small a share in deciding matters that affect my work.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

16) My job means more to me than just money.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

17) I am satisfied with the work I do.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

18) My job gives me a chance to do what I do best.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

19) People feel they belong where I work.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

The following questions are designed to measure your intention to leave the current position of superintendent.

Specifically, are you considering leaving your current position:

- 20) Within one year? Yes No
- 21) Within five years? Yes No
- 22) Within ten or more years? Yes No

The following questions are designed to gather data related to your position of

23) If you have held more than one superintendency position, what was the most important reason for leaving the last one? (Select one).

- Board elections

- Career advancement with larger/more successful district
 - Conflict with community groups
 - Disagreements with board members
 - Family dynamics
 - Salary and fringe benefits
 - Retirement
 - Strained relationships with employee groups
 - Stayed too long in district
 - No applicable because I have only held one superintendency
- 24) Looking ahead, where do you see yourself in 5 years? (Select one)
- Plan to continue current superintendency until retirement.
 - Plan to continue in a superintendent position, in current district or another until reaching retirement age.
 - Plan to leave as soon as I find a position in a university.
 - Plan to leave as soon as a find a suitable position outside of education.
 - Not sure, but current job is impossible.
 - Other
- 25) Which of the following best describes the career path to your superintendency? (Select one)
- Teacher, Assistant Principal, Principal, & Central Office
 - Teacher and Central Office
 - Teacher and Principal
 - Central Office only
 - Teacher only
 - Other - Please specify: (input box)
- 26) Which past position in education was most beneficial in preparing you for the superintendency? (Select one)
- Teacher
 - Coach
 - Principal
 - Central Office Director/Coordinator
 - Assistant Superintendent
 - All of the above
 - Other - Please Specify: (input box)
- 27) What is the enrollment of current school district (K-12)? (input box)
- 28) What type of community does your current school district serve?
- Rural
 - Suburban
 - Urban
- 29) How would you characterize your overall relationship with the present

school board?

- Unbearable
- Strained
- Good
- Excellent

30) Rate the quality of the communication with your present school board:

- Neither friendly nor productive
- Friendly, but not productive
- Productive, but not friendly
- Friendly and productive

31) Choose the most appropriate description of your current school board:

- Aligned with community interest
- Dominated by the elite
- Not involved with critical school/community issues
- Represents key special groups
- Dominated by personal agendas

32) What is the greatest urgency in your current district? (Select one)

- Collaborative decision making
- Discipline
- Finance
- Community support
- Student achievement
- Recruitment, selection and retention of staff
- Technology
- Other: Please specify (text box)

33) What would you suggest to help overcome shortage of superintendents?
(Select one)

- Certify business leaders outside of education
- Change or decrease certification requirements
- Develop district practices that support in-house leadership capacity building
- Increase recruitment of current administrators to certify for the superintendency
- Other - Please Specify: (input box)

34) What is your prediction of future superintendent turnover in your home state:

- About the same
- Decreasing superintendent turnover
- Increasing superintendent turnover

35) In your opinion, what was the most important reason you were hired by the present board of education? (Select one)

- Ability to be an instructional leader

- Ability to provide stability
- Ability to be a change agent
- Ability to handle a specific task (facilities, personnel, etc.)
- Possession of personal characteristics (honesty, tact, etc)
- Other, please specify (text box)

36) How would you describe your overall effectiveness as a superintendent?

- Not successful
- Somewhat successful
- Successful
- Very successful

37) How do you feel about the size of your current district (student population)?

- It is a right fit for me
- I would rather be in a smaller district
- I would rather be in a larger district

Demographic Data

38) Original State of Certification:

- Kansas
- Other: please specify (input box)

39) Age: (Input box)

40) Gender:

- Male
- Female

41) The total years of experience in education: (input box)

42) The total years at current superintendent position: (input box)

43) In how many years do you plan to retire? (input box)

44) The total number of different public school superintendencies held (including present one):

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- Greater than 6

45) The highest level of education:

- Bachelor

- Masters
- Masters Plus
- Doctorate
- Doctorate Plus

47) Anything else you would like to add related to your job as a superintendent?

(Input box)

48) I am willing to participate in a follow-up interview regarding superintendent longevity in Kansas.

- Yes
- No

49) If you responded “Yes” to question number 46, please share your contact information below. Your name and contact information will not be shared with anyone but the researcher.

Name: _____

E-mail: _____

Phone Number: _____

Appendix D Consent to Use the Survey

Cory Gibson

From: Kathy Berryhill <kathy.berryhill@pangburnschools.org>
Sent: Tuesday, September 22, 2015 8:08 AM
To: Cory Gibson
Subject: Re: Superintendent Turnover: Dissertation
Thanks Cory for your email.

You are welcome to use my survey--- adjust as you need it.

With so many schools in Texas, Supt. turnover is an ongoing issue. Really makes it tough on school districts with changes in leadership and what new procedures or programs or staff changes that may involve. What I did find was the biggest reason for turnover was related to school board interactions, relations or wanting to do the Superintendent's job and regulation requirements (although I can say from working in both Arkansas and Texas--- our regulations are even more intense here!!!) When I was at Aransas Pass, Texas (for 20 years as teacher, coach, curriculum director, administrator, assistant superintendent --- I worked for 8 different superintendents!

Maybe this is more of a trend in public school education for all areas-- not just administrators.

My office number is _____ and my cell number is _____. You can also email me at anytime as well.

BEST WISHES!!!!

