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# School Board Members' Perceptions of Superintendent Leadership Behaviors in Upstate New York

## Abstract

School board members are concerned about the number of vacancies created by retiring superintendents and the difficulty finding individuals willing to take on the challenges of running a school district (Conrad & Rosser, 2007). School board members' perceptions of superintendent behaviors contribute to the board-superintendent relationship (Tallerico, 2000). The relationship between school board members and superintendent is critical to the effectiveness of the superintendent and the stability of leadership in the superintendent position. The purpose of the study is to improve school districts by providing research leading to positive school board-superintendent relationships that bring about stability in the superintendent position. Board member perceptions of superintendent behaviors are investigated using the Leadership Behavior Questionnaire Form XII as constructed by Ralph Stodgill (1963). The quantitative study uses questionnaires and survey analysis. The study summarizes the frequency of the perceptions reported and identifies two relationships connected to demographic variables. The results of the study show that there is a significant difference between board perception of ideal and real superintendent leader behaviors. Also found, are correlations between the gaps in board perceptions of ideal and real superintendent behaviors and education level of the board and length of time the superintendent has served in the district. The implications connected with the study provide information for school board members, superintendents, and superintendent preparation programs.

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School Board Members' Perceptions of Superintendent Leadership Behaviors in Upstate  
New York

By

Linda Rae Doty

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Ed.D. in Executive Leadership

Supervised by

Dr. Marie Cianca

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Dr. C. Michael Robinson

Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. School of Education  
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May 2012

## Dedication

This work is dedicated to my husband, mother, children, grandchildren, and family who supported me and scheduled their lives allowing me to successfully complete this journey and still be present at life's important moments. Most of all I thank my husband David for his love, support, patience, and encouragement. You have been instrumental in my decision to pursue and complete my dream. Love forever and always.

To my friend and colleague Dean, your resilience and courage are an inspiration. Thank you for walking beside me throughout this journey. I would like to thank the members of cohort 4 and Three's Company who will be my friends forever. "We all take different paths in life. But no matter where we go, we take a little of each other everywhere." Tim McGraw.

My deepest gratitude and thank you to my Dissertation Chair Dr. Marie Cianca for her wisdom, commitment, encouragement, and outstanding leadership that helped motivate me. A special thank you to my committee member Dr. C. Michael Robinson, his thoughtful comments, recommendations, and motivation helped me to complete this scholarly work. I would like to thank Dr. Bruce Blaine for assistance analyzing the quantitative data that made this study successful. Thank you Dr. Sam Walton, your sincerity and professionalism serve as an inspiration. It is an honor and a privilege to be part of a program and college that expects and delivers quality education. It is with much appreciation I would like to thank all of the professors, Betsy Christiansen, teachers, and individuals supporting me in the doctoral program and journey.

## Biographical Sketch

Linda R. Doty is currently the Principal of Charles E. Riley School at the Oswego City School District, Oswego, New York. Dr. Doty attended the State University of New York at Plattsburgh from 1984 to 1987 and graduated with her Bachelor of Arts/Sciences Degree in N-9 Education. She attended the State University of New York at Oswego from 1993 to 1995 and graduated with a Master of Arts/Sciences degree in Exceptional Students, August 1995. Linda attended the State University of New York at Oswego from 1998 to 2000 and graduated with a Certificate of Advanced Studies in Educational Administration in May 2000. Dr. Doty attended and completed the Oswego State University College/BOCES Superintendent Development Program in May 2006. She came to St. John Fisher in 2008 and began her doctoral studies in the Executive Leadership Program. She completed the program studies in 2011. Dr. Doty pursued her research in School Board Perceptions of Superintendent Leadership Behaviors in Upstate New York under the direction of Dr. Marie Cianca and Dr. C. Michael Robinson, receiving her degree in 2012.

## Abstract

School board members are concerned about the number of vacancies created by retiring superintendents and the difficulty finding individuals willing to take on the challenges of running a school district (Conrad & Rosser, 2007). School board members' perceptions of superintendent behaviors contribute to the board-superintendent relationship (Tallerico, 2000). The relationship between school board members and superintendent is critical to the effectiveness of the superintendent and the stability of leadership in the superintendent position.

The purpose of the study is to improve school districts by providing research leading to positive school board-superintendent relationships that bring about stability in the superintendent position. Board member perceptions of superintendent behaviors are investigated using the Leadership Behavior Questionnaire Form XII as constructed by Ralph Stodgill (1963). The quantitative study uses questionnaires and survey analysis. The study summarizes the frequency of the perceptions reported and identifies two relationships connected to demographic variables.

The results of the study show that there is a significant difference between board perception of ideal and real superintendent leader behaviors. Also found, are correlations between the gaps in board perceptions of ideal and real superintendent behaviors and education level of the board and length of time the superintendent has served in the district. The implications connected with the study provide information for school board members, superintendents, and superintendent preparation programs.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

### *Introduction*

Today's school districts are complex and dynamic organizations that are influenced by a number of educational, political, cultural, and social entities. There are often conflicts within these forces while meeting desired goals (Spillane & Regnier, 1998). Interest groups including parent-teacher organizations, teachers unions, student groups, and concerned citizens work in and outside the organization in the form of community interest groups. These organizations and stakeholders communicate with board members to influence district decisions and voice personal interests. Stakeholders share an interest in educational performance of schools and voice a general dissatisfaction with the educational system (Spillane & Reginer, 1998). Little to no research exists in New York State relating to school board perceptions of quality leadership and effectiveness in regard to superintendents.

In a national study on public education Cooper, Fusarelli, and Carella (2000) identify a leadership crisis. Public school districts continue to experience a superintendent turnover rate of approximately two and a half years to six years (American Association of School Administrators and the National Center for Educational Statistics, 2000; Cooper, Fusarelli, & Carella, 2000; Glass & Bjork, 2003). Research also indicates concern in the number of qualified candidates interested in applying for superintendent positions. Further, as retiring administrators leave more vacant positions to be filled, there are fewer certified and potentially qualified individuals willing to take on the challenges of running

a school district (Conrad & Rosser, 2007). School districts across the country report difficulties filling leadership positions with highly qualified people (Gilman & Lanman-Givens, 2001).

The superintendent turnover rate in New York State mirrors the national trend (New York State Council of School Superintendents, 2009). Federal mandates, state mandates, and financial burdens challenge public school education. Howley and Pendarvis (2002) found that, with a lack of quality superintendent candidates, there are districts struggling to function effectively.

Spillane and Reginer (1998) found that superintendent turnover is related to difficult relations between superintendents and school board members. Superintendents and school board members experience similar pressures to implement change, mandates, and address district finances. Within the past decade, the educational reform movement has influenced the behaviors and motivation of superintendents, superintendent candidates, and school boards. Newly mandated state and federal initiatives have resulted in increased pressure on school board members to become involved with daily operations of the school district. This additional pressure affects superintendent-school board relationships. “Historically, boards of education have seen their role as one of policy making, while superintendents are recognized as professional managers of the district” (p. 192). The increasing pressure and measure for success on superintendents and school boards over the past 10 years results in strained relationships between the two leadership roles (Natkin, Cooper, Fusarelli, Alborano, Padilla, & Ghosh, 2002).

School board members who are eager to demonstrate accountability to the community tend to challenge and scrutinize behaviors and responsibilities of the

superintendent (Metzger, 2003). Strained relationships lead to greater school board dissatisfaction with superintendent behaviors and performance, causing a high turnover rate in the superintendency (Spillane & Regnier, 1998). This consistent turnover also adds to the superintendent shortage (Metzger, 2003).

As a group, school board members agree upon expected superintendent behaviors. However, individual school board members may or may not hold the same expectations associated with ideal superintendent job performance and behaviors (Tallerico, 2000). Superintendent behaviors lead to board satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the superintendent. Therefore, school board member satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the superintendent may be determined by board member perceptions of superintendent behaviors (Rausch, 2001).

If the behaviors that indicate a perceived satisfaction with the superintendent could be identified, then superintendents and board members could recognize such behaviors and the turnover rate might be reduced (Twiford & Harrison, 1986). This study examines the factors related to superintendent behaviors that are perceived to be ideal. The study also examines the actual behaviors that influence superintendent and board relationships and the duration of the superintendent's length of service in the position. In addition, the study examines current research showing a recurring theme of leadership behaviors influencing organizational climate and relationships among board members, superintendents, and district stakeholders. Success depends upon communication, trust, and maintaining a working relationship (Twiford & Harrison, 1986).

### *Problem Statement*

The relationship between school board members and the superintendent is vital to the effectiveness of the superintendent (Marzano & Waters, 2007). School board members are concerned about the number of vacancies currently created by retiring superintendents and the difficulty finding certified and qualified individuals willing to take on the challenges of running a school district (Conrad & Rosser, 2007). School districts across the country report difficulties filling leadership positions with highly qualified people (Gilman & Lanman-Givens, 2001) and research supports board satisfaction as a factor of superintendent turnover, stability, and effectiveness. In a national study of superintendents and school boards, Rausch (2001) determined that the superintendent-school board relationship is a factor in the length of time the superintendent remains in the position. The relationship between school board members and the superintendent determines satisfaction or non-satisfaction of superintendent behaviors and is the basis of board members perceptions on the topic.

### *Theoretical Framework*

The theoretical framework for the study is found in leadership theory and more specifically, contingency theory. Leadership Theory is complicated and has evolved into many social and psychological strands. Studies of leadership resulted in theories relative to behaviors, situation, transition, power, intelligence and personality (Fiedler, 1967).

Fiedler's contingency theory (1967) best relates to the study as it provides a connection between the leader's behaviors and relationships with others in the organization. Contingency theory is similar to situational theory in its focus on behaviors, but takes an even broader view to include contingent factors about the leader's capability.

Contingency theory explains that group performance is a result of the interaction between two factors: leadership style and situational favorableness.

