

ABSTRACT

Dennis J. Sawyer. SUPERINTENDENT PERCEPTIONS OF DISTRICT LEADERSHIP FOR IMPROVED STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT. (Under the direction of Dr. William Rouse, Jr.) Department of Educational Leadership, April, 2010.

The purpose of this study is to focus on how North Carolina superintendents perceive the importance and employ the self-assessed practices of the five McREL district-level leadership responsibilities linked to student achievement as they relate to the superintendents' years of experience and the size of the school system. One of the leading studies of the superintendent's professional practice was the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) comprehensive study of the superintendency, which was released in a 2006 report. Waters and Marzano (2006) generate four major findings. These findings are: (1) District-level leadership matters, (2) Effective superintendents focus their efforts on creating goal-oriented districts, (3) Superintendent tenure is positively correlated with student achievement, and (4) Defined autonomy.

Finding 2, effective superintendents focus their efforts on creating goal-oriented districts, generated five district-level leadership responsibilities related to setting and keeping districts focused on teaching and learning goals which have a statistically significant correlation with average student academic achievement. They are: (1) collaborative goal-setting, (2) non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction, (3) board alignment with and support of district goals, (4)

monitoring achievement and instructional goals, (5) use of resources to support the goals for instruction.

The five responsibilities from Finding 2 served as the basis for the survey questions. Data gained from superintendent self assessment survey responses included superintendents' ratings of the importance of the leadership responsibilities along with their perceptions of how often they employ these practices. Responses were examined for similarities and differences with respect to length of service and school system size.

McREL found that effective superintendents focus their efforts on creating goal oriented districts. This finding was significant enough from their meta-analysis of 27 studies related to effective school leaders that it emerged as one of four overall findings. This study found North Carolina superintendents share McREL's view that creating goal-oriented districts is important. Similarly, superintendents most often perceive that they practice the 5 responsibilities that McREL articulates as the practices relative to this finding. This study suggests McREL designed a potential blueprint for improving district-level achievement and North Carolina superintendents perceive they are employing the responsibilities that the McREL research identified as being important to student achievement.

SUPERINTENDENT PERCEPTIONS OF DISTRICT LEADERSHIP FOR
IMPROVED STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

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by

Dennis J. Sawyer

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IMPROVED STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Statement of the Problem

Despite the existence of studies and articles on leadership and organizational goals by many acknowledged experts in the field of Educational Administration, it appears that there remains a limited research base on the effects of superintendents' leadership behaviors on instructional performance of school districts. Historically the primary role and expectation of a superintendent has involved managerial elements that may not have a direct influence on student achievement. These roles and responsibilities have included budgeting, procuring, personnel, facilities, public relations, grievance proceedings, board secretary, business and industry liaison. While all of these functions are important to a well-managed district and schools and are vital to the success and effectiveness of the superintendency, these functions are not enough. The superintendent must provide a clear focus on teaching and learning to impact student achievement which is, after all, the primary purpose of the schools. In North Carolina, such a focus would align with changes in the public's and policymakers' expectations of schools over the past decade or more.

As improved student achievement increasingly became the center of state and national attention, the General Assembly of North Carolina focused on the development and implementation of a statewide school accountability model. In 1995, Senate Bill 16 was passed and laid the foundation for North Carolina's ABCs Accountability Model (Jackson, 2004). Senate Bill 16 directed the North

Carolina State Board of Education (NCSBE) to develop a restructuring plan for the Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI), and to include a provision for statewide educational reform, which emphasized improving student performance as measured by End-of-Grade tests in grades three through eight, End-of-Course tests in grades nine through twelve, and the student accountability gateway in grades three, five, and eight. The NCSBE presented their accountability plan recommendations to the North Carolina General Assembly. Senate Bill 1139, commonly called the School-Based Management and Accountability Program, was ratified on June 21, 1996. This legislation became known as the ABCs of Public Education (ABCs) (*North Carolina Session Laws 716, 1996*). The primary goals of the ABCs legislation were to improve student achievement with an emphasis on three principles from which its name was derived: (1) strong accountability, emphasizing more challenging educational standards for students, (2) teaching the basics that included language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies, and (3) local school district control and flexibility (North Carolina Department of Instruction, Division of Accountability Services, Testing Section, 2001). North Carolina's ABCs raised the performance bar for students, teachers, principals, and superintendents in every public school district across the state. As a result of this legislation, state mandated assessments have become the measure of the professional reputation of students, teachers, principals, and district leaders. These are clearly high-stakes tests with financial rewards for teachers and principals and public accountability tied to school and school district

performance. Students are impacted through completion or loss of course credit. In addition to meeting local standards, students must pass state mandated examinations in order to meet promotion requirements. Teachers are impacted through financial incentives or disincentives based on the outcome of student results. District and school status is impacted through community perceptions of school and student success or lack of success. Superintendents and district-level leadership are clearly impacted as they are charged with leading school districts to high academic achievement evidenced by district performance. Consequently, the mandate to improve teaching and learning, as well as the increased state accountability authorization and federal mandates, requires superintendents and district leadership to create a sense of urgency around improving student achievement.

The landmark reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary School Act (ESEA) by Congress, that became known as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), set additional expectations and rules for schools and school districts in many areas – from dictating the accountability system, to requiring schools to hire only highly qualified teachers, and to mandating that schools provide military recruiters with student information that had previously been considered confidential (Houston, 2007). The intent of NCLB was for 100% of public school students, with an emphasis on the economically disadvantaged, to perform at grade level or higher in reading and mathematics by 2014 (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). This act included the following tenets: (a)

increased accountability at the state, school district, and school levels, (b) greater school choice for parents and students, particularly those attending low-performing schools, (c) more flexibility for states and local education agencies (LEAs) in the use of federal education dollars, and (d) a stronger emphasis on reading, especially for the youngest children (U.S. Department of Education).

NCLB is designed to strengthen Title I schools' (schools that receive federal funding from the 1965 ESEA for low-income students) accountability by requiring all fifty states (that accept federal funds) to develop and implement statewide assessments that measure what children have learned in reading and math in grades three through eight and in one secondary grade (No Child Left Behind Act, 2002). Educational leaders acknowledge that the most important benefits of NCLB lie in the recognition of the right of each child to learn and be assessed by high academic standards, as well as in the act's requirement that test results be disaggregated by race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, and English language learner status. NCLB requires the disaggregation of test results and reporting of results by ten subgroups: (1) the school as a whole, (2) white students, (3) black students, (4) Hispanic students, (5) Native American students, (6) Asian/Pacific Islander students, (7) multiracial students, (8) economically disadvantaged students, (9) Limited English Proficiency students, and (10) students with disabilities (No Child Left Behind). If one of these ten student subgroups does not meet the target goal in either reading or mathematics, the school does not make adequate yearly progress (AYP) (North

Carolina Department of Instruction, Division of Accountability Services, Testing Section, 2001). While NCLB and AYP were designed to improve student achievement in all subgroups in all public schools across the nation, only schools receiving Title I federal funding were subject to the law's sanctions. Federal and state policymakers mandated accountability through utilization of student achievement goals in reading and mathematics, assessments standards, and dissemination of test results to the media (Popham, 2001). Both the ABCs and NCLB models incorporated rewards and sanctions. The importance of all students performing well on North Carolina mandated tests increased with the introduction of the ABCs and NCLB standards, subsequently requiring effective instructional leadership skills for every superintendent.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to focus on how North Carolina superintendents perceive the importance and employ the self-assessed practices of the five McREL district-level leadership responsibilities linked to student achievement as they relate to the superintendents' years of experience and the size of the school system. One of the leading studies of the superintendent's professional practice was the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) comprehensive study of the superintendency, which was released in a 2006 report. This study, a working paper, by Waters and Marzano, on *School District Leadership that Works: The Effect of Superintendent Leadership on Student Achievement (Meta-analysis of Effective School Leaders)*,

specifically investigated the influence of school district leaders on student performance and determined the characteristics of effective schools, leaders, and teachers. Findings from 27 studies conducted since 1970 that used quantitative methods to study the influence of school district leaders on student achievement, were examined. Altogether, these studies involved 2,817 districts and the achievement scores of 3.4 million students, resulting in what McREL researchers believe to be the largest-ever quantitative examination of research on superintendents (Waters & Marzano, 2006). Because the McREL research serves as a foundation for this study, some essential background of the McREL study, its authors, and the outcomes and the potential value of the research are included to show how this study builds on the McREL findings.

The McREL Study, authored by Tim Waters and Robert Marzano, was a meta-analysis of 27 existing studies of the superintendent's leadership behaviors. Meta-analysis is a sophisticated research technique that combines data from separate studies into a single sample of research, in this case examining the effects of superintendents' leadership behaviors on instructional performance of school districts. Tim Waters has served as CEO for McREL since 1995, following 23 years in public education, the last seven of which were as the superintendent of the Greeley, Colorado school system. He is the author and co-author of several publications related to educational leadership, including *School Leadership that Works: From Research to Results*. Robert Marzano is a Senior Scholar at McREL. He is the author and co-author of numerous publications,

including *What Works in Schools, Classroom Instruction that Works, and School Leadership that Works: From Research to Results*.

In their working paper called *School District Leadership that Works: The Effect of Superintendent Leadership on Student Achievement*, (Meta-analysis of Effective School Leaders) Waters and Marzano (2006) generate four major findings. These findings are: (1) District-level leadership matters, (2) Effective superintendents focus their efforts on creating goal-oriented districts, (3) Superintendent tenure is positively correlated with student achievement, and (4) Defined autonomy. The fourth finding, described as “surprising and perplexing” indicated that an increase in building autonomy had a positive association with average student achievement in the district. According to McREL, this finding seems contradictory. One study reported that building autonomy has a positive correlation of .28 with average student achievement in the district, indicating that an increase in building autonomy is associated with an increase in student achievement. Interestingly, the same study reported that site-based management had a negative correlation with student achievement of -.16, indicating that an increase in site-based management is associated with a decrease in student achievement. Researchers concluded from this finding that effective superintendents may provide principals with “defined autonomy.” That is, they may set clear, non-negotiable goals for learning and instruction, yet provide school leadership teams with the responsibility and authority for determining how to meet those goals.

An additional finding of the McREL research established that superintendent tenure is positively correlated with student achievement, specifically the length of superintendent tenure in a district correlates to increasing levels of student achievement. While there were only two studies that examined the relationship between superintendent tenure and student achievement, they were both positively correlated: the longer they stay, the higher the achievement.

Finding 2 of the McREL research generated five district-level leadership responsibilities related to setting and keeping districts focused on teaching and learning goals and that have a statistically significant correlation with average student academic achievement. They are: (1) collaborative goal-setting, (2) non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction, (3) board alignment with and support of district goals, (4) monitoring achievement and instructional goals, (5) use of resources to support the goals for instruction. A summary of each of these five leadership responsibilities is described below.

Collaborative goal setting (Responsibility 1), according to the authors, must encompass all relevant stakeholders, including central office staff, building level administrators, and board members to establish district goals. Involving principals and school board members in the goal setting process does not imply that consensus must be reached among these stakeholders. However, it does imply that once stakeholders reach an acceptable level of agreement regarding

district goals, all stakeholders agree to support the attainment of those goals (Waters & Marzano, 2006).

Non-negotiable goals (Responsibility 2) are goals that all staff members must act upon in at least two areas: student achievement and classroom instruction (Waters & Marzano, 2006). This responsibility further states that specific achievement targets for schools and students should be set. All staff members at each campus are aware of the goals and an action plan is created for the attainment of those goals. Goals should be strategic and specific, measurable, attainable, results oriented, and time-bound (DuFour, Eaker, & DuFour, 2007).

Researchers, Waters and Marzano, found that school board alignment with and support for the district goals (Responsibility 3) is vital to ensure that these goals remain the top priorities in the district and that no other initiatives detract attention or resources from accomplishing these goals. Although other initiatives might be undertaken, none can detract attention or resources from the two primary goals of student achievement and classroom instruction.

Responsibility 4, monitoring achievement and instruction, must occur on a continual basis to observe progress toward achievement and instructional goals and to ensure that these goals remain the driving force behind a district's actions. When goals are consistently monitored, it communicates to all stakeholders the importance of the goals (Waters & Marzano, 2006).

Use of resources to support the goals for instruction and achievement (Responsibility 5) must be allocated and deployed at the school level and utilized in ways that align schools with district goals. Districts will benefit from effective resource allocation such as state and federal grant programs which are consistent with district goals. Flexibility with resources (which include time, money, personnel, and materials) will greatly facilitate local reform because funding could be more easily applied and combined to meet student achievement and classroom instruction needs. Superintendents must support district and school level leadership in ways that enhance, rather than diminish, achievement to improve teaching and learning (Waters & Marzano, 2006).

The 2006 study follows work by McREL that began in 1998 with a series of meta-analytic studies that are viewed as third-generation effective schools research. The first generation of effective schools research, conducted from the late 1960s to the mid 1980s, produced the first set of “effective schools correlates” – school level practices that researchers found more evident in schools with higher levels of student achievement than in schools with lower levels of student achievement, even when accounting for variances in student backgrounds and socioeconomic status. Findings from this first generation of research (Waters & Marzano, 2006) established the first empirical relationship between practices used in schools and student achievement. The conclusion drawn from these studies was that what happens in schools matters. Differences in achievement among schools are not just a reflection of the characteristics of

students who attend them, but also the efforts of professionals within those schools.

In the 1970s, 80s, and 90s, researchers continued to examine the relationship between classroom practices, school practices, and student achievement. As the findings from these studies began to accumulate, a body of research-based knowledge emerged, along with data for secondary analysis. This body of knowledge and these data evolved into the second generation (Waters & Marzano, 2006) of effective schools research. In this generation, researchers were able to more explicitly describe effective practices and compute effect sizes, or strength of relationship, between specific practices and student achievement.

The new, third generation (Waters & Marzano, 2006) of effective schools research translates well-defined, effective classroom, school, and leadership practices into specific actions and behaviors. These actions and behaviors represent the basic procedural, or “how-to,” knowledge practitioners need to translate research into practices that produce high levels of student achievement. McREL’s contributions to this third generation of effective schools research has been published as a series of “what works” books, including, *Classroom Instruction that Works* (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001), *What Works in Schools* (Marzano, 2003), and *School Leadership that Works* (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). Each study in this series was built on earlier studies and helped establish the foundation for subsequent analyses. Similarly, McREL’s

most recent analysis of the effects of superintendent leadership incorporates aspects of each of the previous “what works” studies – most notably the findings from the meta-analysis of research on school leadership, reported in the book, *School Leadership that Works* (see Table 1).

The findings by Waters and Marzano support the beliefs of others, that student academic improvement does not happen by chance but rather through effective leaders devoting ample time to implement broad, sustainable reform (Fullan, 2002). While the superintendent is one step removed from the students, by supporting school-level leadership to make the difference within their schools, the superintendent is assuming ultimate responsibility for the success or failure of student performance in their district. By assuming this responsibility, superintendents must now have, in addition to their managerial skills, the knowledge and skills to augment instructional methods in those they lead, in addition to interpreting assessment data to hold accountable and explain their district’s achievement level compared to others in the state and nation (Hoyle, Bjork, Lars, Collier, & Glass, 2005). Beyond specific behaviors of the superintendent, persistence in the job matters as well.