Sincerely,

Kathy

Dr. Kathy Berryhill
Superintendent
Pangburn Schools

On Mon, Sep 21, 2015 at 7:07 PM, Cory Gibson <Cory.Gibson@usd262.net> wrote:

Dr. Berryhill,

I am currently researching superintendent longevity and turnover in Kansas as part of my dissertation work. Recently, I reviewed your 2009 work regarding turnover in Kansas, Connecticut, Kentucky, and Oregon. Many of our cited works are similar, and our designs are parallel. I believe you cited that your reliability of the job satisfaction survey (p. 64), was .74. Which in most cases is considered reliable. The reason I am writing you is to request the use of your survey as part of my dissertation work. I would likely administer it to 220+ superintendents in Kansas with only small adjustments and additions. You would be provided credit in my dissertation. Thank you for your consideration. Respectfully submitted,

Cory

Sent from
my iPad
Cory L.
Gibson,
Ed.S.

Superintendent of Valley Center USD262

Valley Center, Kansas

Confidentiality Note: The information contained in this email and any attached file(s) are for the exclusive use of the addressee and may contain confidential, privileged and non-disclosable information. If the recipient of this email is not the addressee, such recipient is strictly prohibited from reading, photocopying, distributing or otherwise using this email or its contents in any way.

Appendix E Interview Questions

Semi-Structured Interview Questions: Longevity Greater than Six Years

Cory L. Gibson

Practice Qualitative Research Interview

Topic: Superintendent Longevity

Parameters of Interviewee: Superintendent in Kansas Working in the Same District for Greater than 6 years.

Name of Interviewee: _____ Date: _____

Introductory Script: “This is Cory L. Gibson Today’s is _____ is _____ o’clock, and I am here in [location] with [name of interviewee], the superintendent of [institution or system]. We’ll be discussing contributing factors of superintendent longevity.”

1. Tell me about the career path that has led you to this position.
 - a. How many years have you been serving as superintendent in the current district?
 - b. How many years have you served as superintendent in any district?
 - c. How many places have you served as superintendent?
 - d. How many years have you been in administration?
 - e. How many years have you been in education?
 - f. Tell me about the demographic make-up of your district? Size?

2. Do you feel that it is important for a superintendent to remain in the same district for several years? Why?

4. Do you feel that you were well prepared to serve in this role? Why/Why not?
5. Why did you select to apply and interview for this current role?
6. When reflecting upon your current role, what aspects of the job bring you satisfaction? Why?
- 7.a. What parts of the job brings you dissatisfaction? Why?
- b. How do you handle these challenges?
8. Currently, the average superintendent longevity in the same position within Kansas is around 5.5 years. You are exceeding this average. In your opinion, what do you believe are the reasons why you have remained in this position greater than the state average?
9. a. Have you ever considered leaving the superintendency? Why and what other career options would you have explored?
- b. Have you ever considered leaving the state of Kansas to serve as a superintendent? Why?
- c. Have you ever considered changing districts within the state? What prevented you from going after those opportunities?
- d. What are some factors that could motivate you to remain in the same district for years to come?
- e. What are some factors that could motivate you to apply and change districts?

10. How has the role as superintendent changed during your tenure?

11. As you may be aware, some districts have a revolving door in the district office. Why do you think this is?

12. What is the recipe for long term employment within the same district?

13. What support systems exist for you as a superintendent?

14. Is there anything else you would like to share with me regarding the role of being a superintendent in Kansas?

15. Is there anything else you would like to share with me regarding superintendent longevity?

Semi-Structured Interview Questions: Longevity Less Than Two Years

Cory L. Gibson

Practice Qualitative Research Interview

Topic: Superintendent Longevity

Parameters of Interviewee: Superintendent in Kansas Changed Districts Within the Past Two Years

Name of Interviewee: _____ Date: _____

Introductory Script: "This is Cory L. Gibson Today's is _____ is _____ o'clock, and I am here in [location] with [name of interviewee], the superintendent of [institution or system]. We'll be discussing contributing factors of superintendent longevity."

1. Tell me about the career path that has led you to this position.
 - a. How many years have you been serving as superintendent in the current district?
 - b. How many years have you served as superintendent in any district?
 - c. How many places have you served as superintendent?
 - d. How many years have you been in administration?
 - e. How many years have you been in education?
 - f. Tell me about the demographic make-up of your district? Size?
 - e. What degrees have you earned? When and from what institutions?

2. Do you feel that it is important for a superintendent to remain in the same district for several years? Why?

3. Do you feel that you were well prepared to serve in this role? Why/Why not?
4. Why did you select to apply and interview for this current role?
5. When reflecting upon your current role, what aspects of the job bring you satisfaction? Why?
- 6.a. What parts of the job brings you dissatisfaction? Why?
- b. How do you handle these challenges?
7. Currently, the average superintendent longevity in the same position within Kansas is around 5.5 years. You are currently below that average. What factors influenced your decision to change districts?
8. a. Have you ever considered leaving the superintendency? Why and what other career options would you have explored?
- b. Have you ever considered leaving the state of Kansas to serve as a superintendent? Why?
- c. Are you considering changing districts within the state within the next two years? Why?
- d. What are some factors that could motivate you to remain in the same district for years to come?
- e. What are some factors that could motivate you to apply and change districts?
9. How has the role as superintendent changed during your tenure?

10. As you may be aware, some districts that have a revolving door in the district office. Why do you think this is?

11. What is the recipe for long term employment within the same district?

12. What support systems exist for you as a superintendent?

13. Is there anything else you would like to share with me regarding the role of being a superintendent in Kansas?

14. Is there anything else you would like to share with me regarding superintendent longevity?