Contingency theory also supports the two main dimensions examined in the study. Consideration or relationship behaviors reflect the extent to which a leader shows concern for the satisfaction and well-being of others in the organization. Consideration is demonstrated through mutual trust, respect for ideas of others in the organization, and consideration for their feelings. Initiating structure or task behaviors demonstrate the ability of the leader to set and attain goals. Initiating Structure is demonstrated by individuals who plan thoroughly, are willing to try new ideas, and are good two-way communicators. Avolio, Sosik, Jung, and Berson (2003) have identified an effective leader as someone with high scores on both dimensions.

The relationship between school board members and the superintendent is contingent upon boards' perceptions of the superintendents' interactions with others and their effectiveness as a leader (Byrd, Drews, & Johnson, 2006) The contingency theory of leadership has been applied to school board members perceptions of leadership behaviors indicative of superintendent effectiveness and satisfaction (Fiedler, 1967).

Ideal leadership behaviors are contingent upon internal and external constraints. Fiedler's contingency theory states that a leader's effectiveness is based on situational contingency, which is a result of interaction of multiple factors: leadership style and situational favorableness and the relationship with others in the organization (Vecchio, 1983). The superintendent behaviors perceived by board members are the result of interaction between the style of the leader and the characteristics of the environment in which the leader works (Gray & Starke, 1988).

The Ohio State leadership studies of the 1940s and 1950s used the behavior constructs of Consideration and Initiation of Structure. These studies of board perceptions of superintendent leadership behaviors provide a background for leadership research. Most current theoretical frameworks of leadership are built upon concern for both people and production. The interaction between a leader's traits, behaviors, and a given situation result in contingency theories. Contingency theory has advanced study to include the idea that the importance of leadership behaviors could depend on the situation. Leadership study using the contingency approach, allows for the likelihood of different behaviors in any given situation (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Horner, 1997).

In 1983 Ross uses the LBDQ to investigate Ohio board members' perceptions of real and ideal superintendent leadership behaviors. Ross identifies and measures two dimensions of leadership, Initiating Structure and Consideration. Ross states that in a behavioral sense, leadership requires relationship behaviors that improve interpersonal relations within the group and task behaviors that assist group members in completing tasks. The LBDQ measures both of these leadership qualities, which are important to most boards of education. Ross finds differences on demographic variables concerned with either the real or ideal dimension, but findings are not significant when investigating the interaction between the real and ideal dimensions based upon the demographic factors. Although the results are inconclusive, it provided a basis for further investigation of board perceptions.

#### *Significance of the Study*

Superintendent leadership behaviors affect the way school boards and superintendents work together in making decisions relating to school district business

(Vecchio, 2006). No New York State studies are currently available that specifically focus on school board members' perceptions of school superintendents' leadership behavior.

The significance of this study is its potential contribution to school boards, superintendents, and superintendent candidates by identifying superintendent leadership behaviors that lead to school board member perceptions of satisfaction and high-quality board/superintendent relationships. The study provides information that relates to superintendent stability and effectiveness. Additionally, the identification of leadership behaviors perceived by school board members as ideal could be useful to school boards as they search and select new superintendents. The results of the study also provide valuable information to those who struggle to retain superintendents, to superintendent candidates considering entering the field, and to superintendent preparation programs that seek to prepare quality candidates for openings across the country.

#### *Purpose of the Study*

School board members' perceptions of superintendent behaviors contribute to the board-superintendent relationship (Tallerico, 2000). In addition, the relationship between school board members and the superintendent is critical to the effectiveness of the superintendent and the stability of leadership in the superintendent position. Therefore, the purpose of the study was to improve school districts by providing research on positive school board-superintendent relationships contributing to stability in the superintendent position. The study identifies the gap between ideal superintendent behavior and real superintendent behavior as perceived by school board members, along with a correlation to demographic variables relating to board member perceptions.

### *Research Questions*

The study examines school board member perceptions of ideal and real superintendent behaviors to identify the gaps. Additionally, a correlation is made to board member demographic information. The following questions are answered:

Q1: What is the frequency of ideal superintendent behaviors as perceived by school board members in upstate New York?

Q2: What is the frequency of real superintendent behaviors as perceived by school board members in upstate New York?

Q3: Are there significant gaps between frequently identified ideal superintendent behaviors and frequently identified real superintendent behaviors perceived by school board of education members?

Q4: If there are significant gaps between ideal and real behaviors in Initiating Structure and Consideration, are gaps correlated with any of the following variables?

1. Gender of the board member
2. Educational level of board member
3. Length of time as a board member
4. Length of time superintendent has been employed in the district
5. Gender of the superintendent

### *Definition of Terms*

Definitions used for the purpose of this study relate specifically to this study and are not necessarily considered as general definitions.

Consideration – behaviors that regard the comfort, well being, status, and contributions of followers (LBDQ Manual, 1962) and refer to behavior indicative of friendship, mutual trust, respect, and warmth in relationship between the leader and members of the group.

Correlation Study - a scientific study in which a researcher investigates associations between variables using a correlation coefficient. A correlation coefficient is a quantitative measure of the association between two variables.

Ideal Leadership Behaviors – the manner in which a leader should act; what a leader is expected to do; how the leader ought to behave as perceived by school board members (Stogdill, 1963).

Initiating Structure – behaviors that clearly define leader’s own role, and lets followers know what is expected (LBDQ Manual, 1962) and refer to the leader’s behavior in explaining the relationship between himself and the members of his group in an effort to establish well-defined patterns of organization, channels of communication, and ways of getting the job done.

Real Leadership Behaviors- the actual manner in which a leader acts as observed by another. Real leadership behaviors are what a leader actually does and how he or she behaves. For the purposes of this research, “real” behavior is based upon school board members’ perception (Stogdill, 1963).

Stability – is 7.25 years or more in the same superintendency, for the purpose of this study (Kuncham, 2008).

### *Chapter Summary*

Glass, Bjork, and Brunner (2000) provide research predicting a high turnover rate in the superintendent position. School boards are concerned over who will fill these

positions and that the best candidate is selected. Marzano and Waters (2007) explain that stable leadership promotes strategic goal planning, visionary leadership, positive climate, and continuity in programs that result in higher student achievement. School boards are looking for candidates that can provide their districts with these requirements (Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000; Kowalski & Keedy, 2005 ).

Drawing from the meta-analysis provided by Marzano and Waters (2007), positive collaborative relationships among superintendents and their school board members result in stable leadership and appear to have a direct impact on the success of the school district as an organization. By understanding the board members perceptions of superintendent behaviors that lead to board member satisfaction, insights can be gained regarding what leads to stability in the position (Byrd, Drews, & Johnson, 2006).

The following provides a brief description of the remaining chapters of the dissertation. Chapter 2 is a literature review of relevant research. This literature provides background information regarding the selected topic. With large numbers of anticipated superintendent openings, it is important that school board members, superintendents, and superintendent candidates understand what leadership behaviors lead to satisfaction and foster a positive relationship. Chapter 3 explains the methodology of the study as it relates to data collection in relation to the research questions. This chapter presents the context, participants, data collection process, quantitative analysis procedures, and a summary of the methods used within the study. Chapter 4 is a presentation of the results. The chapter addresses study findings by research question and includes data correlated to participant demographics. Additional data and findings are provided in relation to superintendents in the districts of participants. In Chapter 5 a discussion and

interpretation of the results. The chapter includes implications of findings, a study limitation, recommendation for future research, and a conclusion to summarize the dissertation.

## Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

### *Introduction*

Turnover in the superintendent position causes concerns regarding who will lead our school districts. Often, school board members wonder if their new superintendent will be the best person for the job (Cooper, Fusarelli, & Carella, 2000). The National School Boards Association predicts a shortage of quality certified superintendent candidates ready to fill the anticipated openings because of superintendent turnover in the field (Glass & Bjork, 2003). Local school boards have the responsibility of selecting superintendents for a three to five year term. The process used by school boards in New York State varies, and although a recommended process for the recruitment, search and selection process may be found on the National School Boards Association website, there is no guarantee of satisfaction after the superintendent is hired (Tallerico, 2000). Finding and keeping the right person provides continuity, stability, and will lead to a successful school district (Marzano & Waters, 2007).

This chapter provides a review of the literature and of leadership theory as it relates to the study of public school superintendent leadership behaviors associated with length of service and stability. The study also demonstrates the importance of school board perceptions of superintendent behaviors as related to satisfaction and stability in school district leadership.

The literature concerning board perceptions and superintendent behavior consists of many different leadership theories. Major theoretical frames include contingency

theory, situational leadership, (Bolman & Deal, 2003) behavior and transactional theories (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Fiedler, 1967). Leadership theory is useful in this study and helps to frame how superintendent behaviors play a part in school boards' perceptions of leadership and length of service.

### *Leadership Theory*

The focus of early research in leadership theory includes internal qualities that differentiate leaders from followers and effective leaders from ineffective leaders (Vecchio, 2006; Yukl, 1989). Once differentiating qualities are identified, leaders may be assessed and placed into leadership positions. Another related idea of early leadership theory is that leaders are born, rather than developed, and traits such as personality, disposition, and intelligence are characteristic of effective leaders (Yukl, 1989). Since the time of early leadership theories, there has been intensive research addressing the perspectives of leadership. These studies lead to the contingency theory era that began with Fiedler in 1967.

The contingency theory era recognizes that effective leadership is contingent or dependent on one or more factors of behavior, influence, and the situation. Fiedler's contingency theory points out the need to place leaders in situations most suited to them (Fiedler, 1967). Using this theory, Fiedler (1967) also developed the contingency model of situational leadership with the goal of incorporating situational factors into his leadership model. His contingency model of leadership is probably the earliest and best-known contingency theory approach to understanding leadership behavior. Fiedler suggests that leader effectiveness is determined by choosing the right kind of leader for particular situations or changing the situations to match a certain leader's style. Fiedler

created a scale of “situational control” based on factors he determined are existent in all situations. The three main situational factors proposed by Fiedler (1967) include: 1) leader-member relationship, which include the levels of trust and support that exist between the leader and others in the organization; 2) task structure, or the extent to which goals and methods for achieving the group’s task are defined; and 3) position power, which is the degree to which the leader has the authority to reward and punish followers.