The raised expectations of superintendents, brought about by NCLB, have placed renewed pressure on those in that role. While Waters and Marzano found a relationship between tenure and increased student achievement, Hoyle et al. (2005) expressed that the success or failure of various superintendents (length of tenure) is a subject that is ambiguous and not thoroughly researched. Cooper,

Table 1

Leadership Responsibilities and Practices

Superintendent Responsibilities	Average r	Practices Used by Superintendents & Executive/District Office Staff to Fulfill Superintendent Responsibilities
Collaborative goal-setting	.24	<p>Developing a shared vision for the goal setting process</p> <p>Using the goal setting process to set goals developed jointly by board and administration</p> <p>Developing goals that are coherent and reflect attendant values which support involvement and quality in achievement rather than maintenance of the status quo</p> <p>Communicating expectations to central office staff and principals</p>
Non-negotiable goals for achievement & instruction	.33	<p>Modeling understanding of instructional design</p> <p>Establishing clear priorities among the district's instructional goals and objectives</p> <p>Adopting instructional methodologies that facilitate the efficient delivery of the district's curriculum</p> <p>Incorporating varied and diverse instructional methodologies that allow for a wide range of learning styles that exist in a multi-racial student population</p> <p>Adopting 5-year non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction</p> <p>Ensuring that a preferred instructional program is adopted and implemented</p>

Table 1

Leadership Responsibilities and Practices (continued)

Superintendent Responsibilities	Average r	Practices Used by Superintendents & Executive/District Office Staff to Fulfill Superintendent Responsibilities
Board alignment with & support of district goals	.29	Establishing agreement with the board president on district goals Establishing agreement with the board president on type and nature of conflict in the district Along with the board president, remaining situationally aware, agreeing on the political climate of the school district Establishing agreement with the board president on the nature of teaching/learning strategies to be used in the district Providing professional development for board members Establishing agreement with the board president on the effectiveness of board training
Monitoring goals for achievement & instruction	.27	Using an instructional evaluation program that accurately monitors implementation of the district's instructional program Monitoring student achievement through feedback from the instructional evaluation program Using a system to manage instructional change Annually evaluating principals Reporting student achievement data to the board on a regular basis Ensuring that the curricular needs of all student populations are met Observing classrooms during school visits Coordinating efforts of individuals and groups within the organization to increase reliability of the system, with adjustments by individuals to quickly respond to system failures

Table 1

Leadership Responsibilities and Practices (continued)

Superintendent Responsibilities	Average r	Practices Used by Superintendents & Executive/District Office Staff to Fulfill Superintendent Responsibilities
Use of resources to support the goals for achievement & instruction	.26	Adopting an instructional and resource management system supporting implementation of the district's instructional philosophy Providing extensive teacher and principal staff development Training all instructional staff in a common but flexible instructional model Controlling resource allocation Providing access to professional growth opportunities through the design of a master plan to coordinate in-service activities of the district

Note. The r correlations reported in this table are derived from McREL's meta-analysis of research on superintendent leadership.

Fusarelli, and Carella (2000), found in their research that the public perception of the superintendency is that of a job so daunting, few individuals desire to pursue the challenge. The length of superintendent service and student achievement affirm Fullan's (2005) research on the value of leadership stability and of a superintendent remaining in a district long enough to see the positive impact of his or her leadership on student learning and achievement. Fullan states that leadership at the district level is much more complex than leadership at the school level because a larger part of the system is being led in the direction of sustainability. Fullan describes two reasons why district leadership is essential. First, decentralized schools will have variable capacities to engage in continuous improvement, and therefore district structures have to be responsible for helping develop capacity and for intervening (with a goal to develop capacity) to impact performance and achievement. The second reason is even more fundamental for sustainability: We cannot change the system without lateral (cross-school and cross-district) sharing and capacity development. It is very much the responsibility of district leadership to develop capacity.

This study focuses on the five McREL district-level leadership responsibilities linked to student achievement. More specifically, the purpose of this study examines (1) how North Carolina superintendents perceive the importance of these responsibilities and (2) how North Carolina superintendents self-assess their employment of these responsibilities. These ratings are then

examined to determine similarities and differences based on years of experience and school system size.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This study focuses on North Carolina superintendents' perceptions of the importance of the five McREL district-level leadership responsibilities linked to student achievement along with their perceptions of how often they practice these responsibilities as they relate to the superintendents' years of experience and the student population (size) of the school system. The review of literature is divided into three sections: A brief historical perspective, a discussion of how the role of the superintendency has emerged, and the role of the superintendent in district wide student achievement. For clarification purposes this study focuses on district level superintendents rather than state level superintendents.

Section one discusses the historical perspective of the superintendency and the role of the superintendent; it is not intended to be an exhaustive review of the historical perspective of the superintendency, but rather an introduction of the early expectations of the superintendent and the lack of early indicators of the superintendent's role in improving district wide student achievement. This provides a context of the ever-evolving role of the superintendent and highlights the complexity of the modern superintendents' reality.

Section two outlines the emerged role of the superintendent as a leader whose role could be described very much as a generalist, expected to be involved, somewhat equally, across a broad range of responsibilities related to running a school district (finance and budgeting, human resources, school

construction, pupil assignment and much more), but without particular attention given to such areas as instruction and student achievement. Again, while not exhaustive, this section of the literature review suggests that the superintendent's role has shifted from "overseer" to being involved with the many responsibilities related to leading a complex organization.

Section three, the primary focus of this literature review, examines the superintendent's role in impacting district wide student achievement in detail. While little has been written specifically on the superintendent's impact, there is related literature describing the superintendent's role in such areas as instruction and accountability. This review includes authors who explicitly describe the role of the superintendent in student achievement as well as those who infer this role as an important responsibility of the superintendency. While some authors do not specifically address the superintendent's role in student achievement, their findings are instructive; they outline conditions that are necessary to improve student achievement such as developing capacity within and encouraging collaboration throughout the organization.

The Historical Perspective of the Superintendency

Section one discusses the historical perspective of the superintendency and the initial role of the superintendent. As noted earlier, this section is not intended to be an exhaustive review of the historical perspective of the superintendency, but rather an introduction to the early expectations of the

superintendent and documentation of the lack of emphasis on the superintendent's role in improving district wide student achievement.

Education has historically been a state function, one that is defined in the modern constitutions of each of our 50 states. State legislatures initially allocated money to local communities for education. Eventually, as the education system grew and became more complex, legislatures created local committees to oversee expenditures and funds (Houston, 2007). They, in turn, employed superintendents to handle the administrative function associated with "running" the schools in local districts. Thus, the first superintendents were largely bureaucrats carrying out state laws, collecting data and accounting for money. New York is credited with creating the first state superintendency when a paid state officer was appointed in 1812 to handle accounting for these local committees (Houston; Salley, 1980; Willower & Fraser, 1980; Wolf, 1988). Since that simpler time, the superintendent's role has shifted from the top of the organizational structure to the hub of a complex network of interpersonal relationships (Peterson & Short, 2001). In this new role, school district leaders must motivate staff to improve academic achievement, share authority and responsibility with them, and provide support, and hold staff accountable for making those efforts. The uncertainty and complexity of school district leadership means that superintendents must be continuous learners. Heifetz and Linsky (2002) and Schoen (1983) have argued against merely technical approaches to educational leadership. Creating a sense of urgency about the importance of

learning is essential as there is no manual that contains the solutions to problems that take into account idiosyncratic variables of context and people.

In 1837, Buffalo, New York, and Louisville, Kentucky, hired the first local superintendents. As more and more states passed legislation that mandated compulsory student attendance and as school districts grew larger, local boards hired superintendents to control operations. Since the appointment of the first school superintendent, the role has changed and expanded (Houston, 2007; Salley, 1980; Willower & Fraser, 1980; Wolf, 1988). A brief discourse of the superintendency shall describe what has shaped the historical role of the superintendency. Discourses change according to the social, political, and economic forces at work during any given period.

Although public schools were first established as early as 1640, the position of superintendent of schools did not come into existence until the mid-1800s (Griffiths, 1966) as noted above. The reluctance of Americans, during the earliest years of public schooling, to appoint what are now called superintendents stemmed from a strong anti-executive tradition that existed among the American colonists. The earliest formal superintendency was not a clearly defined position that was created to address a specific need nor was the early superintendency a powerful position, but rather one that was very much subservient to the local board of education. In fact, during the years 1820-1850, clerks were used to assist boards of education with the day-to-day activities related to schooling

(Campbell, Cunningham, Nystrand, & Usdan, 1985; Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Norton, Webb, Dlugosh, & Sybouts, 1996).

However, around the turn of the century, the role of the superintendent expanded and they became career professionals who were expected to be efficient managers, an expectation created by successful businessmen of the boards who hired them (Callahan, 1962; Webb, Montello, & Norton, 1994). As the public schools began to be inundated by social and public issues and criticized by citizen groups in the mid-1950s, the efficient manager was called upon to be a public relations expert and an astute politician as well (Tyack & Hansot, 1982), yet another expanded role of the superintendency.

A review of the literature recognized various perspectives for understanding the roles of the superintendent. Raymond E. Callahan (1962) explored the origin and development of the incorporation of business values and practices in educational administration, namely the superintendency. His study indicated that there was a commercial-industrial influence that came from business. He argued that the business influence was exerted upon education through the print medium, speeches at educational meetings, school board actions (businessmen as members), professional journalists, businessmen, and the educators themselves. In this atmosphere, superintendents responded by embracing the values and beliefs of business and industry. Many attempted to apply Taylor's concept of "scientific management" to the educational enterprise as a solution to their challenges (Callahan; Webb et al., 1994). The core work of

business and other large institutions, which were considered progressive, came to be the standard to which education was expected to aspire (Cuban, 1976). Under these influences, the self-image of the superintendent was changing from that of a scholar to that of a businessman (Callahan). Callahan wrote that Ellwood P. Cubberley contributed to the conception of the superintendent as an executive. Cubberley used such terms as “executive power” and “executive skill” and referred to the superintendent as the chief executive of the school system. Callahan remarked that by 1925 this term “chief executive” was used in administrative journals and books (Callahan, p. 219).

Carter and Cunningham (1997) mentioned in their study, *The American School Superintendent: Leading in an Age of Pressure*, that the American superintendent has gone through four major stages since its inception:

1. The Clerical Role – assisted the school board with daily school activities;
2. The Master Educator – provided direction on curricular and instructional matters;
3. The Expert Manager – emphasized hierarchical bureaucracy and scientific management;
4. The Chief Executive Officer for The Board – currently serves as the professional advisor to the school board, leader of reforms, manager of resources, and communicator to the public (pp. 23-24).

By categorizing all the written data from several educational journals and superintendent proceedings in ten-year increments from 1870-1950, Cuban (1976) was able to identify three functions that a superintendent performed at one time or another. He called them “dominant conceptions of leadership” (p. 114). Cuban’s (1976) dominant conceptions of leadership were: teacher-scholar, administrative chief, and negotiator-statesman (pp. 14-19). He perceived the superintendent's political role as that of “negotiator-statesmen,” which requires the superintendent to shape policies, allocate resources, build coalitions, and resolve conflict.

For decades, superintendents oversaw the business of the schools – the budget, buildings and daily operations – and gained power and prestige as major community leaders. During this era, superintendents were respected in the community for their business acumen and their moral courage as custodians of the nation’s future (Houston, 2007). They ran the nation’s education system with little interference from local boards. Relationships were respectful and relatively positive (Houston).

The upheaval of the 1960s and 1970s and the growing criticism of public education spawned by Sputnik and accelerated by civil rights, women’s rights and disability rights movements, according to (Brunner, Grogan, & Björk, 2002), seriously deteriorated the status and role of superintendents. In addition, the rise of powerful teacher unions and special interest groups changed the manner in which school board members were chosen. Federal legislation including the

Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and Title IX gave specific guidance, through legal regulations, to superintendents by outlining how students would be best served by their local schools (Houston, 2007).

In the mid-1970s, the school reform movement began to place new expectations and demands upon the superintendent to provide direction and leadership to improve the teaching and learning environment of the public schools (Barraclough, 1973; Goodlad, 1978; Odden, 1980; Walters, 1977). A general conclusion from the school reform literature of the 1970s was that educational leadership was an important characteristic of effective schools (Brookover, Beady, Flood, Schweitzer, & Wisenbaker, 1979; Edmonds, 1979; Marzano et al., 2005; Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, & Ouston, 1979). Specific behaviors associated with effective leadership included monitoring student progress on specific learning goals, supervising teachers, promoting high expectations for student achievement and teacher performance, focusing on basic skills, and monitoring the curriculum (Marzano et al., 2005). As Cubin (1988) notes:

Given that the literature on effective schools suggests that no school can become effective without the visible and active involvement of a principal hip-deep in the elementary school instructional program, then it also seems likely that no school board approving policies

aimed at system-wide improvement can hope to achieve that condition without a superintendent who sustains a higher than usual involvement in the district's instructional program (p. 146).

Additionally, Blumberg (1985) studied 25 superintendents from different size districts. His study resulted in the book entitled, *The School Superintendent: Living with Conflict*. Blumberg identified three primary roles of the superintendent: leader, politician, and teacher. Related findings were also recorded by Theodore J. Kowalski (1995) who documented the study of 17 urban superintendents and explored the conditions surrounding them. Kowalski reported three primary roles that emerged from the research: skilled politician, effective manager, and scholar.

A University of Texas doctoral dissertation, "The Roles of the Superintendent in Creating a Community Climate for Educational Improvement," written by Jane C. Owen (1997), revealed that the superintendent performed three roles when working with the local community: political leader, educational leader, and managerial leader (p. viii). Owen suggested that the superintendent's political leadership role was implemented through three primary acts: building coalitions, negotiating agreements, and forcing concessions (p. 163). The political leadership role was most visible to the stakeholders.

The last third of the 20th century saw major shifts in expectations for schools and those who led them. America had for decades paid lip service to the dual requisites of equity and excellence. As the 21st century approached, the goal

of access and opportunity for schooling clearly had been reached (Houston, 2007). There was a place at the table for everyone, including those who were able and those who were not, those who spoke English and those who did not, and those who belonged to the majority culture and those who did not.

However, the issue of high levels of achievement for all remained unfulfilled. Beginning in 1983 with the publication of *A Nation at Risk*, a wave of reports emerged that focused on the need for school reform and higher standards and expectations for excellence in education. As a result of this seminal report, education and the superintendency became politicized; state and national policymakers suddenly focused on large scale educational reforms meant “to improve the quality (or ‘excellence’) of schools” rather than on equality of educational opportunity (Wirt & Kirst, 1982). Educators at all levels were to focus on “setting higher standards; strengthening the curriculum in core subjects; increasing homework, time for learning, and time in school; more rigorous grading, testing, homework, and discipline; increasing productivity and excellence; and providing more choices regarding education” (Carter & Cunningham, 1997, p. 28).

In 2002, those who were dissatisfied with the progress schools had made on the equity front joined with those who were dissatisfied with the progress toward excellence. The result was a landmark piece of legislation from Congress that became known as No Child Left Behind Act, 2002). The federal law set rules for schools in many areas – from dictating the accountability system, to requiring

schools to hire only highly qualified teachers, to mandating that schools provide military recruiters with student information that had previously been considered confidential (Houston, 2007). After NCLB was enacted, the traditional relationship between the states and the federal government changed dramatically; now the federal government set the rules and mandates that all states comply (Houston). As the twentieth century came to an end once again the literature highlighted new and emerging roles of the superintendent and the role of the modern superintendent began to take shape.

The Emerging Role of the Superintendent

Section two discusses the emerging role of the superintendent as a leader who could be described as a generalist, expected to be involved, somewhat equally, in all aspects of running the school, without particular attention given to such areas of instruction and student achievement (Brunner et al., 2002). Again, while not exhaustive, this portion of the literature review suggests that the superintendent's role has shifted from one of overseer to one of being involved with many aspects related to leading a complex organization.

Soon after the position's or the job's inception, the school superintendent became a general kind of executive leader faced with a myriad of responsibilities. Superintendents today must be communicators, collaborators, consensus creators, community builders, child advocates, champions of curriculum and masters of teaching for learning. At the same time they are expected to carry out mandates for the policymakers, and appease the business community by

managing school districts as if they were conglomerates. School leaders today must also be nimble enough to respond effectively to these varied pressures while staying focused on the crucial mission of improving student learning (Houston, 2007). As chief executive of the school board, the superintendent is expected to remain the efficient manager and relate effectively to the board, secure adequate funding, maintain district facilities, relate well to the community, secure and develop highly effective educators, and improve educational opportunities for all students (Cuban, 1988; Willower & Fraser, 1980; Wolf, 1988).

Most observers of the daily operation of American schools would agree that the superintendent is central in the operation and administration of these institutions. This observation is based primarily on theory and expectation rather than on clear empirical evidence. However, few regard the superintendent as the instructional leader of the school system (Björk, 2000). Although studies and research on how well modern superintendents are meeting the demands and expectations of their role are somewhat limited, they exist. A limited number of studies analyze role conflict and role ambiguity as related to job performance and job satisfaction (Bacharach & Mitchell, 1983; Blumberg, 1985; Caldwell & Forney, 1982), some investigate the effects of management and leadership style on effectiveness (Barracough, 1973; Gilliam 1986; Johnson, 1986; Ortiz, 1987; Southard, 1985), and still others examine role behavior (Duignan, 1980; Pitner & Ogawa, 1981; Willower & Fraser, 1980). A California study by Murphy and

Hallinger (1986), of 12 superintendents in carefully defined instructionally effective school districts concluded that these superintendents were successful instructional leaders because they controlled the development of goals both at district and school levels, were influential in the selection of staff, supervised, mentored, and evaluated principals, and they were more likely to fire principals who performed poorly. Together with other central office staffers, superintendents were active in establishing and monitoring a district-wide instruction and curriculum focus. Superintendents in these school districts were knowledgeable about curriculum and teaching strategies, and they were key initiators of changes in these areas. These districts were clearer in their goals and more willing to decide what would be taught and what would constitute evidence of performance. On the other hand, these successful districts were also more willing to let the schools decide how to carry out an instructional plan, and, despite strong leadership, they were less bureaucratic than their counterparts. They tended to rely more on core values, which typically focused on improvement of student learning.

It follows, then, that superintendents who set out to transform their school districts are faced with what Fullan (2007) calls “the essential dilemma” of large-scale school reform. Effective leaders neither impose tight leadership – forcing a new regimen and demanding strict adherence from direction that has been established from the top, or loose leadership – that encourages those within the organization to pursue their own independent interests and initiatives.

Fullan (2005) believes that sound leadership at the district level adds value to an education system. When it comes to leadership, each level above helps or hinders (it is rarely neutral). Just as the student is affected by the climate in the classroom, the teacher is affected by the culture of the school and the school, in turn, is affected by the culture of the district. It is possible for a school to become highly collaborative despite the district that it is in, but it is difficult to sustain high levels of collaboration in these circumstances. The superintendent's leadership role in the district can foster continuous improvement of schools or it can take a toll on continuity through neglect or misguided policy actions.

Fullan acknowledges that the principles of site-based management still apply (greater empowerment at the school level, more control over budget, and acceptance of accountability) but identifies two core reasons why the expanding role of district leadership is essential. First, decentralized schools will have variable capacities to engage in continuous improvement, and therefore some agency has to be responsible for helping develop capacity and for intervening (with a goal to developing capacity) when performance is low. After exploring the question of loose versus tight leadership throughout his distinguished career, Fullan (2007) concludes that neither strategy works. He writes...

Top-down change doesn't work because it fails to garner ownership, commitment, or even clarity about the nature of reform. Bottom-up change—so-called let a thousand flowers bloom—does not produce

success on any scale. A thousand flowers do not bloom and those that do are not perennial” (p. 11).

The second reason for the expanding role of district leadership is even more fundamental for success and sustainability: systems and processes can't be changed without lateral (cross-school and cross-district) sharing and capacity development (Fullan, 2005). As the position of the superintendency continues to expand, it is very much the superintendent's role to help make the latter happen. District leadership is linked to successful reform (Marzano et al., 2005).

Deep district reform requires superintendents who understand the direction in which the district needs to go and are strategic about how to get there. As superintendents pursue the depth of change they must build a coalition of leaders. The challenge for district leaders is not merely to become skillful in the change process per se. The challenge facing superintendents is to become skilled in the improvement process – a challenge they can only meet if they can sustain a collective focus on a few issues that matter over an extended period of time (DuFour, Eaker, & DuFour, 2008). Change sticks only when it is firmly entrenched in the school or organization's culture, as part of “the way we do business around here.” As Kotter (1996) concludes, “Until new behaviors are rooted in social norms and shared values, they are always subject to degradation as soon as the pressures associated with a change effort are removed”.

In *Change Forces: Probing the Depths of Educational Reform*, Michael Fullan (1993) focused on the expansive process of change and leadership for

change. He argues that educational leaders striving for reform “are fighting a battle that is not winnable given that the system has a propensity to continually seek change but is inherently averse to it.” Although Fullan (2002) offers no simple solution to this dilemma, he suggests viewing problems as opportunities, realizing that change cannot be mandated, ensuring that individualism and collective efficacy have equal power, and designing schools to be learning communities. An important hat that has emerged is that of superintendent as teacher, learner, and collaborator focused on student achievement.

Multiple studies on the superintendent as a generalist include a common thread of the superintendent’s role in curriculum and instruction. While the language of these studies varies, this common theme indicates an early mandate for the superintendent to at least pay attention to student achievement from the district level. No longer can superintendents operate solely as generalists, giving equal time and commitment to the varied and important roles. To excel in the superintendency and be considered an effective leader, the superintendent is faced with no choice but to create district leadership focused on student achievement.

The Superintendent as an Agent for Improved Student Achievement

In this section, the superintendent’s role in impacting district wide student achievement is addressed in greater detail. This section of the literature review attempts to address the superintendent’s role in district wide student achievement in a thorough manner. While little has been written specifically on

the superintendent's role in improving student achievement, this literature review deals with authors who have inferred this role as an important one for the superintendent. While the authors often do not specify the superintendent's role in student achievement, this section reports authors' findings which identify related roles that align with or infer a role for the superintendent in affecting student achievement.

The superintendent's role as leader continues to expand as it pertains to promoting instructional leadership. The importance of understanding effective practices in curriculum, instruction, and assessment and the ability to stay focused on the day to day challenges related to these topics are essential for increasing student academic success (Elmore, 2000; Marzano et al., 2005). Because the knowledge base one must have to provide guidance on curriculum, instruction, and assessment is vast, Elmore's solution is an organization that distributes the responsibility for leadership. In short, Elmore calls for the use of distributed models of leadership and collaboration where collective work is the norm and isolation the exception.

Brown and Hunter's (1986) Model of Instructional Leadership for Superintendents, focuses interpersonal attention on collaboration and organizational attention and resources on teaching and learning. This process reduces role ambiguities among district administrators, principals, assistant principals, and teachers. It also provides positive socialization of administrators and teacher leaders into the roles desired by the superintendent. Additionally,

this model of managing managers encourages leadership and builds capacity from within the organization.

In order for superintendents to promote an instructional focus and develop capacity they must pay careful attention to systematic and strategic planning that accentuates teaching and learning, including goal setting and goal monitoring. There are many factors which underscore the importance of establishing goal oriented school districts. First, schools are institutions (Wirt & Kirst, 1982) with many expectations, needs, and wants. This condition often creates intense competition over limited resources available to finance education and unfortunately results in many unmet needs and fragmented purposes within the school district. Second, employees must understand and clarify their roles in order to maintain effectiveness and professional integrity. Third, crucial determinations, such as whether or not to offer a specialized course to high school students, require the thoughtful consideration of the district's professional staff. Fourth, according to Brown and Hunter (1986), the primary mission of a school system is the cognitive/academic development of its students. The authors maintain that everyone should be clear on this basic objective. This responsibility can best be executed when the superintendent and board of education interact together in a clearly defined process of goal formulation.

Having clear and concise goals is important but it is equally important that systemic planning and monitoring occur in order to ensure that the goals are met. Therefore, an instructional leadership design that supports teaching and learning

must be developed and implemented. Knowing that improved student learning happens as a result of the relationship between the teacher and the student, increasing teachers' knowledge and application of research-based practices that impact student learning must be a focus. Clearly defining the role of the superintendent as instructional leader focuses the district by eliminating the ambiguity of staff roles at all levels of the organization.

In their review of contemporary literature on leadership, Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach (1999), and Marzano et al. (2005) report that instructional leadership is one of the most frequently mentioned educational leadership concepts in North America. An explanation of instructional leadership that has attained a high level of visibility is that described by Smith and Andrews (1989). Smith and Andrews identify four dimensions of an instructional leader: resource provider, instructional resource, communicator, and visible presence. As resource provider, materials, facilities, budget, and personnel are provided to adequately perform duties. As an instructional resource, leadership actively supports day-to-day instructional activities and programs by modeling desired behaviors, participating in professional development, and consistently giving priority to instructional concerns. As communicator, clear goals are articulated. Lastly, a visible presence occurs through frequent school visits, classroom observations, community involvement, and easy accessibility to faculty and staff (Leithwood et al., 1999; & Marzano et al., 2005).

The superintendent as chief school executive of the school district is expected to spend the vast majority of time interacting with board members and district personnel, addressing various business management issues, relating to the community, and bringing about broad improvements in teaching and learning. The superintendent, on a day to day basis, has responsibility for these and all other matters that are part of the school district's operation.

Research has demonstrated that the role and influence of the superintendent in successful school districts is significant. Like other organizations, school districts require strong leadership in order to achieve organizational goals (Hart & Ogawa, 1987). Joseph Murphy and Philip Hallinger (1986) found in their comprehensive study of effective school districts that superintendents were indeed able to exert a significant degree of influence over the ability of the organization to achieve its goals.

One of the more significant distinctions common to effective superintendents studied by Murphy and Hallinger (1986) is their instructional focus. These superintendents demonstrate by their dialogue and action, their belief that student learning and quality instructional practices are the most important functions of schooling. Additionally, this study revealed that effective superintendents actively monitor the implementation of the curriculum and best instructional practices. They also note that these superintendents work very closely in the supervision, support, and evaluation of the campus principals.

It has been demonstrated that effective superintendents greatly enhance the instructional effectiveness of a school district through the establishment of organizational structures that are tightly coupled in the areas of curriculum and instruction (Murphy & Halinger 1986). Coleman and LaRoque (1990) in their study of high performing schools, found similar evidence of a strong district presence and coordination, particularly in the areas of curriculum and instruction. Superintendents are able to achieve this tightly coupled system, so indicative of effective school districts, through collaborative development, implementation, and support of district-wide goals and through the frequent articulation of these goals (DuFour et al., 2008).

Senge (1990), a business writer, refers to one of the greatest paradoxes of leadership in the learning organization. He indicates that leadership in learning organizations is both “collective and highly individual” (p. 360). When establishing goals for the organization, it is critical that adequate attention be given to the goals of each individual in the organization. Effective leaders build into their organizational cultures support for the critical organizational functions as well as support for the critical work needs of the individuals within the organization (Sashkin & Burke, 1990). Fullan and Miles (1992) state that:

to achieve collective power, we must develop personal power and assure that it is aligned with a shared vision for an ideal school (workplace).
Effective work cultures will encourage their employees to develop themselves fully, assume ownership, and accept responsibility, to apply

their full ability and skill, and to see that schools achieve greatness (p. 748).

In the effective organization, alignment exists between the needs of the organization and the needs of each individual within the organization.

One of the most significant functions of the superintendent is to establish and to nurture an organizational culture that supports and sustains the vision of the organization and the goals of each individual within the organization (Hart & Ogawa, 1987; Norton et al., 1996). Most experts agree that leadership can play a role in the creation and management of an organization's culture. "The bottom line for leaders is that if they do not become conscious of the culture in which they are embedded, those cultures will manage them. Cultural understanding is desirable for all of us, but it is essential to leaders if they are to lead" (Schein, 1996). Sashkin and Burke (1990) indicate that one of the most important functions of a leader is to understand existing culture and then to construct, modify, and manage culture so that it is consistent with organizational goals.

Despite the existence of such studies and the writings of many acknowledged experts in the field of educational administration, it appears that there remains a limited base of research on the effects of superintendents' leadership behaviors on instructional performance of school districts. In 2006 the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) consortium conducted a comprehensive study of the superintendency. This study, the Meta-analysis of Effective School Leaders, specifically investigated the influence of

school district leaders on student performance and determined the characteristics of effective schools, leaders, and teachers. Findings from 27 studies conducted since 1970 that used rigorous, quantitative methods to study the influence of school district leaders on student achievement were examined. Altogether, these studies involved 2,817 districts and the achievement scores of 3.4 million students, resulting in what McREL researchers believe to be the largest-ever quantitative examination of research on superintendents. The purpose of the Meta-analysis of Effective School Leaders focused on the effective professional practice of the superintendent as it relates to student performance. Specifically it was a meta-analysis - a sophisticated research technique that combined data from separate studies into a single sample of research. This study led to four major findings from which five district leadership responsibilities were generated (Waters & Marzano, 2006).

In their working paper called *School District Leadership that Works: The Effect of Superintendent Leadership on Student Achievement*, (Meta-analysis of Effective School Leaders) Waters and Marzano (2006) generate four major findings. These findings are: (1) District-level leadership matters, (2) Effective superintendents focus their efforts on creating goal-oriented districts, (3) Superintendent tenure is positively correlated with student achievement, and (4) Defined autonomy. The fourth finding, described as “surprising and perplexing” indicated that an increase in building autonomy had a positive association with average student achievement in the district. According to McREL, this finding

seems contradictory. One study reported that building autonomy has a positive correlation of .28 with average student achievement in the district, indicating that an increase in building autonomy is associated with an increase in student achievement. Interestingly, the same study reported that site-based management had a negative correlation with student achievement of -.16, indicating that an increase in site-based management is associated with a decrease in student achievement. Researchers concluded from this finding that effective superintendents may provide principals with “defined autonomy.” That is, they may set clear, non-negotiable goals for learning and instruction, yet provide school leadership teams with the responsibility and authority for determining how to meet those goals (Walters & Marzano). The superintendent provides defined autonomy to principals to lead their schools, but expects alignment on district goals and use of resources for professional development. DuFour et al. (2008), refer to loose and tight coupling as a strategy to balance leadership.

Length of Service Makes a Difference

A bonus feature of the McREL research found that superintendent tenure is positively correlated with student achievement. The length of superintendent tenure in a district positively correlates to student achievement. McREL found two studies that substantiate the correlations between superintendent tenure and student achievement. These positive effects appear to manifest themselves as early as two years into a superintendent’s tenure. The positive correlation between the length of superintendent service and student achievement affirm the

value of leadership stability and of a superintendent remaining in a district long enough to see the positive impact of his or her 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.