Horner (1997) focused on behavioral approaches, concentrating on the interactions between the leader’s behaviors and the situation in which the leader operates. He led the way in research by applying leadership analysis that includes an interaction between the leader, the leader behavior and the situation. Horner points out that leadership is more than just possessing the correct traits, or leader qualities, and that the behavior the leader demonstrates depends upon additional variables evident in the situation.

Applying the contingency theory, Stogdill (1948) published one of the earliest comprehensive reviews of the research literature on leadership traits and behaviors. Stogdill indicated that there is great interest in the subject of leadership theory. He concludes that specific behaviors are related to leadership success. In other studies that focus on leader behavior theory, researchers attempt to determine what successful leaders do (Halpin & Winer, 1957). These studies focused on identifying the behaviors demonstrated by leaders to increase the organization’s effectiveness. The Michigan and Ohio State leadership studies (Likert, 1961; Stogdill, 1948) use this approach to identify two independent factors: Consideration and Initiating Structure. The Ohio State leadership studies (Stogdill, 1948) took place in the 1940s and 1950s, and identified the

behavior constructs of Consideration and Initiating Structure as relevant subsets for study in educational settings.

During this same time period, the University of Michigan also was conducting leadership studies (Likert, 1961). According to Likert, three types of leadership behavior were identified through these studies: task-oriented behavior, relationship-oriented behavior, and participative leadership. Task-oriented behaviors are closely aligned with the Initiating Structures in the Ohio State studies, while relationship-oriented behaviors are considered to be similar to the construct of Consideration in the Ohio State studies. One difference between the two studies is that the results of the University of Michigan study suggest participative leadership be separate from the other consideration or relationship-oriented behaviors. Further, although several theories and assumptions have appeared throughout the literature since the Ohio State and Michigan studies, the two general constructs of Consideration and Initiating Structure are still widely accepted and studied today.

Another approach to studying leadership is one regarding the interaction between the leader's traits, behaviors, and the situation in which the leader operates. Situational leadership theory is one contingency theory that advances the belief that the importance of leadership behaviors depends on the situation (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Aspects of the situation that modify the importance of behavior are called situational moderator variables. This concept was a major shift in thinking at the time, allowing for the possibility that leadership is different in any given situation (Bolman & Deal, 2003).

Phillips (1992) applies contingency theory to study Abraham Lincoln's leadership behaviors, focusing on the constructs of Consideration and Initiating Structure. Many of

Lincoln's identified behaviors such as circulating among the troops; complimenting people, being available to followers, and creating a compassionate culture are consistent with the construct of Consideration. Other identified behaviors of Lincoln's leadership are more closely aligned to the concept of Initiating Structure and include decisiveness, setting and monitoring progress of identified aims or goals, and paying attention to task details.

Hersey and Blanchard (1984) propose a model to explain why leadership effectiveness varies across the two dimensions of task behaviors and relationship behaviors, similar in definition to consideration and initiating structure identified on the Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire. The work of Hersey and Blanchard (1982) is an example of the contingency theory approach in which the researchers propose a model where the constructs of Initiating Structure and Consideration are approached differently based upon the maturity level of the followers. Contingency theories assume that the effects of one variable on leadership are contingent on other variables (Horner, 1997). In the early 1950s, leadership theory expanded as new concepts and perspectives were explored. One of the new concepts was the exploration of the possibility that leadership can be different in each situation (Saal & Knight, 1988).

Combs, Miser, and Whitaker (1999) recognized the fact that school leaders function within an organization that is dynamic and must wear different hats for different situations. School leaders find themselves in roles as managers, controllers, and directors, which are roles akin to initiating structure, as well as helpers, aides, assistants, and ministers, which parallel the construct of consideration. The fact was evident that several observations and theories of leadership are congruent with much of the original work out

of the Ohio State studies, essentially focused on tasks and people, supporting the original ideas of initiating structure and consideration included on the Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire.

Current theoretical frameworks of leadership include, explicitly or implicitly, a focus on a concern for people and a focus on production (Vecchio, 2006). The literature is limited regarding board members' perceptions of school superintendents' leader behaviors (Peterson & Short, 2001; Tallerico, 1989). However, board perceptions are important as evidenced by the close working relationships of superintendents and board members (Cambron-McCabe, Cunningham, 2005), as well as the high turnover rate of superintendents often associated with poor board relationships (Houston & Eadie, 2005).

#### *Superintendent Turnover*

Public perception of the superintendency is that of a career with considerable stress and great challenge (Cooper, Fusarelli, & Carella, 2000). Metzger (2003) finds that stress within the position often determines the superintendent's actions or behaviors and that these behaviors play a role in school board-superintendent relations. Research indicates that stress is a cause for superintendent resignation, adding to turnover rates and a superintendent shortage. Metzger also reports that superintendent shortages, frequent turnovers, and burnout of leaders are often due to defective board of education-superintendent relationships caused by stress.

There are opposing points of view concerning superintendent turnover in school districts. The first point of view is that there is a superintendent crisis created by the turnover in Urban districts. The frequent superintendent turnover estimated at 2.5 years is the topic of repeated newspaper articles referring to dissatisfaction of the superintendent

and a revolving-door superintendent turnover (Alsbury, 2003). The term revolving-door superintendency was then used to describe superintendent turnover rates and creates interest and concern over superintendent leadership and time spent in the position. Concern for the large number of superintendent turnovers in urban districts has generated research on the topic. Natkin, Cooper, Fusarelli, Alborano, Padilla, and Ghosh (2002) question the phenomenon of the revolving-door superintendency to determine a second point of view. Natkin et al. establish that the well-publicized stories of superintendent turnover that grab our attention are primarily in urban districts. They also predicted that openings in the position will occur in large numbers due to other variables such as retirement, upward mobility and interest in other professions.

Conrad and Rosser (2007) determine that turnover has not increased markedly since 1975. They find that concern still exists as the number of vacancies currently created by retiring administrators has increased. They also find that fewer certified and potentially qualified individuals are willing to take on the challenges of running a school district (Conrad & Rosser, 2007). The school board's ability to select the right person for the needs and culture of the district may lead to a strong start and longer length of service (Tallerico, 2000).

In a large-scale study sponsored by the American Association of School Administrators, Cooper, Fusarelli, and Carella, (2000) discover that the 1,688 superintendent respondents generally held their position for an average of 7.24 years. Surveys conducted by the National School Boards Association (NSBA) (2000) confirm these findings. NSBA did acknowledge that projected openings due to retirements of

baby boomers would happen around the same time and might create a sense of superintendents flocking from the profession.

Natkin, et al. (2002) report that short terms of superintendent service contribute negatively and add a sense of crisis to the school superintendent position. In turn, this sense of crisis contributes negatively to the recruitment of quality candidates. Current superintendent actions are influenced by the turnover rate. Superintendents, believing they will likely be in a position for a short time, often react by making leadership decisions resulting in school board dissatisfaction. The success or failure of superintendents in the field is considered an aspect of superintendent turnover (Hoyle et al., 2005).

Another aspect of superintendent turnover discovered by Glass and Bjork (2003) is the stress on superintendents that is related to state and federal mandates. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 (U.S. Department of Education, 2002) places challenging requirements on states and adds to leadership demands and stress on public school superintendents. These conditions make the superintendent position a less desirable position. Pressure for increased programs, collaboration, and accountability combined with federal and state mandates also place many demands on the position (NCLB, 2001). However, there are multiple factors that may be contributing to superintendent turnover (Glass & Bjork, 2003).

The factors that impact superintendent turnover and stability in public school systems are varied and interconnected. Glass and Bjork (2003) confirm that the American education system is facing a critical shortage of superintendents over the next several years, causing a dilemma over who will lead our schools. Adding to this dilemma, school

districts across the country report difficulties filling leadership positions with highly qualified people (Gilman & Lanman-Givens, 2001).

### *School Board Selection of Superintendents*

Local school boards have the responsibility of selecting superintendents for a three to five year term. The process used by school boards in New York State varies. However, NSBA recommends a process for the recruitment, search and selection of superintendents (NSBA, 2009. [www.nsba.org](http://www.nsba.org)) School boards have the option to complete a superintendent search on their own, contract with an outside search consultant, or follow variations of this process (Tallerico, 2000).

Current research confirms that one of the most important functions of public school boards of education is that of selecting a superintendent of schools (National School Board Association, 1996). In many districts, the school board and superintendent enter into a contract that specifies leadership duties. Contract language and New York State school law address terminations and buy-outs in the event that a district desires to end a superintendent's length of service prior to the expiration of their contract (NSBA, 1996). For this reason, it is important for districts to select candidates that fit the community's needs and avoid termination that may send a district toward instability (National School Board Association, 1996).

*Recruitment and selection methods.* Significant trends and issues limit the pool from which a school district may be recruiting and selecting its candidates for the interview process (Normore, 2006). There has been a shortage of administrators because of pending retirements, inadequately trained or prepared replacements, individuals leaving school leadership positions for other types of employment, and raised

expectations of leadership positions. The aforementioned factors contribute to the need for school district personnel to identify, recruit, and select effective leaders (Normore, 2002).

Recruitment and selection of effective superintendents remains a challenge for educational organizations. Normore (2006) states that districts lacking an aggressive process for the selection of the superintendent may make a decision that haunts them for years. Promotion from within the organization is considered as an option to fill positions (Seyfarth, 2002). In the past, administration was seen as a normal part of career advancement. However, teachers no longer see administration as a way to improve their salary or respect, adding to the lack of quality candidates (Seyfarth, 1999).

Superintendent selection varies among school districts. Glass and Bjork, (2003) identify three selection methods used today. Districts may form their own candidate search, allowing the board to control screening, interviewing and selection of candidates. Some boards hire a private search firm or agency to screen and select candidates from which the board may interview. Additionally, the board may use the services provided by intermediate school organizations to screen and recommend candidates for the interview (Glass & Bjork, 2003).

Studies show that many school boards continue to look at both the search and selection process for answers leading them to a person with desired leadership behaviors. Charlton (1998) studies the relationship between the Idaho public school superintendent selection process and board satisfaction of the selected superintendent's performance. The board members in this study believed that the selection process they use results in their satisfaction with the superintendent selected. School boards engaged in the

following process: use of a consultant, structured recruitment, selection procedures, use of committees that include community and staff, visitation of the candidate's work place, and a unanimous board selection of the superintendent. As a final step, the board formally introduces the new superintendent to the staff and community. Charlton's study shows the average superintendent time in the position in Idaho was 3.5 years compared to the national tenure average of 6.6 years. Additionally, Charlton found that 64 % of Idaho school districts changed superintendents at the end of a five year period, concluding that superintendent turnover and stability may not be a function of the process.