Chris Whittle, in his 2005 book *Crash Course*, contrasts CEO stability in major corporations with superintendent stability in large urban school districts. (see Tables 2 and 3). The corporations listed in Table 3 are generally acknowledged as among the most successful in the world (Waters & Marzano, 2006). Over the last 20 years, Kansas City, Mo., has had 14 superintendents, yielding an average tenure of 1.4 years. Washington, DC, has had nine superintendents over that time for an average tenure of 2.2 years. During the same time frame, General Electric was run by two CEOs. Federal Express, Microsoft, Dell had one chief executive each. Whittle, who founded the Edison Schools, asserts that CEO stability at the corporate level accounts for a large measure of their success. He argues that the instability of superintendent leadership accounts for much of the low student achievement found in too many school districts. If the stability of superintendents were to approximate the stability of CEO leadership, he claims, school districts likely would experience greater success, assuming superintendents focus on the right priorities and skillfully fulfill their responsibilities. The McREL finding aligns with Whittle's conclusion.

Table 2

Superintendent Stability in Selected Urban Districts

City	Number of Superintendents in past 20 years	Average tenure (Years)
Kansas City	14	1.4
Washington, DC	9	2.2
New York City	8	2.5

Table 3

CEO Stability in Selected Corporations

Corporation	Number of CEOs in past 20 years	Average tenure (Years)
General Electric	2	11
Federal Express	1	35
Microsoft	1	30
Dell	1	21

The findings by Waters and Marzano support the beliefs of others, that student's academic improvement does not happen by chance but rather through effective leaders devoting ample time to implement broad, sustainable reform (Fullan, 2002). While the superintendent is one step removed from the students, by supporting school-level leadership to make the difference within their schools, the superintendent is assuming ultimate responsibility for the success or failure of student performance in their district. In addition to their managerial skills, by assuming this responsibility, superintendents must have, the knowledge and skills to augment instructional methods in those they lead along with the expertise to interpret assessment data to hold accountable and explain their district's achievement level compared to others in the state and nation (Hoyle et al., 2005). Beyond specific behaviors of the superintendent, persistence in the job matters as well.

Superintendent Leadership Matters

The McREL research identified factors in addition to superintendent tenure that were positively correlated with student achievement. Finding 2 generated five district-level leadership responsibilities related to setting and keeping districts focused on teaching and learning goals and that have a statistically significant correlation with average student academic achievement. They are: (1) collaborative goal-setting, (2) non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction, (3) board alignment with and support of district goals, (4) monitoring achievement and instructional goals, (5) use of resources to support the goals for

instruction. A summary of each of these five leadership responsibilities is described below.

According to the authors “collaborative goal-setting” must encompass all relevant stakeholders, including central office staff, building level administrators, and board members to establish district goals. Major findings from the Meta-analysis of Effective School Leaders study identify leadership responsibilities and practices that superintendents and executive/district office staff use to fulfill superintendent responsibilities (see Table 1). Effective superintendents focus their efforts on creating goal-oriented districts (Moon & Galvin, 2007; Waters & Marzano, 2006). The superintendent involves all relevant stakeholders, including central office staff, building level administrators, and board members, in establishing non-negotiable goals for their school districts. In particular, they ensure that building level administrators and teacher leaders throughout the district are heavily involved in the goal-setting process since these are the individuals who, for all practical purposes, will implement articulated goals in schools. Involving principals, school improvement team members, and school board members in the goal-setting process does not imply that consensus must be reached among these stakeholders. However, it does imply that once stakeholders reach an acceptable level of agreement regarding district goals, all stakeholders agree to support the attainment of those goals (Moon & Galvin; Waters & Marzano).

Effective superintendents ensure that the collaborative goal-setting process results in non-negotiable goals (i.e., goals that all staff members must act upon) in at least two areas: student achievement and classroom instruction (Waters & Marzano, 2006). This means that the district sets specific achievement targets for the system as a whole. Goals should be strategic and specific, measurable, attainable, results oriented, and time-bound (DuFour et al., 2007). Once agreed upon, the achievement goals are enacted in every school. All staff members are aware of the goals and an improvement plan is created for those goals (Moon & Galvin, 2007; Waters & Marzano). This does not mean that the district establishes a single instructional model that all teachers must employ. However, it does mean that the district adopts a broad but common framework for classroom instructional design and planning, common instructional language or vocabulary, and consistent use of research-based instructional strategies in each school (Moon & Galvin; Waters & Marzano). Another characteristic of this responsibility is that all principals support the goals explicitly and implicitly (Waters & Marzano). Explicit support means that school leaders engage in the behaviors described above. Implicit support means that building level administrators do nothing to subvert the accomplishment of those goals.

The researchers found that “school board alignment with and support for the district goals” is vital to ensure that these goals remain the top priorities in the district and that no other initiatives detract attention or resources from accomplishing these goals. Although other initiatives might be undertaken, none

can detract attention or resources from the two primary goals of student achievement and classroom instruction. In districts with higher levels of student achievement, the local board of education is aligned with and supportive of the non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction (Moon & Galvin, 2007; Waters & Marzano, 2006). Publicly adopting broad five year goals for achievement and instruction and consistently supporting these goals, both publicly and privately, are examples of board-level actions that McREL researchers have found to be positively correlated with student achievement (Waters & Marzano).

“Monitoring achievement and instruction” must occur on a continual basis to observe progress toward achievement and instructional goals and to ensure that these goals remain the driving force behind a district’s actions. When goals are consistently monitored, it communicates to all stakeholders their importance. Effective superintendents continually monitor district progress toward achievement and instructional goals to ensure that these goals remain the driving force behind a district’s actions. If not monitored continually, district goals can become little more than terse refrains that are spoken at district and school events and highlighted in written reports. Waters and Marzano report that effective superintendents ensure that each school regularly examines the extent to which it is meeting achievement targets.

“Use of resources to support the goals for instruction and achievement” must be allocated and deployed at the school level and utilized in ways that align

schools with district goals. Districts will benefit from effective resource allocation such as state and federal grant programs which are consistent with district goals. Flexibility with resources will greatly facilitate local reform because funding could be more easily applied and combined to meet student achievement and classroom instruction needs. Superintendents of high performing school districts ensure that the necessary resources, including time, money, personnel, and materials, are allocated to accomplish the district's goals. McREL's research does not answer questions about the level of resources school districts must commit to supporting district achievement and instructional goals. However, it is clear from the meta-analysis that a meaningful commitment of funding must be dedicated to professional development for teachers and principals (Moon & Galvin, 2007; Waters & Marzano, 2006). Furthermore, as professional development resources are deployed at the school level, they must be utilized in ways that align schools with district goals and focus on building capacity within the organization.

As the reader has seen throughout this section, the role of the superintendent, from its historical beginnings through its emerging, complex description, has consistently focused on improving student achievement. While such areas as operations, accountability, finance, public relations, etc., have been undeniably referenced as key areas as the superintendent's role has emerged, there has always been an emphasis on student achievement. At times the superintendent's role in student achievement is buried in a function described

as instructional leadership or high stakes testing or most recently professional learning communities. But it is undeniably a role the superintendent must fulfill. The Meta-analysis for Effective School Leaders research is significant in that this landmark study not only emphasizes the superintendent's role in student achievement but also identifies five district level leadership responsibilities of the superintendent which contribute to student achievement.

The purpose of this study is to focus on how North Carolina superintendents perceive the importance and employ the self-assessed practices of the five McREL district-level leadership responsibilities linked to student achievement as they relate to the superintendents' years of experience and the size of the school system. Waters and Marzano's (2006) most recent Meta-analysis of Effective School Leaders says that district leadership makes a difference, affirming the long-held, but previously undocumented, belief that sound leadership at the district level adds value to an education system. However, these answers stand in stark contrast to the image of superintendents, school boards, and district office staff created by former Secretary of Education William Bennett, who characterized superintendents, district office staff, and school board members as part of the education "blob" (Bennett, Finn, & Cribb, 1999; Waters & Marzano, 2006). Bennett argued that the "blob" is made up of people in the education system who work outside of classrooms, soaking up resources and resisting reform without contributing to student achievement. For two decades, superintendents, district office personnel, and school board

members have worked to overcome the image of the “blob” created by William Bennett. Findings from the seminal study of Waters and Marzano, *A Meta-analysis of Effective School Leaders*, establish that a substantial and positive relationship exists between district-level leadership and instruction when the superintendent, district office staff, and school board members do the “right work” in the “right way”. These findings suggest that superintendents can contribute to school and student success when they are focused on fulfilling key leadership responsibilities described earlier in this study. McREL specifically states the positive correlations that appear between the length of superintendent service and student achievement confirming the value of leadership stability. As a result superintendents should note the importance of remaining in a school district long enough to see the positive impact of their leadership.

As documented in the review of the current literature, despite the existence of some studies and the writings of many acknowledged experts in the field of educational administration, it appears there remains limited research on the effects of superintendent leadership behaviors on instructional performance in schools. In this study, data on how North Carolina superintendents perceived the importance and their practice of the five McREL leadership responsibilities as they relate to the superintendents’ years of experience and the size of the school system are analyzed. The researcher involved created a Likert Scale of “degree of use” of these five responsibilities by North Carolina superintendents.

Descriptive techniques designed to summarize data from the self-reported responses from superintendents are reported.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES AND PROCEDURES

Introduction

This chapter presents a description of the methodology and the data collection procedures employed for this study. After reviewing the literature that redefined the role of the superintendent and specifically the results of the McREL study, the purpose of this research focused on North Carolina superintendents' perceptions of the importance of the five McREL district-level leadership responsibilities linked to student achievement along with their perceptions of how often they practice these responsibilities as they relate to the superintendents' years of experience and the student population (size) of the school system.

This descriptive study generates findings on perceptions of the importance and practice of the five responsibilities as they relate to years of experience and size of district, as well as identifies areas for further research. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the results of a survey. Descriptive analysis is a statistical technique that permits researchers to identify variables or attributes that clearly discriminate two or more groups from others. The goal of descriptive analysis is to provide a quantitative specification of the important sensory aspects of a product, particularly dealing with perceptions. Descriptive analysis is based upon certain assumptions; according to Grimm and Yarnold (2001) these assumptions include: attributes connected with individual entities will be independent; a multivariate normal distribution is present; and, variance-covariance structures are equal across all groups. Variables in this study include

superintendent perceptions of importance and practice of the five McREL district-level leadership responsibilities linked to student achievement, superintendents' years of experience, and the size of the school system. For purposes of this research a descriptive comparative analysis was used to determine how some variables might be more or less significant than others, facilitating the researcher's ability to separate or identify specific factors. The researcher quantified responses to determine most prevalent and least prevalent for the overall survey and each of the individual variables (experience and size).

Key responsibilities under Finding 2 of the Meta-analysis for Effective School Leaders established the basis for the five essential questions for the survey instrument. The survey was generated by converting the five leadership responsibilities of Finding 2 from a statement format to a question format. An expert panel of educational leaders validated these questions. The three educational leaders included a distinguished university professor, a former university vice president and education dean, and a recently retired successful superintendent who also served as an educational advisor to the governor. The empirical evidence from the review of literature formed the basis for two additional questions requesting demographics of years of experience the superintendent has practiced and student population (school system size). Using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) the researcher created an excel spreadsheet which included a separate tab for each of the five questions, years of experience and district size.

Statement of the Problem

No longer can superintendents operate as generalists, giving equal time and commitment to the varied and important roles ranging from bus schedules, food services, district funding, community engagement, human resource development, and student success. Superintendents who are considered effective in today's world of high stakes accountability are those who create themselves as district leaders who are primarily focused on student achievement (Waters & Marzano, 2006).

To accomplish the growing national and state mandate for greater rigor, educational reform efforts designed to improve student academic performance have become a constant. With this continued emphasis on improved student academic performance, superintendents' roles have changed (or have been strongly urged to change) from predominately managers to instructional leaders (Peterson & Short, 2001). Consequently, today's superintendents must perform leadership tasks that support and facilitate a far more demanding instructional environment that improves student academic performance. The purpose of this study was to ascertain how current North Carolina superintendents have embraced the new level of expectations as measured by their self-rating of the McREL leadership responsibilities relative to (1) the superintendents' years of experience and (2) the student population of the school district (size). A survey was administered to determine the extent to which North Carolina superintendents rate the significance (perceptions of importance and practice) of

the five responsibilities as defined by Waters and Marzano. Findings suggest to what extent the five leadership responsibilities are important to North Carolina superintendents.

Research Questions and Rationale

The foundation of the Meta-analysis of Effective School Leaders working paper focused on key leadership responsibilities from Finding 2: Effective Superintendent Leadership Responsibilities. Five responsibilities were identified and served as the basis for the survey questions. The researcher further identified three variables upon which to focus: superintendent perceptions of importance and practice of the five McREL district-level leadership responsibilities linked to student achievement, length of superintendent service and student population of the school district (size). Waters and Marzano (2006) noted a positive relationship between length of superintendent service and student achievement. The authors highlight the value of leadership stability as it pertains to district level student achievement. Districts where stable leadership was evident tended to demonstrate positive performance attributes compared to districts with frequent leadership turnover. While there were only two studies that examined the relationship between superintendent tenure and student achievement, they were both positively correlated. Likewise, student population (size) can greatly impact the role and responsibilities of superintendents. North Carolina school districts vary greatly in size and the size of the districts may

influence the superintendents' perceptions of how they view the leadership responsibilities.

The empirical evidence available from the research served as the basis for the research questions below:

1. What are North Carolina superintendents' self-reported perceptions of the importance of McREL's five leadership responsibilities in their district leadership?
2. What are North Carolina superintendents' self-reported perceptions of their practice of McREL's five leadership responsibilities in their district leadership?
3. Is there a relationship between a superintendent's years of experience and self-reported perceptions of the importance and their practice of McREL's five leadership responsibilities?
4. Is there a relationship between the size of the district (student population) and superintendents' self-reported perceptions of the importance and their practice of McREL's five leadership responsibilities?

Research Design

Trochim (2006) stated that the research design is thought of as the structure of the research project. It is the substance that holds the research project together and allows one to show how all of the major parts of the research--participants, treatments, measures, and methods of assignment--work

together to address the research question or questions. There are many types of research designs available to investigators which assist the researcher in answering research questions.

The research design best suited for this study was a non-experimental design. Non-experimental research designs do not use random assignment of subjects and there is not a control group or multiple measures. This study utilized the population, not a sample, of participants consisting of a one-shot survey using a single observation.

Participants

The participants identified for this study were the 114 public school superintendents currently serving as the superintendent representing those districts in North Carolina as of January 5, 2010. The superintendents were identified using the 2009-2010 North Carolina Public School Directory. Additionally, their email contact information was available through this directory as well.

Validation of the Survey Instrument

An expert panel of educational leaders was used to validate the survey questions. Three individuals were identified as experts in the field of educational leadership. The experts identified were a distinguished university professor, a former vice president for the University of North Carolina, a former dean of a school of education, and a recently retired successful superintendent who also served as an educational advisor to the governor. The experts were asked to rate

the questions to determine the extent of face validity. The experts determined that face validity existed among the survey questions.

Survey Instrument

The instrument used for data collection for this study was a self-reporting perception survey utilizing a four-point Likert scale. A Likert scale allows for self-reporting with individuals responding to a series of statements indicating the extent to which he or she agrees.

The survey was constructed using a four-point Likert scale, “Very Important,” “Important,” “Somewhat Important,” “Not Important,” to obtain participant responses regarding their perception of the level of importance of the McREL leadership responsibilities. “Always,” “Almost Always,” “Almost Never,” and “Never” were utilized to obtain participant responses regarding their perception of their level of practice of the McREL leadership responsibilities.

The survey was administered via the internet to all practicing North Carolina public school superintendents. The survey software used was Perseus.

The survey was distributed via email notification to all 114 superintendents in North Carolina on December 7, 2009. Potential participants were asked to respond within two weeks from the aforementioned date. At the end of the two week time period, 37 superintendents had responded to the survey. On December 22, 2009, a second email notification was sent to the potential participants as a reminder to respond to the survey within two weeks. At the end of that two week period, January 5, 2010, 51 superintendents had responded to

the survey. The survey link was closed on January 6, 2010; no additional reminders were distributed and no additional responses were collected.

Statistical Analysis

For this study, it was determined that descriptive statistics using cross tabulations was the best measure of results. Descriptive analysis is a statistical technique that permits researchers to identify variables or attributes that clearly discriminate two or more groups from others. The goal of descriptive analysis is to provide a quantitative specification of the important sensory aspects of a product, particularly dealing with perceptions. For purposes of this research, descriptive analysis was used to determine how some variables might be more or less significant than others, facilitating the researcher's ability to separate or identify specific factors.

This study utilized the quantitative statistical software program Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) to generate descriptive statistics to determine trends and relationships (if any) between variables. The intent of the study was to examine the trends and relationships between superintendents' perceptions of the importance and their practice of McREL's five leadership responsibilities and to determine if trends or relationships exist related to years of experience of a superintendent and size of the school district.

Perception data gained from the superintendent self assessment survey responses was used to address the research questions.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

This chapter is designed to present the analysis of data and the findings derived from the analysis. As stated in chapter 1, the purpose of this study was to focus on North Carolina superintendents' perceptions of the importance of the five McREL district-level leadership responsibilities along with their perceptions of how often they employ these practices. The five McREL district-level leadership responsibilities are:

1. Collaborative goal-setting must encompass all relevant stakeholders, including central office staff, building-level administrators, and board members, in establishing goals for the district.
2. Ensure the collaborative goal-setting process results in non- negotiable goals in at least two areas: Student achievement and classroom instruction and set specific achievement targets for schools and students.
3. Ensure that the Board of Education is aligned with and supportive of the non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction and that they maintain these goals as the primary focus of the district's efforts.
4. Continually monitor district progress toward achievement and instructional goals to ensure that these goals remain the driving force behind the district's actions
5. Ensure the necessary resources, including time, money, personnel, and materials are allocated to accomplish the district's goals.

Data analysis was conducted in relationship to the superintendents' years of experience and the student population (size) of the school system. As documented in the review of the current literature, despite the existence of such studies and the writings of many acknowledged experts in the field of educational administration, it appears there remains limited research on the effects of superintendent leadership behaviors on instructional performance in schools.

Data gathered through the survey were analyzed through a descriptive statistical model. Collected data on self-reported perceptions of the importance and practice of the five McREL leadership responsibilities were coded, summarized, and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS), a comprehensive and flexible statistical analysis and data management system. Using SPSS the researcher created cross tabs on perceptions of importance and practice, and school system size as well as superintendents' years of experience. Clusters were correlated with each other and represent factors, which were used by the researcher to explain variability.

The entire pool of survey respondents totaled 115 superintendents minus 1 superintendent (researcher) for a population of 114 superintendents. All 114 superintendents were surveyed. There were 51 responses after two attempts to invite participation. Tables 4 indicates the respondents' years of experience, and Table 5 indicates the superintendents' school system size. Table 6 shows connections between these two factors.

Table 4

Respondents' Years of Experience

Response	<i>f</i>	Percent
Not answered	01	1
Less than 3 years	12	24
3 years to 5 years	11	22
5 years to 10 years	13	26
10 years or more	14	28
Total	51	100

Note: The categories for years of experience were not clearly delineated in the survey and may have resulted in discrepancies as superintendents responded to this demographic question. Data are reported based on exact responses by superintendents.

Table 5

Respondents' School System Size

Response	<i>f</i>	Percent
Not answered	01	1
Less than 2,500	11	22
2,501 to 5,000	12	24
5,001 to 10,000	14	28
10,001 to 25,000	09	18
25,001 or more	04	08
Total	51	100

Table 6

Respondents' Years of Experience and School System Size

Yrs of experience	School system size	<i>f</i>	Percent
Not Answered		1	.001
Less than 3 years	Less than 2,500	5	10.2
	2,501 to 5,000	4	12.73
	5,001 to 10,000	1	.001
	10,001 to 25,000	2	.03
	25,001 or more	0	
3 years to 5 years	Less than 2,500	2	.03
	2,501 to 5,000	2	.03
	5,001 to 10,000	3	17.0
	10,001 to 25,000	2	.03
	25,001 ore more	2	.03
5 years to 10 years	Less than 2,500	1	.001
	2,501 to 5,000	5	10.2
	5,001 to 10,000	5	10.2
	10,001 to 25,000	1	.001
	25,001 or more	1	.001
10 years or more	Less than 2,500	3	17.0
	2,501 to 5,000	1	.001
	5,001 to 10,000	5	10.2
	10,001 to 25,000	4	12.73
	25,001 or more	1	.001
Total		51	100

Table 4 indicates a relatively even distribution by years of experience with approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ of the superintendents falling in each category. While there was no attempt to even distribution in the research design, this distribution is helpful in certain generalizations.

While not evenly distributed by school system size, Table 5 indicates a fairly even distribution in 4 of the 5 categories. The smallest number of participants fall in the over 25,000 student school system size; this may limit certain generalizations.

Table 6 indicates a relatively mixed distribution when comparing superintendents across years of experience and school system size. The highest number of superintendents in any category was 5.

Tables 7 through 11, displayed below indicate the superintendents' perceptions of the importance of each of the five McREL district-level leadership responsibilities. These tables separate superintendent responses by superintendent years of experience. While respondents were given the choices of Very Important, Important, Somewhat Important, or Not Important, no superintendent marked Not Important and the Somewhat Important response was used only for one of the five McREL district-level leadership responsibilities – non-negotiable goals (Responsibility 2). And in this case, only one superintendent felt it was Somewhat Important. Of the responding superintendents, 3.9% submitted a response without answering the question as illustrated in the following tables. This anomaly may exist due to Perseus (the

Table 7

Superintendent Years of Experience and Perceived Importance of Responsibility 1: Collaborative Goal-Setting

		Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Not Answered
Not Answered	Count	0	0	0	0	1
	% within	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%
Less than 3 years	Count	10	2	0	0	0
	% within	83.3%	16.7%	.0%	.0%	.0%
3 to 5 years	Count	9	1	0	0	1
	% within	81.8%	9.1%	.0%	.0%	9.1%
5 to 10 years	Count	11	1	0	0	1
	% within	84.6%	7.7%	.0%	.0%	7.7%
10 years or more	Count	13	1	0	0	0
	% within	92.9%	7.1%	.0%	.0%	.0%
Total	Count	43	5	0	0	3
	% within	84.3%	9.8%	.0%	.0%	5.9%

Note. Collaborative goal-setting must encompass all relevant stakeholders, including central office staff, building-level administrators, and board members, in establishing goals for district.

Table 8

Superintendent Years of Experience and Perceived Importance of Responsibility 2: Non-Negotiable Goals for Achievement and Instruction

		Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Not Answered
Not Answered	Count	0	0	0	0	1
	% within	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%
Less than 3 years	Count	10	2	0	0	0
	% within	83.3%	16.7%	.0%	.0%	.0%
3 to 5 years	Count	9	0	1	0	1
	% within	81.8%	.0%	9.1%	.0%	9.1%
5 to 10 years	Count	12	0	0	0	1
	% within	92.3%	.0%	.0%	.0%	7.7%
10 years or more	Count	12	2	0	0	0
	% within	85.7%	14.3%	.0%	.0%	.0%
Total	Count	43	4	1	0	3
	% within	84.3%	7.8%	2.0%	.0%	5.9%

Note. Ensure the collaborative goal-setting process results in non-negotiable goals in at least two areas: Student achievement and classroom instruction and set specific achievement targets for schools and students.

Table 9

Superintendent Years of Experience and Perceived Importance of Responsibility 3: Board Alignment with and Support of District Goals

		Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Not Answered
Not Answered	Count	0	0	0	0	1
	% within	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%
Less than 3 years	Count	10	2	0	0	0
	% within	83.3%	16.7%	.0%	.0%	.0%
3 to 5 years	Count	6	4	0	0	1
	% within	54.5%	36.4%	.0%	.0%	9.1%
5 to 10 years	Count	8	4	0	0	1
	% within	61.5%	30.8%	.0%	.0%	7.7%
10 years or more	Count	11	3	0	0	0
	% within	78.6%	21.4%	.0%	.0%	.0%
Total	Count	35	13	0	0	3
	% within	68.6%	25.5%	.0%	.0%	5.9%

Note. Ensure that the Board of Education is aligned with and supportive of the non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction and that these goals remain the primary focus of the district’s efforts.

Table 10

Superintendent Years of Experience and Perceived Importance of Responsibility 4: Monitoring Achievement and Instructional Goals

		Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Not Answered
Not Answered	Count	0	0	0	0	1
	% within	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%
Less than 3 years	Count	9	3	0	0	0
	% within	75.0%	25.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%
3 to 5 years	Count	10	0	0	0	1
	% within	90.9%	.0%	.0%	.0%	9.1%
5 to 10 years	Count	11	1	0	0	1
	% within	84.6%	7.7%	.0%	.0%	7.7%
10 years or more	Count	13	1	0	0	0
	% within	92.9%	7.1%	.0%	.0%	.0%
Total	Count	43	5	0	0	3
	% within	84.3%	9.8%	.0%	.0%	5.9%

Note. Continually monitor district progress toward achievement and instructional goals to ensure that these goals remain the driving force behind the district's actions.

Table 11

Superintendent Years of Experience and Perceived Importance of Responsibility 5: Use of Resources to Support Achievement and Instructional Goals

		Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Not Answered
Not Answered	Count	0	0	0	0	1
	% within	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%
Less than 3 years	Count	10	1	0	1	0
	% within	83.3%	8.3%	.0%	8.3%	.0%
3 to 5 years	Count	10	0	0	0	1
	% within	90.9%	.0%	.0%	.0%	9.1%
5 to 10 years	Count	12	0	0	0	1
	% within	92.3%	.0%	.0%	.0%	7.7%
10 years or more	Count	14	0	0	0	0
	% within	100.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%
Total	Count	46	1	0	1	3
	% within	90.1%	2.0%	.0%	2.0%	5.9%

Note. Ensure the necessary resources, including time, money, personnel, and materials are allocated to accomplish the district's goals.

survey program used) allowing participants to stop and start the survey without forcing responses before moving to the next item or section of the survey.

At least 70% of the superintendents rated all responsibilities as Very Important. Of the five McREL district-level leadership responsibilities, Responsibility 5 – use of resources, was perceived as most important.

Superintendents with less than 3 years experience consistently rated the McREL district-level leadership responsibilities as Very Important ranging from 75% to over 83%. Similarly, superintendents with 10 years or more experience rated the McREL district-level leadership responsibilities Very Important with a range slightly over 78% to 100%. Those superintendents falling in other years experience ranges had more variance in rating the McREL district-level leadership responsibilities as Very Important versus Important.

All superintendents responding indicated that Responsibility 1 – collaborative goal-setting was Important or Very Important (see Table 7). No one perceived this responsibility as Somewhat Important or Not Important. There is little variance in perceived importance of Responsibility 1 across the years of experience categories, with superintendents with 10 years or more indicating importance as slightly higher than the other 3 categories of fewer years of experience.

Consistently more than 80% of all superintendents responding perceived Responsibility 2 – non-negotiable goals as Very Important (see Table 8). Only

one of the responding superintendents marked Somewhat Important. There was little difference in responses by years of experience.

All superintendents responding perceived Responsibility 3 – board alignment as Very Important or Important (see Table 9). There was less consistency on Board of Education alignment as Very Important. Of those superintendents with 3-5 years experience responding, nearly half indicate Important versus Very Important. The groups with less than 3 years and more than 10 years of experience perceived this responsibility as Very Important.

At least 75% or more superintendents responding to responsibility 4 – monitoring achievement – selected Very Important (see Table 10). Also, there was little variance in the number of superintendent responses – Very Important across the years of experience. However, the superintendents with 10 or more years experience ratings indicated that they perceived this responsibility to be more important than the other groups, but especially more important than the Less than 3 Year Experience group.

More than 80% of superintendents responding to Responsibility 5 – use of resources –perceived it as being Very Important. Only one respondent perceived this responsibility as Not Important (see Table 11). This respondent had less than 3 years experience. An overwhelming majority of responding superintendents indicated that they perceived ensuring and allocating resources as being Very Important.

Tables 12 through 16, displayed below indicate superintendent perception of practice on each of the five McREL district-level leadership responsibilities. These tables separate superintendent responses by superintendent years of experience.

There is variance among superintendent perceived practice of the five McREL district-level leadership responsibilities with as few as 40% indicating they always practice Board of Education alignment (Responsibility 3) and a high of 72% practicing continually monitoring achievement (Responsibility 4).

Superintendents with more than 10 years experience consistently perceived that they always practice the five McREL district-level leadership responsibilities at least 50% of the time. All thirteen superintendents with more than 10 years experience (one of the fourteen superintendents in this category did not answer) indicated they Almost Always or Always practice these responsibilities. No other category of superintendent years experience (no superintendents with less than 10 years experience) perceived that they Always practice all five McREL district-level leadership responsibilities.

Less than 65% of responding superintendents indicate a perception of Always Practicing Responsibility 1 – collaborative goal-setting (see Table 12). There is little variance among responses Almost Always across years of superintendent experience, with the exception of 63.6% of superintendents with 3 to 5 years experience indicating they Almost Always include relevant stakeholders in establishing district goals.

Table 12

Superintendent Years of Experience and Perceived Practice of Responsibility 1: Collaborative Goal-Setting

		Always	Almost Always	Almost Never	Never	Not Answered
Not Answered	Count	0	0	0	0	1
	% within	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
Less than 3 years	Count	6	5	1	0	0
	% within	50.0%	41.7%	8.3%	.0%	.0%
3 to 5 years	Count	3	7	1	0	0
	% within	27.3%	63.6%	9.1%	.0%	.0%
5 to 10 years	Count	8	4	0	0	1
	% within	61.5%	30.8%	.0%	.0%	7.7%
10 years or more	Count	9	4	0	0	1
	% within	64.3%	28.6%	.0%	.0%	7.1%
Total	Count	26	20	2	0	3
	% within	51.0%	39.2%	3.9%	.0%	5.9%

Note. Collaborative goal-setting must encompass all relevant stakeholders, including central office staff, building-level administrators, and board members, in establishing goals for district.

Table 13

Superintendent Years of Experience and Perceived Practice of Responsibility 2: Non-Negotiable Goals for Achievement and Instruction

		Always	Almost Always	Almost Never	Never	Not Answered
Not Answered	Count	0	0	0	0	1
	% within	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
Less than 3 years	Count	9	3	0	0	0
	% within	75.0%	25.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%
3 to 5 years	Count	6	4	1	0	0
	% within	54.5%	36.4%	9.1%	.0%	.0%
5 to 10 years	Count	10	2	0	0	1
	% within	76.9%	15.4%	.0%	.0%	7.7%
10 years or more	Count	8	5	0	0	1
	% within	57.1%	35.7%	.0%	.0%	7.1%
Total	Count	33	14	1	0	3
	% within	64.7%	27.4%	2.0%	.0%	5.9%

Note. Ensure the collaborative goal-setting process results in non-negotiable goals in at least two areas: Student achievement and classroom instruction and set specific achievement targets for schools and students.