In 1998, Charlton introduced personality and fit into the equation of superintendent selection and, although he received similar results, the board was found to be satisfied with the superintendent's traits and behaviors. A superintendent's traits and behaviors have a larger positive effect on the district if they match that of the organization's culture and the board.

Talbot and Billsbury (2007) use Schneider's attraction-selection-attrition theory (1987) proving that people with similar traits and behaviors are attracted. They note that those selected into organizations that have similar behaviors stay in the organization and enjoy success in the position. Talbot and Billsbury (2007) find there is a distinct difference between fit and misfit. Their qualitative study finds the root causes of both fit and misfit in organizations, with fit and misfit on the furthest ends of the spectrum. Talbot and Billsbury (2007) state that it is important to look at how organizations search and select superintendents that they perceive as a match to what the district is looking for in this leadership position. Most boards use a candidate interview process to identify the top three persons that match the district culture and needs.

In a similar study, where superintendents look at recruited principals, superintendents indicated that the most important criterion used to select candidates is the use of professional references (Clark, 2003). Clark (2003) explores the role of administrative experience in addition to behavioral traits in the selection and hiring process. Both qualitative and quantitative responses were gathered and analyzed through a survey administered randomly among ninety-two superintendents throughout New Jersey. The study concludes that 94.2% of superintendents feel that it is somewhat important that candidates have administrative experience from within their district; however, they agree that it is very important that candidates have previous elementary experience. Previous experience as an administrator, elementary teaching experience, and instructional leadership skills are identified as desired. Yet, finding a leader that possesses character traits of optimism, honesty, and consideration are high on the desired list (Clark, 2003). These are the qualities that build interpersonal relationships needed in times of change and desired in selection of all administrators, including the superintendent position. Brockel (1989) confirms that board perceptions of the desired behavioral characteristics include: vision, influence on positive culture and climate, effective communicator, a team player, instructional leader, and experience.

School boards often use their intuition while interviewing and looking at application folders to predict what characteristics, behaviors, and personality traits may lead to a fit between themselves and prospective candidates. In a study on applicant characteristics and behaviors during the interview process, Higgins and Judge (2004) determine that characteristics and behavioral factors have a direct effect on the interview outcome. Factors ranging from knowledge, skills, abilities, personality characteristics,

values, and social skills conveyed during the interview lead to perceptions of fit and final selection decisions. Higgins and Judge's research shows that applicants may use strategies during interviews that lead to the recruiter perceive a match. Applicants that display the personal characteristics, traits, behaviors, and needs of the district, are selected. False perceptions and a limited candidate pool find school boards struggling to find the best person for the job.

According to Mills (2004), school boards select superintendents based on personal character traits and not their ability to lead. Mills' interest in superintendent turnover led to his study in search of reliable, valid, and legal interview questions to use during the interview process. The Mills study (2004) is made up of two distinct parts; the first addresses the need for specific interview questions, and the second replicates a previous mixed methods study conducted in 2002. Mills replicates studies confirming that school board members hire superintendents based on general personal characteristics. It is assumed that all school boards are interested in hiring the right superintendent to lead their district to exemplary status and that the wrong choice may result in unsatisfactory or dysfunctional leadership. Therefore, the questions Mills uses during the structured interview become a vital part of finding the right person for the position. Mills describes the structured interview as a process of legally discriminating among a group of candidates seeking the same position. His basic objective in selection is to provide a means to select and reject, the questions are the means used for this purpose. Mills identifies interview questions and answers that are significant in hiring a superintendent that will help lead the district to exemplary status. Mills finds that use of the structured-

panel interview format helps school board members compare all candidates fairly, and deter them from asking illegal questions (2004).

In a national study, Wallace (2003) describes and examines a search process for new superintendents. He studied seventy one superintendents, collecting data through a survey of school board presidents. Districts where school boards conducted longer searches, trained board members in the search process, and interviewed a larger number of quality candidates hired successful superintendents (Wallace, 2003). Of the 71 respondents, 62% of the boards perceive their superintendent as successful. The Wallace study confirms that districts that spent more time, money and effort in the search and selection process, experience higher levels of satisfaction in their selection of a new superintendent. Districts are looking for methods of selection that result in longer length of service.

Bjork, Keedy, Winter, and Rienhart (2007) use existing recruitment methods to complete a field survey they describe as a combination of quasi-experimental and correlation designs. The intent of the study is to look at a specific pool of superintendent applicants. They look at the experienced practicing principal, and whether or not the principal may or may not be a likely candidate. The study is conducted in the state of Kentucky where practicing public school principals were surveyed. The study looks at demographic information designed to collect personal characteristics of the participants and information on job satisfaction. Bjork, Keedy, Winter, and Rienhart (2007) report limitations for principals as potential candidates. They find that 87.7% of the principal participants do not hold the required certificate for superintendents and that 79% report they do not intend to pursue the certificate. Participants state that the major reason they

choose not to pursue the certificate is they did not feel they had the capability to become a superintendent. Research suggests that school boards, policy makers, and educational facilities of higher education may need to know if the people in the pipeline of quality candidates intend to pursue superintendent vacancies as they assess vacancy challenges and recruitment (Bjork, Keedy, Winter, & Rienhart, 2007).

Pashiardis and Petros (1993) research alternate methods available in the selection of quality administrators. Their research confirms that the interview process is often the main determination of selecting new superintendents, yet there are other methods that may be less subjective and are available for consideration. One such method is the use of assessment centers in education. During the 1970s, a pilot project was used to demonstrate this alternative method of identifying quality candidates for administrative selection. Participants were screened by ability in the following skill/dimension areas: problem analysis, judgment, organizational ability, decisiveness, leadership, sensitivity, stress tolerance, oral communication, written communication, range of interests, personal motivation, and educational values (Pashiardis & Petros, 1993). Reports are then generated for assessment and development recommendations using a rating that indicates areas of strength and needs for improvement. However Pashiardis and Petros also state, this process presents concerns in validity, a high cost to participate in this type of program, and the ability of this program to predict performance. Pashiardis and Petros suggest that the process could be used as a rigorous way to screen candidates for strengths in specific areas. The process would allow boards more information while looking at superintendent candidates as they enter the final interview selection process. Pashiardis and Petros conclude with predictions of massive numbers of baby-boomers

entering the age of retirement during the next ten years, this may offer one alternative for school districts selecting new superintendents .

*Additional considerations.* Concerns also lie in the lack of correlation between job interview and job performance. Normore's study (2006) is based on the review of research and identifies implications for recruitment, and selection of administrators. The first implication suggests that a partnership in higher education leadership development programs would deliver effective well trained leaders. Second, a policy that provides district resources for attracting and retaining school leaders is necessary. A third implication of the Normore study (2006) suggests that districts should provide mentoring by leaders already employed in similar positions and establish a policy to fund coursework. The final implication for recruitment and success calls for district restructuring to allow superintendents resources and supports needed to distribute leadership responsibilities and provide instructional leadership.

While districts delineate responsibilities of superintendents, Hord and Estes (1993), look at the lack of written policy and procedures in place to guide the selection of superintendents and administrators. Researchers identify professional competencies and skills required of superintendents. Board members placed personnel management, educational leadership, and finance as high priority predictors for success (Hord & Estes, 1993). Hord and Estes also discover that academic qualifications and specific doctoral program s may enhance desirability. Additionally, personal traits and factors including character, poise, personality, intelligence, sense of humor, voice, open mindedness, and cultural background are listed as desired in superintendent selection (Hord & Estes, 1993).

In an attempt to search for these qualifications, Long Island districts turn to private search consultants to ease the political pressures of completing their own search. As school boards react to high taxes and a lack of trust from stakeholder groups, they often rely on these consultants to provide the best candidates. According to Kamler (2009), Long Island school boards often use retired superintendents from local districts as their search consultants. In a qualitative study of the similarities and differences between 1995 and 2005, (Kamler, 2009) research confirms that consultants compile candidate profiles that included evidence of experience, knowledge, training, certification, and with even criminal and credit checks. The process allows the search consultants to gather quality candidates within the social, political, and economic context. Through this process, districts attracted a broader talent pool and increased diversity including more women assuming the superintendent position (Kamler, 2009). Yet, gender and minority continue to be among the factors that are not equally considered during selection (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008).

Women and minorities continue to be underrepresented in the superintendent search and selection process. Hoff and Mitchell (2008) examine the career paths of male and female leaders. They looked closely at the leaders' perception of how gender and/or minority status affected the leader's entry and advancement in administration. Hoff and Mitchell (2008) found that men (2.57) and women (3.40) perceived that gender barriers continue to exist. Women are often the victims of discrimination due to perceptions of tension between the demands of job and family responsibilities. Research suggests that even in a time with fewer qualified applicants to fill superintendent positions there is a divide in the selection of candidates. Qualified women continue to dominate the field of

education making up 75% of the workforce (U.S. Department of Education, 2005), yet they only represent 18% of the nation's superintendents (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008). Statistics show that college and university leadership programs are filled with talented teachers that have increased the pool of skilled leaders ready and willing to assume administrative openings. Many of these leadership programs are largely represented by women (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008). Yet women continue to be overlooked for positions in leadership, especially those positions that have the most responsibility, influence, and high salaries such as high school principal and superintendent (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008; Gilmour & Kinsella, 2009). Hoff and Mitchell (2008) found that late entry into administration is a factor contributing to lower representation of women in the highest levels of administration. Family responsibility is a factor for the delay of women entering administration, and a second factor for the delay of women into administration is mobility. Women are less likely to switch districts for upward movement (Hoff & Mitchell). Along with these social structures, Hoff and Mitchell identify two patterns of behavior that become known from the study. The first pattern is that participants felt that this was a problem in other districts, but not in theirs. The participants examined the issue from an individual perspective and believed gender barriers only happened in other districts. A second pattern emerges through "oversimplification" of gender as an issue. It is apparent that the theme of gender used to be a problem- but no longer impedes women as they seek upward movement in administration (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008).