Table 14

Superintendent Years of Experience and Perceived Practice of Responsibility 3: Board Alignment with and Support of District Goals

		Always	Almost Always	Almost Never	Never	Not Answered
Not Answered	Count	0	0	0	0	1
	% within	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
Less than 3 years	Count	3	9	0	0	0
	% within	25.0%	75.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%
3 to 5 years	Count	4	5	2	0	0
	% within	36.4%	45.5%	18.2%	.0%	.0%
5 to 10 years	Count	5	5	2	0	1
	% within	38.5%	38.5%	15.4%	.0%	7.7%
10 years or more	Count	7	6	0	0	1
	% within	50.0%	42.9%	.0%	.0%	7.1%
Total	Count	19	25	4	0	3
	% within	37.3%	49.0%	7.8%	.0%	5.9%

Note. Ensure that the Board of Education is aligned with and supportive of the non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction and that these goals remain the primary focus of the district's efforts.

Table 15

Superintendent Years of Experience and Perceived Practice of Responsibility 4: Monitoring Achievement and Instructional Goals

		Always	Almost Always	Almost Never	Never	Not Answered
Not Answered	Count	0	0	0	0	1
	% within	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
Less than 3 years	Count	9	3	0	0	0
	% within	75.0%	25.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%
3 to 5 years	Count	9	2	0	0	0
	% within	81.8%	18.2%	.0%	.0%	.0%
5 to 10 years	Count	9	3	0	0	1
	% within	69.2%	23.1%	.0%	.0%	7.7%
10 years or more	Count	9	4	0	0	1
	% within	64.3%	28.6%	.0%	.0%	7.1%
Total	Count	36	12	0	0	3
	% within	70.6%	23.5%	.0%	.0%	5.9%

Note. Continually monitor district progress toward achievement and instructional goals to ensure that these goals remain the driving force behind the district's actions.

Table 16

Superintendent Years of Experience and Perceived Practice of Responsibility 5: Use of Resources to Support Achievement and Instructional Goals

		Always	Almost Always	Almost Never	Never	Not Answered
Not Answered	Count	0	0	0	0	1
	% within	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
Less than 3 years	Count	7	5	0	0	0
	% within	58.3%	41.7%	.0%	.0%	.0%
3 to 5 years	Count	6	5	0	0	0
	% within	54.5%	45.5%	.0%	.0%	.0%
5 to 10 years	Count	8	5	0	0	0
	% within	61.5%	38.5%	.0%	.0%	.0%
10 years or more	Count	7	6	0	0	1
	% within	50.0%	42.9%	.0%	.0%	7.1%
Total	Count	28	21	0	0	2
	% within	54.9%	41.2%	.0%	.0%	3.9%

Note. Ensure the necessary resources, including time, money, personnel, and materials are allocated to accomplish the district's goals.

While greater than 90% of superintendents responded Almost Always/Always practicing Responsibility 2 – non-negotiable goals – a variance is evident between Almost Always and Always with some categories of years of experience (see Table 13). Within the Less than 3 years experience category, 75% of responding superintendents perceived themselves as Always practicing this, and 25% of respondents Almost Always practice Responsibility 2. Three-fourths of superintendents with 5 to 10 years experience indicate they Always practice ensuring non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction, while less than 20% perceived they Almost Always practice this responsibility.

The range of superintendents responding Almost Always/Always to their perceptions of practicing Responsibility 3 – board alignment – was consistent across experience levels (see Table 14). The exception of superintendents responding both Always and Almost Always occurs with superintendents with Less than 3 Years experience, with 75% of superintendents reporting Almost Always practicing Responsibility 3.

Over 80% of superintendents with 3 to 5 Years experience responded they Always practice district level leadership Responsibility 4 – monitoring achievement (see Table 15). While all responding superintendents perceived that they practice this responsibility, the 3 to 5 years experience group marked highest that they Always practice it. Other groups had a high level of practice, with the lowest being 64% of those with more than 10 years experience.

Very consistent responses are reported for district Responsibility 5 – use of resource (see Table 16). While all responding superintendents practice ensuring necessary resources to support the goals of instruction, there is a relatively even split between Always and Almost Always practicing it.

Tables 17 through 21, displayed below indicate the level of importance superintendents place on each of the five McREL district-level leadership responsibilities. These tables separate superintendent responses by school system size. Of the responding superintendents, 3.9% submitted a response without answering the question as illustrated in the tables below. As stated earlier, this anomaly may exist due to Perseus (the survey program used) allowing participants to stop and start the survey without forcing responses before moving to the next item or section of the survey.

The greatest consistency in rating the importance of McREL’s district-level leadership responsibilities appears with superintendents in systems with 25,000 or more students. With the exception of 1 superintendent rating Responsibility 3 – board alignment – as Important, all 4 superintendents in this size system rated all responsibilities as Very Important.

All superintendents responding marked Responsibility 1 – collaborative goal-setting – as Very Important or Important (see Table 17). There is less consistency noted in the importance of collaborative goal-setting within the category of 10,000 to 25,000 students, with 67% of superintendents from

Table 17

School System Size and Perceived Importance of Responsibility 1: Collaborative Goal-Setting

		Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Not Answered
Not Answered	Count	0	0	0	0	1
	% within	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
Less than 2,500	Count	10	1	0	0	0
	% within	90.9%	9.1%	.0%	.0%	.0%
2,500 to 5,000	Count	12	0	0	0	0
	% within	100.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%
5,001 to 10,000	Count	11	1	0	0	2
	% within	78.6%	7.1%	.0%	.0%	14.3%
10,001 to 25,000	Count	6	3	0	0	0
	% within	66.7%	33.3%	.0%	.0%	.0%
25,001 or more	Count	4	0	0	0	0
	% within	100.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%
Total	Count	43	5	0	0	3
	% within	84.3%	9.8%	.0%	.0%	5.9%

Note. Collaborative goal-setting must encompass all relevant stakeholders, including central office staff, building-level administrators, and board members, in establishing goals for district.

Table 18

School System Size and Perceived Importance of Responsibility 2: Non-Negotiable Goals for Achievement and Instruction

		Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Not Answered
Not Answered	Count	0	0	0	0	1
	% within	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
Less than 2,500	Count	10	0	1	0	0
	% within	90.9%	.0%	9.1%	.0%	.0%
2,500 to 5,000	Count	11	1	0	0	0
	% within	91.7%	8.3%	.0%	.0%	%
5,001 to 10,000	Count	11	1	0	0	2
	% within	78.6%	7.1%	.0%	.0%	14.3%
10,001 to 25,000	Count	7	2	0	0	0
	% within	77.8%	22.2%	.0%	.0%	.0%
25,001 or more	Count	4	0	0	0	0
	% within	100.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%
Total	Count	43	4	1	0	3
	% within	84.3%	7.8%	2.0%	.0%	5.9%

Note. Ensure the collaborative goal-setting process results in non-negotiable goals in at least two areas: Student achievement and classroom instruction and set specific achievement targets for schools and students.

Table 19

School System Size and Perceived Importance of Responsibility 3: Board Alignment with and Support of District

Goals

		Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Not Answered
Not Answered	Count	0	0	0	0	1
	% within	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
Less than 2,500	Count	8	3	0	0	0
	% within	72.7%	27.3%	.0%	.0%	.0%
2,500 to 5,000	Count	9	3	0	0	0
	% within	75.0%	25.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%
5,001 to 10,000	Count	9	3	0	0	2
	% within	64.3%	21.4%	.0%	.0%	14.3%
10,001 to 25,000	Count	6	3	0	0	0
	% within	66.7%	33.3%	.0%	.0%	.0%
25,001 or more	Count	3	1	0	0	0
	% within	75.0%	25.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%
Total	Count	35	13	0	0	3
	% within	68.6%	25.5%	.0%	.0%	5.9%

Note. Ensure that the Board of Education is aligned with and supportive of the non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction and that these goals remain the primary focus of the district's efforts.

Table 20

School System Size and Perceived Importance of Responsibility 4: Monitoring Achievement and Instructional

Goals

		Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Not Answered
Not Answered	Count	0	0	0	0	1
	% within	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100%
Less than 2,500	Count	10	1	0	0	0
	% within	90.9%	9.1%	.0%	.0%	.0%
2,500 to 5,000	Count	9	3	0	0	0
	% within	75.0%	25.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%
5,001 to 10,000	Count	12	0	0	0	2
	% within	85.7%	.0%	.0%	.0%	14.3%
10,001 to 25,000	Count	8	1	0	0	0
	% within	88.9%	11.1%	.0%	.0%	.0%
25,001 or more	Count	4	0	0	0	0
	% within	100.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%
Total	Count	43	5	0	0	3
	% within	84.3%	9.8%	.0%	.0%	5.9%

Note. Continually monitor district progress toward achievement and instructional goals to ensure that these goals remain the driving force behind the district's actions.

Table 21

School System Size and Perceived Importance of Responsibility 5: Use of Resources to Support Achievement and Instructional Goals

		Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Not Answered
Not Answered	Count	0	0	0	0	1
	% within	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100%
Less than 2,500	Count	9	1	0	1	0
	% within	81.8%	9.1%	.0%	9.1%	.0%
2,500 to 5,000	Count	12	0	0	0	0
	% within	100.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%
5,001 to 10,000	Count	12	0	0	0	2
	% within	85.7%	.0%	.0%	.0%	14.3%
10,001 to 25,000	Count	9	0	0	0	0
	% within	100.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%
25,001 or more	Count	4	0	0	0	0
	% within	100.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%
Total	Count	46	1	0	1	3
	% within	90.1%	2.0%	.0%	2.0%	5.9%

Note. Ensure the necessary resources, including time, money, personnel, and materials are allocated to accomplish the district's goals.

systems this size perceiving this responsibility as Very Important and 33% as Important.

Approximately 80% of superintendents responding to Responsibility 2 – non-negotiable goals – selected Very Important (see Table 18). When categorized by school system size, little variance exists among superintendent responses, with all but 1 superintendent indicating it was Very Important or Important. The one superintendent perceiving this responsibility as Somewhat Important fell in the Less than 2,500 student category.

Regardless of school system size, all superintendents responding marked Responsibility 3 – board alignment – as Very Important or Important (see Table 19). There is consistency on the perception that this responsibility is Very Important or Important. With the exception of 1 superintendent in systems with 25,001 or more students rating district Responsibility 3 as Important, all other superintendents in this size system rated board alignment with and support of district goals as Very Important.

At least 75% or more superintendents responding to Responsibility 4 – monitoring achievement – perceived this as being Very Important (see Table 20). There is greater consistency among responses of superintendents from districts with less than 2,500 students and districts with more than 25,000 students. All superintendents in districts with 25,001 or more students indicate Responsibility 4 to be Very Important.

A great degree of consistency exists among superintendent responses indicating the importance of Responsibility 5 – use of resources – as it is perceived as Very Important across all 4 ranges of district size (see Table 21). One district superintendent with less than 2,500 students indicates that use of resources to support the goals for instruction as Not Important.

Tables 22 through 26, displayed below indicate superintendent perception of practice on each of the five McREL district-level leadership responsibilities with superintendent responses categorized by school system size. Superintendents in systems with less than 2,500 clearly perceived that they are less inclined to practice Responsibility 3 – board alignment. Of the 11 superintendents responding in this system size category, only 2 indicate they Always practice board alignment with and support of district goals. The same finding is true with superintendents with school system size between 10,001 to 25,000 with only one of the nine superintendents in this category reporting Always practicing this responsibility.

Two responding superintendents reported Almost Never practicing Responsibility 1 – collaborative goal-setting (see Table 22). A consistent degree of practice exists across district size with superintendents responding Always/Almost Always in their perceptions of how often this responsibility is practiced.

Table 22

School System Size and Perceived Practice of Responsibility 1: Collaborative Goal-Setting

		Always	Almost Always	Almost Never	Never	Not Answered
Not Answered	Count	0	0	0	0	1
	% within	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
Less than 2,500	Count	4	6	1	0	0
	% within	36.4%	54.5%	9.1%	.0%	.0%
2,500 to 5,000	Count	8	4	0	0	0
	% within	66.7%	33.3%	.0%	.0%	.0%
5,001 to 10,000	Count	8	3	1	0	2
	% within	57.1%	21.4%	7.1%	.0%	14.3%
10,001 to 25,000	Count	4	5	0	0	0
	% within	44.4%	55.6%	.0%	.0%	.0%
25,001 or more	Count	2	2	0	0	0
	% within	50.0%	50.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%
Total	Count	26	20	2	0	3
	% within	51%	39.2%	3.9%	.0%	5.9%

Note. Collaborative goal-setting must encompass all relevant stakeholders, including central office staff, building-level administrators, and board members, in establishing goals for district.

Table 23

School System Size and Perceived Practice of Responsibility 2: Non-Negotiable Goals for Achievement and Instruction

		Always	Almost Always	Almost Never	Never	Not Answered
Not Answered	Count	0	0	0	0	1
	% within	0.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100%
Less than 2,500	Count	6	4	1	0	0
	% within	54.5%	36.4%	9.1%	.0%	.0%
2,500 to 5,000	Count	9	3	0	0	0
	% within	75.0%	25.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%
5,0001 to 10,000	Count	10	2	0	0	2
	% within	71.4%	14.3%	.0%	.0%	14.3%
10,001 to 25,000	Count	6	3	0	0	0
	% within	66.7%	33.3%	.0%	.0%	.0%
25,001 or more	Count	2	2	0	0	0
	% within	50.0%	50.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%
Total	Count	33	14	1	0	3
	% within	64.7%	27.4%	2.0%	.0%	5.9%

Note. Ensure the collaborative goal-setting process results in non-negotiable goals in at least two areas: Student achievement and classroom instruction and set specific achievement targets for schools and students.

Table 24

School System Size and Perceived Practice of Responsibility 3: Board Alignment with and Support of District Goals

		Always	Almost Always	Almost Never	Never	Not Answered
Not Answered	Count	0	0	0	0	1
	% within	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100%
Less than 2,500	Count	2	7	2	0	0
	% within	18.2%	63.6%	18.2%	.0%	.0%
2,500 to 5,000	Count	5	7	0	0	0
	% within	41.7%	58.3%	.0%	.0%	.0%
5,0001 to 10,000	Count	10	2	0	0	2
	% within	71.4%	14.3%	.0%	.0%	14.3%
10,001 to 25,000	Count	1	7	1	0	0
	% within	11.1%	77.8%	11.1%	.0%	.0%
25,001 or more	Count	1	2	1	0	0
	% within	25.0%	50.0%	25.0%	.0%	.0%
Total	Count	19	25	4	0	3
	% within	37.3%	49.0%	7.8%	.0%	5.9%

Note. Ensure that the Board of Education is aligned with and supportive of the non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction and that these goals remain the primary focus of the district's efforts.

Table 25

School System Size and Perceived Practice of Responsibility 4: Monitoring Achievement and Instructional Goals

		Always	Almost Always	Almost Never	Never	Not Answered
Not Answered	Count	0	0	0	0	1
	% within	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
Less than 2,500	Count	7	4	0	0	0
	% within	63.6%	36.4%	.0%	.0%	.0%
2,500 to 5,000	Count	8	4	0	0	0
	% within	66.7%	33.3%	.0%	.0%	.0%
5,001 to 10,000	Count	12	0	0	0	2
	% within	85.7%	.0%	.0%	.0%	14.3%
10,001 to 25,000	Count	5	4	0	0	0
	% within	55.6%	44.4%	.0%	.0%	.0%
25,001 or more	Count	4	0	0	0	0
	% within	100.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%
Total	Count	36	12	0	0	3
	% within	70.6%	23.5%	.0%	.0%	5.9%

Note. Continually monitor district progress toward achievement and instructional goals to ensure that these goals remain the driving force behind the district's actions.

Table 26

School System Size and Perceived Practice of Responsibility 5: Use of Resources to Support Achievement and Instructional Goals

		Always	Almost Always	Almost Never	Never	Not Answered
Not Answered	Count	0	0	0	0	1
	% within	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
Less than 2,500	Count	5	6	0	0	0
	% within	45.5%	54.5%	.0%	.0%	.0%
2,500 to 5,000	Count	8	4	0	0	0
	% within	66.7%	33.3%	.0%	.0%	.0%
5,001 to 10,000	Count	9	4	0	0	1
	% within	64.3%	28.6%	.0%	.0%	7.1%
10,001 to 25,000	Count	5	4	0	0	0
	% within	55.6%	44.4%	.0%	.0%	.0%
25,001 or more	Count	1	3	0	0	0
	% within	25.0%	75.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%
Total	Count	28	21	0	0	2
	% within	54.9%	41.2%	.0%	.0%	3.9%

Note. Ensure the necessary resources, including time, money, personnel, and materials are allocated to accomplish the district's goals.

A consistent perception of degree of practice exists across district size with superintendents indicating they *Always/Almost Always* practice Responsibility 2 – non-negotiable goals for the district (see Table 23).

Fewer superintendents indicate practicing Responsibility 3 – board alignment – with 4 superintendents reporting *Almost Never* practicing this responsibility (see Table 24). Consequently, less consistency is evident among superintendent perceived practice when looking at school system size.

All responding superintendents perceived that they *Always* or *Almost Always* monitor district progress toward achievement and instructional goals – Responsibility 4 (see Table 25). There is more consistency among superintendents responding *Almost Always* versus *Always*.

All responding superintendents indicate either *Always* or *Almost Always* practicing district level Responsibility 5 – use of resources (see Table 26). Greater consistency exists across district size under the *Almost Always* response.

Superintendent Practice versus Importance

Tables 27 through 37 address the intersection of how superintendents perceive the importance of the five McREL district-level leadership responsibilities and the level that superintendents perceive that they practice the five McREL district-level leadership responsibilities.

Table 27

Relationship Between Perceived Importance and Perceived Practice (All 5 Responsibilities)

Responsibility / Question	Importance				Practice			
	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Always	Almost Always	Almost Never	Never
#1	84.3%	9.8%	0%	0%	51.0%	39.2%	3.9%	0%
#2	84.3%	7.8%	2.0%	0%	64.7%	27.4%	2.0%	0%
#3	68.6%	25.5%	0%	0%	37.3%	49.0%	7.8%	0%
#4	84.3%	9.8%	0%	0%	70.6%	23.5%	0%	0%
#5	90.1%	2.0%	0%	0%	54.9%	41.2%	0%	0%

Table 28

Perceived Importance and Perceived Practice Based on Years of Experience for Responsibility 1: Collaborative Goal-Setting

Years Experience	Very Important	Always Practice	Important	Almost Always Practice	Somewhat Important	Almost Never Practice	Not Important	Never Practice
Less than 3	83.3%	50.0%	16.7%	41.7%	0%	8.3	0%	0%
3-5	81.8%	27.3%	9.1%	63.6%	0%	9.1	0%	0%
5-10	84.6%	61.5%	7.7%	30.8%	0%	0%	0%	0%
10 +	92.9%	64.3%	7.1%	28.6%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Note. Collaborative goal-setting must encompass all relevant stakeholders, including central office staff, building-level administrators, and board members, in establishing goals for district.

Table 29

Perceived Importance and Perceived Practice Based on Years of Experience for Responsibility 2: Non-Negotiable Goals for Achievement and Instruction

Years Experience	Very Important	Always Practice	Important	Almost Always Practice	Somewhat Important	Almost Never Practice	Not Important	Never Practice
Less than 3	83.3%	75.0%	16.7%	25.0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
3-5	81.8%	54.5%	0%	36.4%	9.1%	9.1%	0%	0%
5-10	92.3%	76.9%	0%	15.4%	0%	0%	0%	0%
10 +	85.7%	57.1%	14.3%	35.7%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Note. Ensure the collaborative goal-setting process results in non-negotiable goals in at least two areas: Student achievement and classroom instruction and set specific achievement targets for schools and students.

Table 30

Perceived Importance and Perceived Practice Based on Years of Experience for Responsibility 3: Board Alignment with and Support of District Goals

Years Experience	Very Important	Always Practice	Important	Almost Always Practice	Somewhat Important	Almost Never Practice	Not Important	Never Practice
Less than 3	83.3%	25.0%	16.7%	75.0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
3-5	54.5%	36.4%	36.4%	45.5%	0%	18.2%	0%	0%
5-10	61.5%	38.5%	30.8%	38.5%	0%	15.4%	0%	0%
10 +	78.6%	50.0%	21.4%	42.9%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Note. Ensure that the Board of Education is aligned with and supportive of the non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction and that these goals remain the primary focus of the district's efforts.

Table 31

Perceived Importance and Perceived Practice Based on Years of Experience for Responsibility 4: Monitoring

Achievement and Instructional Goals

Years Experience	Very Important	Always Practice	Important	Almost Always Practice	Somewhat Important	Almost Never Practice	Not Important	Never Practice
Less than 3	75.0%	75.0%	25.0%	25.0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
3-5	90.9%	81.8%	0%	18.2%	0%	0%	0%	0%
5-10	84.6%	69.2%	7.7%	23.1%	0%	0%	0%	0%
10 +	92.9%	64.3%	7.1%	28.6%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Note. Continually monitor district progress toward achievement and instructional goals to ensure that these goals remain the driving force behind the district's actions.

Table 32

Perceived Importance and Perceived Practice Based on Years of Experience for Responsibility 5: Use of Resources to Support Achievement and Instructional Goals

Years Experience	Very Important	Always Practice	Important	Almost Always Practice	Somewhat Important	Almost Never Practice	Not Important	Never Practice
Less than 3	83.3%	58.3%	8.3%	41.7%	0%	0%	8.3%	0%
3-5	90.9%	54.5%	0%	45.5%	0%	0%	0.0%	0%
5-10	92.3%	61.5%	0%	38.5%	0%	0%	0.0%	0%
10 +	100.0%	50.0%	0%	42.9%	0%	0%	0.0%	0%

Note. Ensure the necessary resources, including time, money, personnel, and materials are allocated to accomplish the district's goals.

Table 33

Perceived Importance and Perceived Practice Based on School System Size for Responsibility 1: Collaborative

Goal-Setting

ADM Size	Very Important	Always Practice	Important	Almost Always Practice	Somewhat Important	Almost Never Practice	Not Important	Never Practice
Less than 2,500	90.9%	36.4%	9.1%	54.5%	0%	9.1%	0%	0%
2,500-5,000	100.0%	66.7%	0%	33.3%	0%	0%	0%	0%
5,001-10,000	78.6%	57.1%	7.1%	21.4%	0%	7.1%	0%	0%
10,001-25,000	66.7%	44.4%	33.3%	55.6%	0%	0%	0%	0%
25,001 or more	100.0%	50.0%	0%	50.0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Note. Collaborative goal-setting must encompass all relevant stakeholders, including central office staff, building-level administrators, and board members, in establishing goals for district.

Table 34

Perceived Importance and Perceived Practice Based on School System Size for Responsibility 2: Non-Negotiable Goals for Achievement and Instruction

ADM Size	Very Important	Always Practice	Important	Almost Always Practice	Somewhat Important	Almost Never Practice	Not Important	Never Practice
Less than 2,500	90.9%	54.5%	0%	36.4%	9.1%	9.1%	0%	0%
2,500-5,000	91.7%	75.0%	8.3%	25.0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
5,001-10,000	78.6%	71.4%	7.1%	14.3%	0%	0%	0%	0%
10,001-25,000	77.8%	66.7%	22.2%	33.3%	0%	0%	0%	0%
25,001 or more	100.0%	50.0%	0%	50.0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Note. Ensure the collaborative goal-setting process results in non-negotiable goals in at least two areas: Student achievement and classroom instruction and set specific achievement targets for schools and students.

Table 35

Perceived Importance and Perceived Practice Based on School System Size for Responsibility 3: Board Alignment with and Support of District Goals

ADM Size	Very Important	Always Practice	Important	Almost Always Practice	Somewhat Important	Almost Never Practice	Not Important	Never Practice
Less than 2,500	72.7%	18.2%	27.3%	63.6%	0%	18.2%	0%	0%
2,500-5,000	75.0%	41.7%	25.0%	58.3%	0%	0%	0%	0%
5,001-10,000	64.3%	71.4%	21.4%	14.3%	0%	0%	0%	0%
10,001-25,000	66.7%	11.1%	33.3%	77.8%	0%	11.1%	0%	0%
25,001 or more	75.0%	25.0%	25.0%	50.0%	0%	25.0%	0%	0%

Note. Ensure that the Board of Education is aligned with and supportive of the non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction and that these goals remain the primary focus of the district's efforts.

Table 36

Perceived Importance and Perceived Practice Based on School System Size for Responsibility 4: Monitoring

Achievement and Instructional Goals

ADM Size	Very Important	Always Practice	Important	Almost Always Practice	Somewhat Important	Almost Never Practice	Not Important	Never Practice
Less than 2,500	90.9%	63.6%	9.1%	36.4%	0%	0%	0%	0%
2,500-5,000	75.0%	66.7%	25.0%	33.3%	0%	0%	0%	0%
5,001-10,000	85.7%	85.7%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
10,001-25,000	88.9%	55.6%	11.1%	44.4%	0%	0%	0%	0%
25,001 or more	100.0%	100.0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Note. Continually monitor district progress toward achievement and instructional goals to ensure that these goals remain the driving force behind the district's actions.

Table 37

Perceived Importance and Perceived Practice Based on School System Size for Responsibility 5: Use of Resources to Support Achievement and Instructional Goals

ADM Size	Very Important	Always Practice	Important	Almost Always Practice	Somewhat Important	Almost Never Practice	Not Important	Never Practice
Less than 2,500	81.8%	45.5%	9.1%	54.5%	0%	0%	9.1%	0%
2,500-5,000	100.0%	66.7%	0%	33.3%	0%	0%	0%	0%
5,001-10,000	85.7%	64.3%	0%	28.6%	0%	0%	0%	0%
10,001-25,000	100.0%	55.6%	0%	44.4%	0%	0%	0%	0%
25,001 or more	100.0%	25.0%	0%	75.0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Note. Ensure the necessary resources, including time, money, personnel, and materials are allocated to accomplish the district's goals.

When indicating the perceived importance and practice of collaborative goal-setting – Responsibility 1, it appears that there is greater consistency among superintendents with more years of experience (see Table 28). Superintendents with more than 5 years experience were more frequently perceived that they Always Practice while also perceiving responsibilities as being Very Important.

Superintendent perceptions of importance were very consistent across range of experience with over 80% of superintendents reporting non-negotiable goals – Responsibility 2 – as Very Important (see Table 29). More than ½ of superintendents always practiced establishing non-negotiable goals for student achievement and classroom instruction. There is little variation related to years of experience with Responsibility 2.

The more years a superintendent has been in his or her role, the more consistency in perceiving that board alignment – Responsibility 3 – is important and practicing it (see Table 30). Highest of any category, half of these superintendents Always Practice this responsibility while rating it highly or Very Important. Conversely, while superintendents with less than 3 years experience feel it is Very Important, only one fourth Always Practice it.

Consistent across range of experience, superintendents report monitoring achievement – Responsibility 4 – as Very Important and more than 60% of superintendents Always Practice this responsibility (see Table 31).

Superintendent years of experience do not seem to play a significant role in variation.

Years of experience did not seem to be a factor with Responsibility 5 – use of resources – with the exception of the more years experience, the higher superintendents rated importance (see Table 32). The same is not true in how they perceived they always practice. Ironically, though they rated this responsibility higher in their perception of importance than all others with less experience, they ranked it lower than all others in their perception of always practicing this behavior.

Tables 33 through 37 display findings of the intersection of perceived importance and practiced based on school system size. The data in Tables 33 through 37 address Research Question 4, is there a relationship between the size of the district (student population) and superintendents' self-reported perceptions of the importance and their practice of McREL's five leadership responsibilities?

Table 27 displays the findings without regard to size of system or years experience. The data in Table 27 addresses the first two research questions: what are North Carolina superintendents' self-reported perceptions of the importance of McREL's five leadership responsibilities in their district leadership, and what are North Carolina superintendents' self-reported perceptions of their practice of McREL's five leadership responsibilities in their district leadership?

While superintendents generally perceived that it is relatively important and that they practice collaborative goal-setting, more than 80% indicate it is Very Important – only about half Always Practice Responsibility 1. Generally, when combining responses marked Very Important and Important and comparing responses of Always Practice and Almost Always Practice, there is little variation. No superintendent thought the responsibility was Somewhat or Not Important and consistently, none indicated they Never Practiced and only a small percent indicated Almost Never Practicing. All superintendents perceived this responsibility to be important to some extent, and all superintendents perceived that they practiced collaborative goal-setting to some degree.

There is a tighter relationship between perceived importance and practice of establishing non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction (Responsibility 2) with over $\frac{3}{4}$ of the superintendents marking this as Very Important and roughly $\frac{2}{3}$ of superintendents indicating that they Always Practice this responsibility . Only 2% indicate it is Somewhat Important and the same percent mark they Almost Never Practice.

There is again variation of perceptions regarding the importance of Responsibility 3 – board alignment – as being considered Very Important and its being Always Practiced. Greater than 70% of superintendents mark Responsibility 3 as Very Important but less than 40% say they practice it. Again, when favorable responses (Very Important and Important; Always and Almost Always) are combined, nearly 90% of superintendents perceive board alignment

as Important and Almost Always Practice ensuring board alignment with and support of district goals.

There is the greatest consistency in superintendents coding as Very Important and then Always Practicing with Responsibility 4 – monitoring achievement. More than 70% of the responding superintendents both perceived monitoring achievement and instructional goals as being Very Important and Always Practiced.

Clearly of all 5 responsibilities – use of resources – Responsibility 5, was marked consistently highest as Very Important among superintendents, yet only ½ Always Practiced it. The level of agreement between importance and practice for Responsibility 5 mirrors the level of agreement for Responsibility 1.

Tables 28 through 32 display findings of the intersection based on years experience, and Tables 33 through 37 display findings of the intersection based on school system size. Tables 28 through 32 address Research Question 3, is there a relationship between a superintendent's years of experience and self-reported perceptions of the importance and their practice of McREL's five leadership responsibilities?

School system size does not seem to be a factor in how superintendents perceive difference in importance and practice when considering Responsibility 1 – collaborative goal-setting (see Table 33).

There is little difference in the intersection of perception of importance and practice for Responsibility 2 – non-negotiable goals (see Table 34). The size of the district does not seem to be related to importance and practice.

Again, size of district does not appear to be a factor between perception of importance and perception of practice as it relates to board alignment – Responsibility 3 (see Table 35). However, it does look as if the largest size district superintendents report the least actual consistent deployment of this behavior.