The school board president's perception may influence the selection of a new superintendent. Research supports the fact that the school board president's perceptions of the superintendent's ability to influence board members and gain board support are

vital to the success and stability of the superintendent (Peterson & Short, 2001). Peterson and Short's study uses social influence theory as a theoretical framework, looking at social attractiveness and credibility. The characteristics of social attractiveness are identified as; a perceived similarity of one person to another, credibility, and trustworthiness. In a study of 131 randomly selected school districts, the perceived compatibility with school board presidents related directly to superintendent trustworthiness, expertise, and social attractiveness. Using both quantitative and qualitative methods, Peterson and Short conduct research using two surveys: the Transactional Style Management Scale (TSM) (Snaveley, 1981; Snaveley & Waters, 1983; & Snaveley & McNeil, 1997) and the Superintendent Rating Form Quick Score (SRQS, based on the works of Strong in 1968) to measure perceived human interactive behaviors and the three social influence dimensions along with interviews. The findings indicate that the positive attributes of social theory and social style are thought of as essential in superintendents. Interpersonal relationships and human skills allow the superintendent to build a supportive working relationship with board members. Board president time in the position seems to influence their perceptions. Mean scores for social attractiveness, expertise, trustworthiness, and emotiveness are found to be higher for superintendents working with experienced board presidents. These skills are perceived to allow the superintendent to positively interact with the school board president to set agendas and influence board-voting patterns. Until recent dissatisfaction with the quality of education across America, the public school superintendent remained in the background and escaped the spotlight.

Boards of education in Missouri report satisfaction in the search and selection process they conducted without the assistance of an outside search firm (Patrick, 2006). The majority of respondents among these school board members perceive their search and selection process to be successful. Data from a study of 71 school board member respondents focuses on districts selecting new superintendents during the years 2001-2005. Data gathered includes district enrollment, school district location, and school district wealth. School districts are then randomly selected if they had searched and selected a new superintendent within the previous ten years. Superintendent candidate knowledge and skills in communication/interpersonal skills, facilities, finance, management, personnel, law, and planning are similar across enrollment size and district location. In addition, Patrick (2006) reports little significant difference among the perceptions of school board members within the four categories of wealth, knowledge and skills in personnel and legal issues are perceived to be a high priority in selection of new superintendents. Patrick's study shows that school district size, location, superintendent turnover rate, and candidates possessing a doctoral degree are strong determiners in the selection process. Findings also show that board members in all three categories rate superintendent/school board relations, community relations, communication/interpersonal skills, finance/budget, instructional leadership, strategic planning, and media relations as the highest priorities for superintendents. The areas of knowledge and skills in facilities, management, personnel, and legal issues rate as fairly high priorities (Patrick, 2006). Patrick recommends follow-up studies to see if the superintendents hired demonstrate the skills thought important during selection and hiring process.

### *Leadership Behaviors*

The pace for change confronting organizations today calls for more adaptive, flexible leadership behaviors (Bass, Avolio, Jung, & Berson, 2003). Cooperative and participatory leadership behaviors are seen as essential according to Bass et. al.

Superintendents wear many hats, are responsible for a multitude of functions, and are not immune from challenges and problems. While wearing these hats and making decisions, the behaviors of the superintendent reflect upon the district and determine the relationship between the board and superintendent relationship (Tallerico, 1989). Tallerico finds this relationship is a critical factor for superintendent success.

Strong and positive leadership behaviors are the solution to effective schools. Sergiovanni (2005) writes that conventional wisdom allows leaders to discover solutions to problems and that even in the best of circumstances, leadership is difficult. Leadership behaviors evolve in the midst of interaction between leaders and followers; leaders behave in situations that are defined by subordinates' actions, making the well-being of the followers important (Spillane, 2005). The behaviors relating to the well-being of the people who work within the district; such as providing encouragement and recognition, communication of meaningful information in a timely and clear manner, along with openness and consultative behaviors are considered essential leadership practices in schools and districts (Louis, 1994; Tallerico, 1989; Vecchio, 2006).

Prior research focuses and builds upon studies of leader behaviors that include a task or production orientation, and one of interaction with people or consideration (Vecchio, 2006). These two leader behavior constructs are formally titled Initiation of Structure (Initiating Structure) and Consideration. Initiating Structure and Consideration

are measured on the Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire as separate subscales (Stogdill, 1963).

The application of these behavior constructs is evidenced when superintendents and boards work together, addressing the concerns and issues their district faces. During these interactions, public school board members form perceptions of their superintendents. School board members' perceptions are often based upon behaviors that their superintendent's exhibit and these perceptions are critical to the board-superintendent relationship (Richard & Kurse, 2008). Boards typically desire a superintendent who demonstrates task-related behaviors for the district, such as high state report card scores, increased graduation rates, and responsible financial management (Porch & Davis, 2008). Additionally, boards desire a superintendent who pays attention to people as individuals. Boards are looking for superintendents that form positive relationships with parents and community members, and generally work cooperatively with others (Richard & Kurse, 2008; Ripley, 2006)).

Research surrounding board members' perceptions of school superintendent leadership behaviors proves that a positive board-superintendent relationship, including the board's ability to maintain a positive perception of the superintendent, is critical to the superintendent's effectiveness (Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000; Harrington-Lueker, 2002; Hoyle & Skrla, 1999; Peterson & Short, 2001). This is an important fact considering that the board of education has authority to hire, fire, reward, renew contracts, and strengthen the work of the superintendent. Kowalski (1999) affirms that rapid turnover in the superintendency is often because of poor relationships between a superintendent and school board members due to negative perceptions of the

superintendent's behaviors. Dillon and Halliwell (1991) find that when a superintendent's perceptions of his or her own purposes, strengths, and weaknesses are similar to those of board members, a superintendent is more likely to be retained regardless of other performance data. Similarly, satisfactory board perceptions are identified as a factor for ongoing superintendent effectiveness. As a result of researching perceived behaviors that board members hold, both board members and superintendents have an opportunity for increasing understanding and practice of their working relationship.

Superintendents are responsible for administering change within a school district. The state and federal government establishes change reforms regarding initiatives designed to raise standards and student achievement, the implementation of core standards, and new evaluations for teachers and principals. There are definitive connections to these transformational changes that are identified within the area of situational leadership. Paraday (2002) defines situational leadership as a process that changes and transforms people. There is also a relationship between superintendent leadership behaviors and staff satisfaction, including workplace conditions associated with employment satisfaction. Studies show there is a preference for superintendents who show concern for others, are open communicators, and believe in shared decision making (Paraday, 2002). Good communication is a behavior that boards perceive as essential.

In a study of superintendent behaviors, Richard and Kurse (2008) find that communication is critical to an effective positive board connection. Communication must be timely, consistent, and attentive to the needs and expectations of both the board members and the superintendent (Rickabaugh & Kremer, 1997). A second important behavior identified in the study is that superintendents must be credible and honest in

their communication (Richard & Kurse, 2008). The study points out that it is important to be able to back any statements or answers with factual information. This includes going to others for information prior to answering questions. In this way, superintendents are more likely to be perceived as effective communicators.

#### *Board Perceptions of Superintendent Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction*

School boards often measure their satisfaction or dissatisfaction of superintendents through measures of district success. Studies indicate that superintendent turnover is an indirect influence on instructional effectiveness relating to district success (Alsbury, 2003). Alsbury also suggests that there is a difference between studying the factors related to superintendent turnover of political vs. apolitical turnover and the effects it carries through the community. Several conclusions concerning superintendent turnover can be made from relating the effects of superintendent instability to a dysfunctional environment. When the community's dissatisfaction with the school district is great enough, the following events may occur: the number of split votes on the board reaches a high level, the rate of school board member turnover increases, and involuntary superintendent turnover occurs (Alsbury, 2003).

#### *School Board/ Superintendent Relationships*

The topic of school boards and superintendent relationships is rich across the literature (Alsbury, 2003; Castallo, 2003; Smoley, 1999). Studies show that positive board/superintendent relationships are a determining factor in superintendent success. The stability of this relationship is a factor in the effectiveness of the district (National School Boards Association, 1996).

Local school boards are the largest body of elected officials in the United States. The public schools they serve educate approximately 90% of the current U.S. workforce (Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000). Goodman and Zimmerman state that school board function to establish policy has not changed in recent years. School boards continue to have the responsibility for the schools within their respective districts and are governed through state law and bylaws of the state board of education (Fletcher, 1980). A school board delegates its responsibilities of district management to the superintendent. The board answers to community members and the state department of education on the outcomes and measures of the district's student achievement, the efficiency of the district's operations, appropriate use of resources and the performance of the superintendent (Fletcher, 1980).

In a national study of superintendents and school boards, Rausch (2001) determines that the superintendent-school board relationship is a factor for a superintendent's length of service. Conflict with the school board is listed as a common reason for a superintendent leaving a district (Cooper, Fusarelli, & Carella, 2000). Superintendents list poor relationship with the board as a reason for involuntary non-extension of a contract, and school boards list a poor relationship with the superintendent as a major cause for termination of contract (Glass, Bjork & Brunner, 2000).

Workman (2003) finds that it takes a major effort for school board members and superintendents to develop a positive working relationship. For this relationship to be effective both parties must openly share information and observe open lines of communication. By clearly defining roles and responsibilities, the board and the superintendent are able to perform their duties and serve the school district effectively.

District success is dependent upon the ability of the board and superintendent to engage in self-evaluation of current governance practices, to have purposeful dialogue on the subject of governance, to identify the strengths and needs of the district, to develop and implement an action plan and then evaluate the plan (Workman, 2003).

Common criticisms of local boards include micromanagement, political or personal self-interest, lack of gaining knowledge on the issues, and neglect of participation in ongoing training and self-assessment. Board members also have a tendency to fall into extremes in decision making; either responding too quickly to whatever the trend of the day or negotiating with other board members to guarantee a vote (Danzberger, 1994).

Smoley (1999) suggests that some of the criticism of boards is because board members are often not prepared for service. As board members learn how to fulfill their role, they realize that a strong working relationship with the superintendent is critical for effective district leadership (Thomas, 2001). Smoley finds that there is a difference between perceptions of board members serving multiple terms on the board and new board members.

School board members' political agendas are referenced in research 85% of the time as a contributing factor to superintendents leaving their position involuntarily (Metzger, 1997). Metzger (1997) finds that when board members make educational decisions based on political or personal interest, this causes a lack of trust and respect for the professional expertise of the superintendent. The lack of trust and respect is causing superintendents to seek other positions (Metzger). Because local school boards are the sole evaluators of superintendent performance and renewal of contracts, a quality

working relationship with members also directly influences the length of service for the superintendent (Cooper, Fusarelli & Carella, 2000).

The study of school board-superintendent interaction sheds some light on superintendent length of stay. Researchers have long proposed theories to help explain the political environment within school districts. The dissatisfaction theory research by Iannaccone and Lutz (1970) acknowledge the multiple studies by Alsbury (2003) and show that a politically motivated board often leads to disagreement, dissatisfaction, and superintendent turnover.

Fletcher (1980) states the role of the school board has changed over the past century from manager to policy maker. Although the school board retains the responsibility for schools within the state laws and bylaws of the state board of education (Fletcher, 1980), the board continues to function by delegating responsibility to the superintendent. Tallerico (2000) finds that the role of the board and superintendent often need refinement. Board training is necessary for boards to know and understand their roles (Tallerico).

Poor board-superintendent relationships, differences in educational priorities and expectations, financial mismanagement, communication issues, board member turnover, changing demographics of student population, student achievement, and systemic relationships often create conflicts that shorten a superintendent's time in the district (Ray & Marshall, 2005). Ray and Marshall (2005) contend that there are many related factors that determine superintendent-board relationships and any combination of disagreement leading to conflict contribute to dissatisfaction and turnover in the superintendent position.

Seitz (1994) argues that it is a major challenge for school boards to understand and properly observe relationships, roles and responsibilities. Seitz suggests there are personal and impersonal conditions that can sometimes affect the harmony between board- superintendent relationships.

### *Chapter Summary*

In the midst of a national school reform movement intended to raise student achievement and graduation rates, the demand on school boards and superintendents to make this happen has become immense. Political pressures from the State Education Department are connected to funding, and student achievement data is the key to this funding. Marzano and Waters (2007) found that setting and monitoring nonnegotiable goals for achievement and instruction at district and school levels will raise student achievement. The superintendent is the one who carries the responsibilities of the entire organization. Literature on educational leadership shows a strong correlation between the quality of district leadership, the achievement of the school district, and stability of the superintendent (Marzano & Waters, 2007).

This dissertation used leadership theory or more specifically, Contingency theory to look at board perceptions of superintendent leadership behaviors. Fiedler (1967) found that leader effectiveness is connected to the leader's ability to influence others in the organization in order to achieve the goals of the organization. Using an approach similar to Stogdill (1948) two behavior constructs of Initiating Structure and Consideration are used to identify board perceptions of superintendent leadership behaviors. Contingency theory assumes that the effects of one variable on leadership are contingent on other

variables (Horner, 1997). One effect is the rising number of superintendent openings across the country.

Boards have shown concern regarding vacancies in superintendent openings as the number of retiring administrators becomes greater and as fewer certified and potentially qualified individuals are willing to take on the challenges of running a school district (Conrad & Rosser, 2007). Superintendent turnover due to mandates and demands placed on the position are adding to the dilemma of difficulty in filling superintendent positions with highly qualified people (Gilman & Lanman-Givens, 2001). The study provides important information on ways to increase the retention of superintendents and therefore address the projected shortage of superintendents in public school districts.

Researchers note that school boards have the responsibility of selecting superintendents for a three to five year term. Districts must select candidates that fit the community's needs and avoid termination that may send a district toward instability (National School Board Association, 1996). Wallace (2003) finds that districts are looking for methods of selection that result in longer length of service or stability in the superintendency. The study seeks to determine answers that lead to superintendent stability.

Leadership behaviors relating to the well being of people who work in the district along with openness and consultative behaviors are considered essential for superintendents (Tallerico, 1089; Vecchio, 2006). According to Sergiovanni (2005) strong and positive leadership behaviors are the solution to effective school districts. The study adds to this information by using the Leader Behavior Descriptive Questionnaire

subsets Initiating Structure and Consideration to collect board perceptions of superintendent leadership behaviors.

Castallo (2003) finds that satisfaction between boards and the superintendent begins with selecting the right superintendent. Research supports board satisfaction as a factor in superintendent turnover/stability. School board members and superintendents list conflict as a reason for a superintendent leaving the position (Polka, Litchka, & Davis, 2008). The superintendent selection process is the first stage of development in superintendent and board relations. A positive start signals good long term relations. The study will seek to determine board perception of ideal superintendent behaviors.

Rausch's (2001) national study of superintendents and school boards determines that the superintendent-school board relationship is a factor of superintendent length of service and effectiveness. Ray and Marshall (2005) confirm that there are many related factors that determine board-superintendent relationships and satisfaction. Identifying board perceptions of ideal and real superintendent behaviors and finding the gap will provide information leading to positive board-superintendent relationships. Analyzing correlations between demographic variables and board perceptions of ideal and real leadership behaviors provide added information for boards, superintendents, and superintendent preparation programs.

Smoley (1999) states that boards and superintendents form a district's leadership team. The stability of a school district's leadership team is an important factor in determining the superintendent's and district success (NSBA, 1996). Castallo (2003) concurs that a positive board-superintendent relationship is a determining factor in

superintendent satisfaction and Alsbury (2003) connects board satisfaction with board-superintendent relationship and the superintendent stability.

In an age of increased accountability, it is important that boards of education know and understand the superintendent behaviors they perceive as desirable and effective in forming a working team. Therefore, it is important that board perceptions of superintendent leadership behaviors and board-superintendent relationships are positive and lead to leadership stability (Marzano & Waters, 2007).

## Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

### *General Perspective*

Studies in research support multiple connections between school board member satisfaction and school superintendent stability; as well as connections between school superintendent stability and student achievement/district success (Marzano & Waters, 2007). Since superintendent leadership behaviors are tied to school board satisfaction and school board members are responsible for school district governance, it is imperative to identify behaviors that are connected to board members' perceptions leading to superintendent satisfaction.

### *Research Context*

The study was conducted in upstate New York. The area consists of 42 public school districts including several counties with a wide range of socioeconomic demographics. Districts within the area are diverse and representative of the state as a whole. Among these public school districts there are rural, suburban, and urban schools. Each public school district includes an elected school board comprised of five to nine members. There are a total of 229 school board members in this region. The study focuses on school board members within the districts. Including all school board members was appropriate for validity and for addressing the relationships linking school board perceptions to personal data variables consisting of member age, gender, years of experience, schooling, superintendent age, superintendent gender, superintendent year's in position within the district, as found in question four.

Quantitative methodology was used to study school board members' perceptions of superintendents' behaviors. Quantitative techniques for analysis of this research allowed for data to be correlated with school board member perceptions of ideal superintendent behaviors and actual superintendent behaviors to identify gaps. An additional survey was administered to school board members to identify factors of demographics that may be related to their perceptions. A t-test was run to show correlations to the variables, an analysis of covariance (ANOVA) is run, and Cohen's d was used to examine the effect size of the data. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences software (SPSS) was used to analyze the data.

Conrad and Rosser (2007) find there is a concern over the number of vacancies created by retiring administrators and by the fact that fewer certified individuals are willing to take on the challenges of running a school district. School districts across the country report difficulties filling leadership positions with highly qualified people (Gilman & Lanman-Givens, 2001) and research supports board satisfaction as a factor of superintendent turnover/stability. In a national study of superintendents and school boards, Rausch (2001) determines that the superintendent-school board relationship is a factor of superintendent length of service. School board members' satisfaction or non-satisfaction is linked to their perceptions of superintendent behaviors (Rausch, 2001).

This study has provided important information on ways to increase the retention of superintendents and subsequently help address the projected shortage of superintendents in public school districts.

The purpose of the study was to improve school districts by providing research on positive school board-superintendent relationships contributing to stability in the

superintendent position. The study has identified a gap between ideal superintendent behaviors and real superintendent behaviors as perceived by school board members. School board members' perceptions of the superintendent behaviors contribute to the board-superintendent relationship (Tallerico, 2000). The relationship between school board members and the superintendent is critical to the effectiveness of the superintendent and the stability of leadership in the superintendent position.

First the study examined school board perceptions of ideal and real superintendent behaviors to identify the gap. Additionally a correlation has been made to board and superintendent demographic information. The following questions were addressed:

Q1: What is the frequency of ideal superintendent behaviors as perceived by school board members in upstate New York?

Q2: What is the frequency of real superintendent behaviors as perceived by school board members in upstate New York?

Q3: Are there significant gaps between frequently identified ideal superintendent behaviors and frequently identified real superintendent behaviors perceived by school board of education members?

Q4: If there are significant gaps between ideal and real behaviors in Initiating Structure and Consideration, are gaps correlated with any of the following variables?

- Gender of the board member
- Educational level of board member
- Length of time as a school board member
- Length of time superintendent has been employed in the position
- Gender of the superintendent

The research was conducted over a three month period and included 42 upstate New York State school districts. School districts ranged from small rural districts to an urban district consisting of 21,000 students. Each board of education consisted of between five and nine members.

### *The Research Participants*

School board members in upstate New York were invited to participate in the study. A packet containing an introductory letter of invitation, an informed consent form, and the study instruments with instructions was mailed to all participants. Two self-addressed envelopes were included for board members to return completed items. One pre-paid envelope was included to return the signed informed consent form and one pre-paid envelope was provided to return all survey materials. Separate envelopes were used to in order to collect data anonymously. Consenting board members completed two questionnaires and a data survey. In order to protect the board and superintendent anonymity, questionnaires and the data survey were not be marked for identification. A 55% return for instruments was anticipated due to the timeliness of the subject.