There is the greatest consistency in perception of importance and practice among superintendents in the largest school districts when examining responses related to Responsibility 4---monitoring achievement (see Table 36). All of the superintendents in districts with more than 25,000 students perceived it is Very Important to monitor achievement and instructional goals and all responding superintendents in this size system practice it.

Again, size of district does not appear to be a factor between perception of importance and perception of practice as it relates to use of resources – Responsibility 5 (see Table 37).

Summary

North Carolina superintendents' perceptions of the importance of the five McREL district-level leadership responsibilities along with their perceptions of how often they employ these practices have been described in this chapter. Data analysis included the relationship to the superintendents' years of experience

and the student population (size) of the school system in order to respond to the four research questions.

As documented in the review of the current literature, despite the existence of such studies and the writings of many acknowledged experts in the field of educational administration, it appears there remains limited research on the effects of superintendent leadership behaviors on instructional performance in schools. The findings of this study attempt to contribute to the limited data on how superintendents perceive they practice what they find important as it relates to leadership on improving district wide student achievement.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

Since the inception of the superintendency in the mid 1800s, superintendents and district level leaders have dealt with curricular and instructional issues. However, prior to the last quarter of the twentieth century, the primary focus for superintendents was to effectively and efficiently manage their budgets, their buildings, their staffs, and their students. During this era, superintendents were respected in the community for their business acumen and their moral courage as custodians of the nation's future (Houston, 2007).

In the mid-1970s, the school reform movement began to place new expectations and demands upon the superintendent to provide direction and leadership to improve the teaching and learning environment of the public schools (Barraclough, 1973; Goodlad, 1978; Odden, 1980; Walters, 1977). A general conclusion from the school reform literature of the 1970s was that educational leadership was an important characteristic of effective schools (Brookover et al., 1979; Edmonds, 1979; Marzano et al., 2005; Rutter et al., 1979). Specific behaviors associated with effective leadership included monitoring student progress on specific learning goals, supervising teachers, promoting high expectations for student achievement and teacher performance, focusing on basic skills, and monitoring the curriculum (Marzano et al., 2005).

Without strong instructional leadership, efforts to raise student achievement are jeopardized. Superintendents must focus their efforts on

teaching and learning to improve student achievement. One study that emphasized this point is a 2006 report by the Mid-Continental Research for Education and Learning (McREL).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine how North Carolina superintendents perceive the importance of the 5 McREL district level leadership responsibilities and how often they employ these practices. The study further looked at any impact of superintendents' years of experience and size of school system on both perceived importance and practice of these responsibilities. One of the leading studies of the superintendent's professional practice was the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) comprehensive study of the superintendency, which was released in a 2006 report. *The Effect of Superintendent Leadership on Student Achievement (Meta-analysis of Effective School Leaders)*, specifically investigated the influence of school district leaders on student performance and determined the characteristics of effective schools, leaders, and teachers. As mentioned earlier in this study, North Carolina superintendents' perceptions of the importance of and how often they practice the five McREL leadership responsibilities, in relation to years of superintendent experience and size of school district, is the focus of this study.

In their working paper called *School District Leadership that Works: The Effect of Superintendent Leadership on Student Achievement, (Meta-analysis of Effective School Leaders)* Waters and Marzano (2006) generate four major

findings. These findings are: (1) District-level leadership matters, (2) Effective superintendents focus their efforts on creating goal-oriented districts, (3) Superintendent tenure is positively correlated with student tenure, and (4) Defined autonomy. The fourth finding, described as “surprising and perplexing” indicated that an increase in building autonomy had a positive association with average student achievement in the district.

Finding 2, effective superintendents focus their efforts on creating goal-oriented districts – generated five district-level leadership responsibilities related to setting and keeping districts focused on teaching and learning goals and that have a statistically significant correlation with average student academic achievement. They are: (1) collaborative goal-setting, (2) non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction, (3) board alignment with and support of district goals, (4) monitoring achievement and instructional goals, (5) use of resources to support the goals for instruction.

The following conclusions of this study relate to superintendents’ perceptions of importance of these 5 responsibilities and superintendents’ perceptions of how often they practice these 5 responsibilities. These conclusions are supported by the findings of this study and also are influenced by the researcher’s experience. As is the case with many new superintendents, I was faced with the challenge to continually improve student achievement. This task can be daunting and when I became superintendent, I recognized the need to diagnose our current status and determine our future direction. As an

inexperienced superintendent, I felt the need for “another set of eyes,” – a third party perspective – so consultants were employed to assist the district in assessment and focusing on district level student achievement. This process, largely influenced by the work of Waters and Marzano and the work of their lab, McREL, led me to this study. The following 5 conclusions already are impacting my practice and this study has been beneficial not only to me as a leader but to our district.

Collaborative Goal-Setting

As a beginning superintendent, when establishing district goals and in an attempt to be comprehensive, I identified too many goals. As a result, district leaders could not articulate the school system’s purpose. While we were successful, the first year’s “mis-steps” led us to condense from approximately 15 goals to 3. The district’s direction became more clearly focused.

Involving stakeholders in goal-setting and keeping the goals focused is essential. Not only did I learn this point in my work, the superintendents in this study almost unanimously rate it as important and attempt to always practice.

Non-Negotiable Goals for Achievement and Instruction

Initially I did not put as much emphasis as necessary on student achievement and instruction. Again, like many inexperienced superintendents, I filled my time with organizational and operational issues – the political issues, the community, personnel, finance, facilities, etc. – and came to realize that these areas, while important, should not be my focus. While a superintendent must

focus on such organizational and operational issues, building trust and establishing a culture, it is imperative that his/her work be ultimately centered on student achievement and classroom instruction.

It is crucial that there are non-negotiable goals for student achievement and classroom instruction. Superintendents in this study find that while important, it is not always as simple to practice.

Board Alignment

In order to have board support the Board of Education must be informed of district goals for achievement and instruction. I have found when board members are informed and involved in establishing district goals they contribute to district success. While it is appropriate to gauge how much information is too much information, it is most important to practice the art of constantly keeping the Board of Education informed and aligned with achievement and instructional goals.

There is variation of perceived importance and the degree to which superintendents indicate they practice Board alignment with and support of district goals for achievement and instruction. In order to optimize student achievement, Board member interest and expectations should be aligned with Board adopted achievement and instructional goals.

Monitoring Achievement and Instruction Goals

In order to effectively monitor achievement, districts must have measurable goals to assess. A review of related research recommends for goals

to be strategic and specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented, and timely (DuFour et al., 2007). Prior to conducting this research most of the goals in this district were very general and less focused. While focused goals take more thought and time to develop, the desired outcomes are more understandable. As a superintendent, I have found this responsibility a bit of a challenge to fulfill. I agree with my colleagues who responded to this survey that this is an extremely important task, and I suggest it is one that we should strive to improve. Monitoring progress must occur at all levels, from classroom to boardroom to ensure achievement is attained and continuously improved.

Findings from this study indicate that NC superintendents reflect a tighter relationship between importance and practice of monitoring achievement and instructional goals. Greater consistency exists with more than 70% of superintendents indicating they think monitoring progress is very important and then always practicing it.

Use of Resources to Support the Goals for Instruction

In spite of the economic situation, as superintendent, I remain committed to ensuring the necessary resources, including time, money, personnel, and materials, are allocated to accomplish district goals. While this commitment is easier said than done, we owe our students and communities this level of commitment to ensure quality instruction in the classroom. This commitment can mean cutting back on / or dropping initiatives that are not aligned with district goals for achievement and instruction.

Clearly of all 5 responsibilities, ensuring necessary resources, responsibility 5, was marked consistently highest as very important among superintendents, yet only ½ always practiced it. Why is there such a gap between practice and importance for NC superintendents? The past two years have posed unprecedented economic challenges for federal, state, local, and private agencies. According to Phillip Price, Chief Financial Officer, Financial and Business Services, NC Department of Public Instruction, through February 2010, state revenues are down \$45 million dollars (North Carolina Association of School Administrators' 2010 Annual Conference, 2010). Collections have slowed significantly for the second consecutive year impacting resources allocated to NC public schools. These numbers effect program services and personnel which may have a direct influence on ensuring necessary resources to improve student achievement and classroom instruction.

General Conclusions

1. Neither size nor years experience seem to be a substantial factor in how North Carolina superintendents perceive importance in and practice of the five district-level responsibilities. Almost all the superintendents participating in this study feel the 5 responsibilities are important and they practice them.

Regardless of district size or years experience, superintendents should engage in periodic reviews of district goals and priorities, should communicate to stakeholders throughout the organization, set specific achievement targets, and secure appropriate resources.

2. There is no discernable pattern of superintendents' perceptions of the importance or practice of the five district-level responsibilities based on superintendent years of experience or school system size.

3. The NC Department of Public Instruction is piloting a new evaluation instrument that will be used statewide in the near future. Following the 5 McREL practices (responsibilities) should lead superintendents to the "distinguished" performance level of practice in the anticipated new superintendent evaluation instrument.

4. North Carolina superintendents report that they perceive that the five responsibilities are important and that they consistently practice them; therefore, McREL's meta-analysis suggests that this should improve student achievement.

Limitations of the Study

1. The participation rate by the 114 practicing superintendents (minus one – the researcher) reflected those who were willing to participate in taking the questionnaire and may not be reflective of the entire population of North Carolina superintendents.

2. The data generated by the superintendents was self-reported on their perceived use of the five leadership behaviors and may or may not be congruent with their actual behaviors.

3. This study did not examine student achievement data for those districts led by superintendents participating in this study. Higher ratings of perceived

importance or practice do not infer high student achievement. Also, there is no inference for superintendents who did not respond.

Recommendations

1. Superintendents must communicate clearly, ensuring there is congruence between their words (importance) and their actions (practice). When communicating with stakeholders it is paramount to both acknowledge the importance of student achievement and to engage in best practices that show your commitment to improving student achievement.

2. Superintendents must limit initiatives they institute and provide adequate time for new practices and processes to become embedded in the culture of schools.

3. Superintendents must provide both pressure and support in improving their schools and districts. While collaborative goal-setting is essential, non-negotiables are a must. Successful superintendents will be those who balance both.

4. New superintendents should establish clear, but more importantly concise goals for the district. The adage, "less is more" may guide new superintendents as they tirelessly pursue improving district achievement levels. A new superintendents' training module based on the perceived importance and practice of North Carolina superintendents may be instructive.

Recommendations for Further Study

1. Interviews with superintendents who always practice the 5 McREL district-level leadership responsibilities would enhance this research and add value to the practice of superintendent leadership and aid in the professional development of prospective superintendents.

2. A study of the implementation of the new North Carolina Superintendent Evaluation Instrument and its relationship to the 5 McREL district-level leadership responsibilities may strengthen superintendent evaluation around the purpose of improving student achievement.

3. Board alignment, and its impact on student achievement, is an area for further study. Determining how a superintendent can lead his or her Board in a way that the Board's focus remains on improving student achievement may be instructive.

4. Replicating this study by surveying board members, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders as to their view of importance (and in some cases practice) would broaden the research base on how these 5 responsibilities are viewed and how that view impacts achievement.

Summary

McREL found that effective superintendents focus their efforts on creating goal oriented districts. This finding was significant enough from their meta-analysis of 27 studies related to effective school leaders that it emerged as one of four overall findings. This study found North Carolina superintendents share

McREL's view that creating goal-oriented districts is important. Similarly, superintendents most often practice the 5 responsibilities that McREL articulates as the practices relative to this finding; these include: collaborative goal-setting, non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction, board alignment with and support of district goals, use of resources to support the goals for instruction. This study suggests McREL designed a potential blueprint for improving district-level achievement and knowingly or instinctively North Carolina superintendents are employing the responsibilities that the McREL research identified as being important to student achievement.

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APPENDIX A: SURVEY INSTRUMENT

LEA Size

What is the ADM size of your LEA?

- Less than 2,500
- 2,500 to 5,000
- 5,001 to 10,000
- 10,001 to 25,000
- 25,000 or more

Experience

How many years have you been a superintendent?

- Less than 3 years
- 3 year to 5 years
- 5 years to 10 years
- 10 years or more

Actual Practice versus Importance

Please answer the following 5 questions in terms of how frequently they actually occur in your role and how important that you think they are

Practice

	Always	Almost Always	Almost Never	Never
I include all relevant stakeholders, including central office staff, building-level administrators, and board members, in establishing goals for my district.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I ensure the collaborative goal-setting process results in non-negotiable goals in at least two areas: student achievement and classroom instruction and set specific achievement targets for schools and students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My board of education is aligned with and supportive of the non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction and they ensure these goals remain the primary focus of the district's efforts.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I continually monitor district progress toward achievement and instructional goals to ensure that these	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

goals remain the driving force behind the district's actions.

I ensure the necessary resources, including time, money, personnel, and materials are allocated to accomplish the district's goals.

Importance

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
I include all relevant stakeholders, including central office staff, building-level administrators, and board members, in establishing goals for my district.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I ensure the collaborative goal-setting process results in non-negotiable goals in at least two areas: student achievement and classroom instruction and set specific achievement targets for schools and students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My board of education is aligned with and supportive of the non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction and they ensure these goals remain the primary focus of the district's efforts.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I continually monitor district progress toward achievement and instructional goals to ensure that these goals remain the driving force behind the district's actions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I ensure the necessary resources, including time, money, personnel, and materials are allocated to accomplish the district's goals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

APPENDIX B: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER



University and Medical Center Institutional Review Board
East Carolina University • Brody School of Medicine
600 Moyer Boulevard • Old Health Sciences Library, Room 1L-09 • Greenville, NC 27834
Office 252-744-2914 • Fax 252-744-2284 • www.ecu.edu/irb
Chair and Director of Biomedical IRB: L. Wiley Nifong, MD
Chair and Director of Behavioral and Social Science IRB: Susan L. McCammon, PhD

TO: Dennis Sawyer, 102 Hall Street, Roanoke Rapids, NC 27870
FROM: UMCIRB *KT*
DATE: November 11, 2009
RE: Human Research Activities Determined to Meet Exempt Criteria
TITLE: "Superintendent perceptions of District Leadership for Improved Student Achievement"

UMCIRB #09-0821

This research study has undergone IRB review on 11.8.09. It is the determination of the IRB Chairperson (or designee) that these activities meet the criteria set forth in the federal regulations for exemption from 45 CFR 46 Subpart A. This human research activity meets the criteria for an exempt status because it is research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects and any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation. The Chairperson (or designee) deemed this **unfunded** study **no more than minimal risk**. This research study does not require any additional interaction with the UMCIRB unless there are proposed changes to this study. Any changes must be submitted to the UMCIRB for review prior to implementation to allow determination that proposed changes do not impact the activities eligibility for exempt status. Should it be found that a proposed change does require more substantive review, you will be notified in writing within five business days.

- The following items were reviewed in determination exempt certification:
- Internal Processing Form- Expedited Form (Rec. 11.6.09)
 - Conflict of Interest (dated 11.2.09)
 - Survey (Rec. 11.6.09)

It was furthermore determined that the reviewer does not have a potential for conflict of interest on this study.

The UMCIRB applies 45 CFR 46, Subparts A-D, to all research reviewed by the UMCIRB regardless of the funding source. 21 CFR 50 and 21 CFR 56 are applied to all research studies that fall under the purview of Food and Drug Administration regulations. The UMCIRB follows applicable International Conference on Harmonisation Good Clinical Practice guidelines.