An introductory letter (Appendix D) was used to introduce and explain purpose of the study and the questionnaires that the participants were asked to complete. The packet also contained instructions for completing the study instruments and returning them via the pre-paid envelopes. All materials are included in the appendices.

### *Instruments Used in Data Collection*

Two questionnaires and a survey were used to collect data from a group of board members in order to describe behaviors, opinions, or other attributes of the population from which the sample is collected. Fowler (2002) finds validity in the results obtained

from the questionnaires and survey used to identify relationships between behaviors through the use of a statistical data analysis in comparative research design. The questionnaires were chosen for this study were based on the study's focus to investigate perceptions of superintendents' leader behaviors from board members' perspectives to identify the gap between board perceptions of real and ideal superintendent leadership behaviors.

The Leadership Behavior Descriptive Questionnaire (LBDQ) was developed at Ohio State University, as a project of the Ohio State Leadership Studies under the direction of Dr. Carroll L. Shartle. The questionnaire was developed to measure leadership behaviors. The original form of the questionnaire was constructed by Halpin and Winter (1952). Halpin and Winter also created an adaptation of the instrument identifying Initiating Structure and Consideration as two fundamental dimensions of leader behavior. These dimensions are identified on the basis of a factor analysis of the responses of 300 Air Force B-29 crew members who described the leader behavior of their 52 aircraft commanders. Initiating Structure and Consideration account for approximately 34% to 50 % of the common variance, respectively. In a following study based upon 249 aircraft commanders, the correlation between the scores on the two dimensions is found to be .38. Initiating Structure refers to the leader's behavior in explaining the relationship between himself and the members of his group, and in an effort to establish well-defined patterns of organization, channels of communication, and ways of getting the job done. Consideration refers to behavior indicative of friendship, mutual trust, respect, and warmth in relationship between the leader and members of the

group. The estimated reliability by the adaptation is .83 for the initiating structure scores, and .92 for the consideration scores.

A modified LBDQ-Real and modified LBDQ-Ideal Form XII Questionnaire was administered individually to school board members. This modified Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ- Real) – Form XII was used to collect descriptions of school superintendent behaviors by school board members in the same school district using the subscales of Initiating Structure defined as clearly defines own role and lets followers know what is expected and Consideration defined as regards the comfort, well being, status, and contributions of followers. Form XII represents the fourth revision of the questionnaire completed in 1963 by Ralph M. Stogdill at the Fisher College of Business, Ohio State University. The LBDQ is usually administered to followers to describe the behaviors of their leader or supervisor. However, the LBDQ questionnaire is also be used by supervisors to describe a given leader that they know well enough to describe accurately (LBDQ Manual, 1962).

The LBDQ-Form XII was developed by Stogdill (1963) as a revised version the document created by Halpin and Winter (1957). It is published by the Fisher College of Business and is free of copyright requirement for purposes of educational study. The LBDQ was developed to obtain descriptions of leader behavior as observed by followers within the framework of 12 factors/subscales. The 12 subscales identified by Stogdill (1963) are Representation, Demand Reconciliation, Tolerance of Uncertainty, Persuasiveness, Initiating Structure, Tolerance and Freedom, Role Assumption, Consideration, Production Emphasis, Predictive Accuracy, Integration, and Superior Orientation.

Each subscale contains five or ten items. The participant indicates a response by circling one of the five letters (A, B, C, D, or E). Each item is scored on a 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 scale coinciding with the letters, with the exception of 4 items that are scored in reverse order. The higher response indicated by these numbers indicates stronger observed leader behavior on the LBDQ Real or a higher leader behavior expectation on the LBDQ Ideal. The questionnaires were modified to include items from two subscales and were administered through the use of the LBDQ Ideal and Real. The scaled down instruments applied the subscales most closely associated with educational leadership and require approximately five minutes each to complete.

Research identifies these two subscales of leader behavior as Consideration and Initiating Structure. Consideration is the degree to which the leader shows concern and respect for followers, looks out for their welfare, and expresses appreciation and support (Bass, 1990). Consideration represents the people-skills of leader behavior.

Initiating Structure is the degree to which the leader defines and organizes the leader's personal role and the roles of followers toward goal attainment while defining patterns and channels of communication (Fleishman, 1995). Initiating Structure represents the production or task behavior of leadership. Consideration and Initiating Structure are considered to be among the most robust of leader behaviors and considered fundamental indicators of effective leadership (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Significant research concludes that the LBDQ-XII is the best measure of Consideration and Initiating Structure in education (Judge, Piccolo, & Ilies, 2004).

The subscale items of Initiation and Consideration Ideal and Real:

Table 3. 1

*Subscale of Items of Initiation and Consideration (Real and Ideal)*

Initiating structure – Real and Ideal	Consideration – Real and Ideal
Acts as the spokesperson of the group	Is friendly and approachable
Encourages the use of uniform procedures	Does little things to make it pleasant to be a member of the group
Tries out his/her ideas in the group	Puts suggestions made by the group into operation
Makes his/her attitudes clear to the group	Treats ALL group members as his/her equals
Decides what shall be done and how it shall be done	Gives advance notice of changes
Assigns group members to particular tasks	Keep to himself/herself
Makes sure that his/her part in the group is understood by the group members	Looks out for the personal welfare of group members
Schedules the work to be done	Is willing to make changes
Maintains definite standards of performance	Refuses to explain his/her actions
Asks that group members follow standard rules and regulations	Acts without consulting the group

Reliability of the LBDQ-Form XII is strong, reliability being the amount of measurement error in the test or scale under study. Internal consistency coefficients are

reported between .70 and .80, using a modified Kuder- Richardson formula (Stogdill, 1963). The internal consistency has been vital in this study to ensure that the items on the two selected subscales of investigation represent essential superintendent leadership behaviors. Stogdill (1963) determines test-retest reliability is high for Consideration, with coefficients in the .70s. The test-retest reliability for Initiating Structure is lower with coefficients between .57 and .71. Test-retest reliability is a way to estimate reliability of scores from the administration of the instrument at one point in time and is correlated with scores obtained at another point in time using the same instrument for the same individuals.

Face validity of the LBDQ is strong according to the Mental Measurement Yearbook (MMY) test review (Impara & Plake, 1998). Evidence for content and construct validity is supported through a quantitative meta-analysis in which validities for each construct generalized across criteria, across measures, and over time and sources (Judge et al., 2004). The LBDQ continues to be a much-utilized instrument in researching leader behaviors.

Board members were asked not to identify themselves. The questionnaires did not contain personal identification information, to protect the anonymity of the participants and protect the seated superintendent. The questionnaires and survey were completed using a paper and pencil format.

Data collected was analyzed through the use of correlation coefficients using a T-test and single level correlation. Results were analyzed and correlated to identify a difference as influenced by board members' of ideal and real superintendent behaviors and demographics included in the survey.

*Procedures for data collection and analysis*

The following steps were used to complete the study:

1. Approval of the dissertation committee
  - a. to use and edit the LBDQ to two subscales in order to minimize the time required to
  - b. complete the study questions ;
2. Approval from St John Fisher College Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct the research proposed in this study using the LBDQ-Real & Ideal, and a personal data survey
3. Identification of study participants and construction of a packet of information
4. Packets were mailed to school board members after approval of the IRB. Packets contained a cover letter, a letter of consent, Leader Behavior Description Questionnaires – form XII Real & Ideal (LBDQ XII), a personal data survey, and two pre-addressed, stamped envelopes for returning completed materials;
5. Follow-up letters were sent ten days after the first mailing to non- responding school board members to persuade them to participate; and
6. Data was collected and analyzed using the corresponding score sheet within the LBDQ manual and the correlated coefficients for the demographic variables collected from board members was also completed.
7. The candidate has completed a proposal to present at a National School Boards Association Conference.

The cover letter was designed to seek voluntary cooperation from the board members. The cover letter explained the purpose and nature of the study and has identified the researcher's college, specific requirements for participation, directions for completion of the forms and return of the documents. In addition, the cover letter indicated assurance that all responses were kept anonymous and that neither school board members nor superintendents were identified in the study.

The LBDQ-Form XII (Ideal and Real) subscales for Initiating Structure and Consideration contain 20 questions and require 5-10 minutes to complete each questionnaire (Appendices A & B). The LBDQ questionnaire describes the frequency that the leader engages in specific leader behaviors. The LBDQ begins with simple directions and an example for completing the form by circling the corresponding letter.

The Personal Data Sheet (Appendix C) contains school board demographics information regarding the respondent's length of time served on the school board, gender, size of district, length of time the superintendent has served in the district, and the school board members' highest degree earned.

Responses to the LBDQ XII (Real and Ideal) items were analyzed in order to determine leader behaviors. Using the data record sheet provided in the manual and the scoring sheet of correlation coefficients, the data was collected and recorded. Frequency tables were also used to summarize the data by recording the value of each variable in the LBDQ XII as it was selected. In statistics, the frequency of an event is the number of times the event occurred in the study.

A correlation of coefficient procedures was used to determine whether combinations of the independent variables show a significant relationship to school board

members' perceptions of superintendent behaviors and to determine the relationship of board members age, years of experience on the school board, gender, district size, and school board members' highest degree: to their perceptions of superintendent behaviors. The data for the study was analyzed using multiple statistical procedures: mean point value, standard deviation, and variance, using a simple t-test of significance.

### *Chapter Summary*

The purpose of the study was to improve school districts by providing research on positive school board-superintendent relationships contributing to stability in the superintendent position. A quantitative statistical approach was employed to determine if significant correlations exist between board member perceptions of ideal and real superintendent behaviors. This study took place in upstate New York school districts in rural, urban, and suburban communities. The Leadership Behavior Descriptive Questionnaire XXI and a personal data sheet were used to collect data. After collecting the data, a correlation of coefficients was used to identify gaps between ideal superintendent behaviors and real superintendent behaviors as perceived by school board members, along with a correlation to demographic variables relating to board member perceptions. This correlation of school board member perceptions of ideal superintendent leader behaviors and real superintendent leader behaviors in the subscales of Consideration and Initiating Structure revealed gaps within board member perceptions. These subscales are related to communication. Better communication leads to satisfaction of the superintendent impacting superintendent stability (Tallerico, 2000).

## Chapter 4: Results

### *Introduction*

Chapter three explained the methodology used in the study to identify the gap in school board perceptions of ideal and real superintendent leadership behaviors using the Leadership Behavior Descriptive Questionnaire (LBDQ). The LBDQ was developed at Ohio State University to measure leadership behavior. The LBDQ is organized into a framework divided by 12 subscales. A modified version of the LBDQ XII –Ideal and LBDQ XII- Real is used to include two specific subscales. The scaled down instruments included the subscales most closely associated with educational leadership (Judge, Piccolo, & Ilies, 2004). The two subscales used are Initiating Structure and Consideration. Initiating Structure refers to the leader’s behavior in explaining the relationship between himself and members of the group, channels of communication, and ways of getting the job done. Consideration refers to behavior indicative of friendship, mutual trust, respect, and warmth in relationships between the leader and members of the organization. Each subscale contains ten items. The participants respond by circling one of the five letters (A, B, C, D, or E). Each item is scored on a 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 scale coinciding with the letters, with the exception of three items that are scored in reverse order. With A representing the highest possible response value of five, each sequential letter from A-E has a lower response value. Higher response values indicate stronger observed leader behaviors on the LBDQ.

The chapter is organized to present data to answer the following questions:

Q1: What is the frequency of ideal superintendent behaviors as perceived by school board members in upstate New York?

Q2: What is the frequency of real superintendent behaviors as perceived by school board members in upstate New York?

Q3: Are there significant gaps between frequently identified ideal superintendent behaviors and frequently identified real superintendent behaviors perceived by school board of education members?

Q4: If there are significant gaps between ideal and real behaviors in Initiating Structure and Consideration, are gaps correlated with any of the following variables?

1. Gender of the board member
2. Educational level of board member
3. Length of time as a school board member
4. Length of time superintendent has been employed in the position
5. Gender of the superintendent

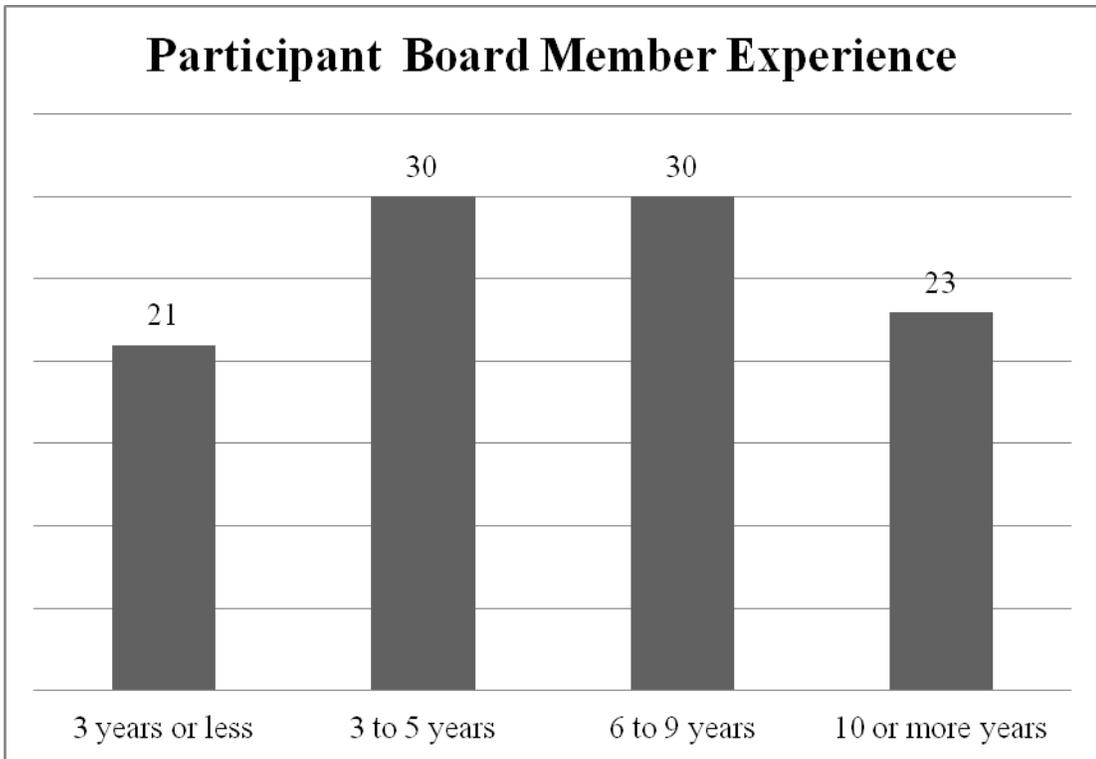
The purpose of this chapter is first to display the data showing frequency of behaviors. The second purpose of this chapter is to display the results that demonstrate whether there are significant gaps between ideal and real superintendent behaviors perceived by school board members. The final purpose is to demonstrate whether or not there are correlations between the gaps and the selected variables.

This is a study of board perceptions. Board members are not asked to identify themselves nor their school districts. The questionnaires do not contain personal information in order to protect the anonymity of the participants and the seated.

Microsoft Excel formulas and SPSS are used to run t tests, covariance, and Cohen's d is used to conduct the analysis and determine significance. To address questions one and two, SPSS is used to compute frequencies of board members' perceptions using t tests, and excel is used to gather data to construct tables showing the percentage of participant selecting often/always and never/seldom. In question three, SPSS is used to run t tests for means and Cohen's d to compute the significance of gaps between ideal and real board perceptions of superintendent behaviors in Initiating Structure and Consideration. In question four, SPSS is used to compute t tests and run an ANOVA for correlation to survey variables and significance in Initiating Structure and Consideration.

The modified LBDQ questionnaires and surveys were distributed to 229 participants in 42 upstate school districts in New York State. Participants returned 104 questionnaires and surveys that represent a 46% return rate. This is slightly less than the anticipated return rate of 50%. Although the questionnaires and surveys were completed and received as anonymous, analyses of signed participant consent forms indicate participation of board members representing rural, suburban, and urban districts.

The following figures represent a profile of the board members responding to the surveys. Participants consist of 63 male and 41 female board members. Figure 4.1 shows the level of board member experience of participants as reported in years. The number at the top of each bar indicates the number of participants that selected each response. The table shows that 83% of the participants in the study possess more than three years of experience on the board. Participants have a minimum of one year experience working with their superintendent, meaning that board members have familiarity with their superintendents' leadership behaviors.



*Figure 4.1.* Participant board member experience.

The education level of board members shows that 80% of the participants hold a higher education degree ranging from a bachelors degree to a doctoral/ law/ post-masters degree. Figure 4.2 shows the educational level of participants. The number at the top of each bar represents the number of participants responding to the variable in this item regarding their educational level at the time of the study.

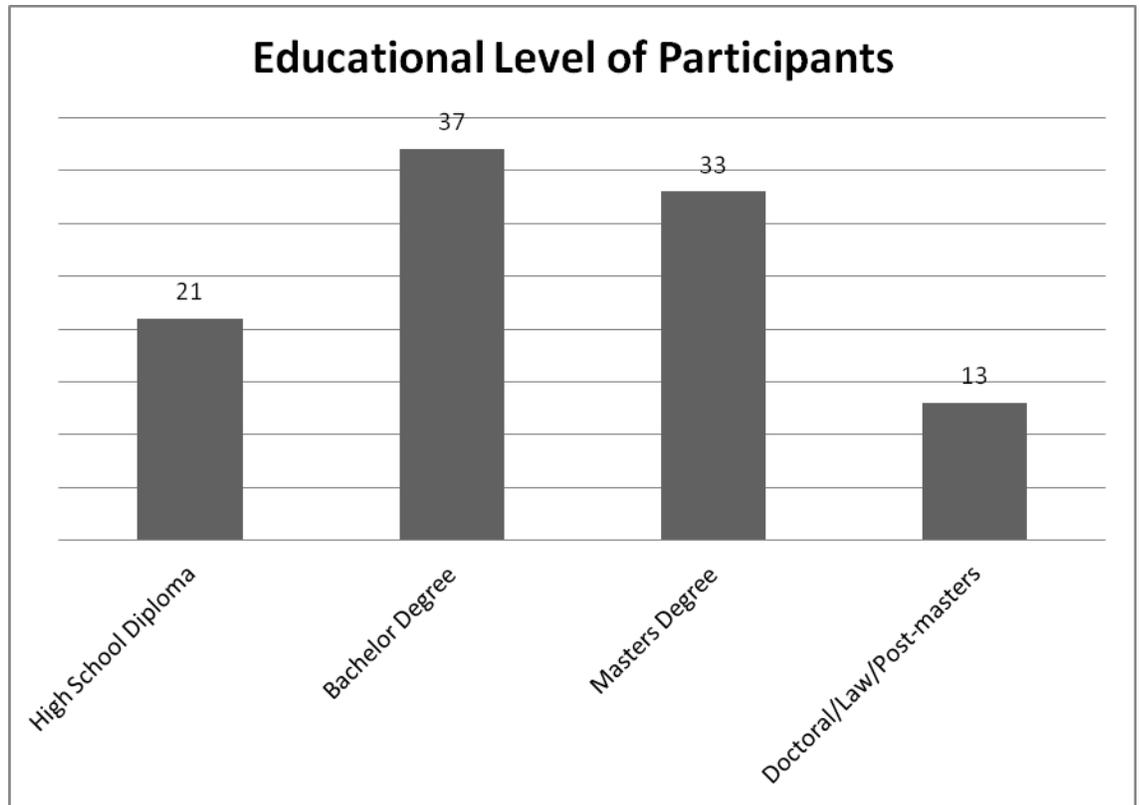


Figure 4.2. Educational level of participants.

Responses indicate that there are 31 female and 73 male superintendents in the board members' districts. Figure 4.3 below shows experience ranges and numbers of superintendents referenced in the study. The number at the top of each bar represents the number of superintendents in the respective category. There were 31 board participants reporting a superintendent with three or less years of experience in his/her current position and 73 of the participants reporting their superintendent with more than three years of experience in the position.

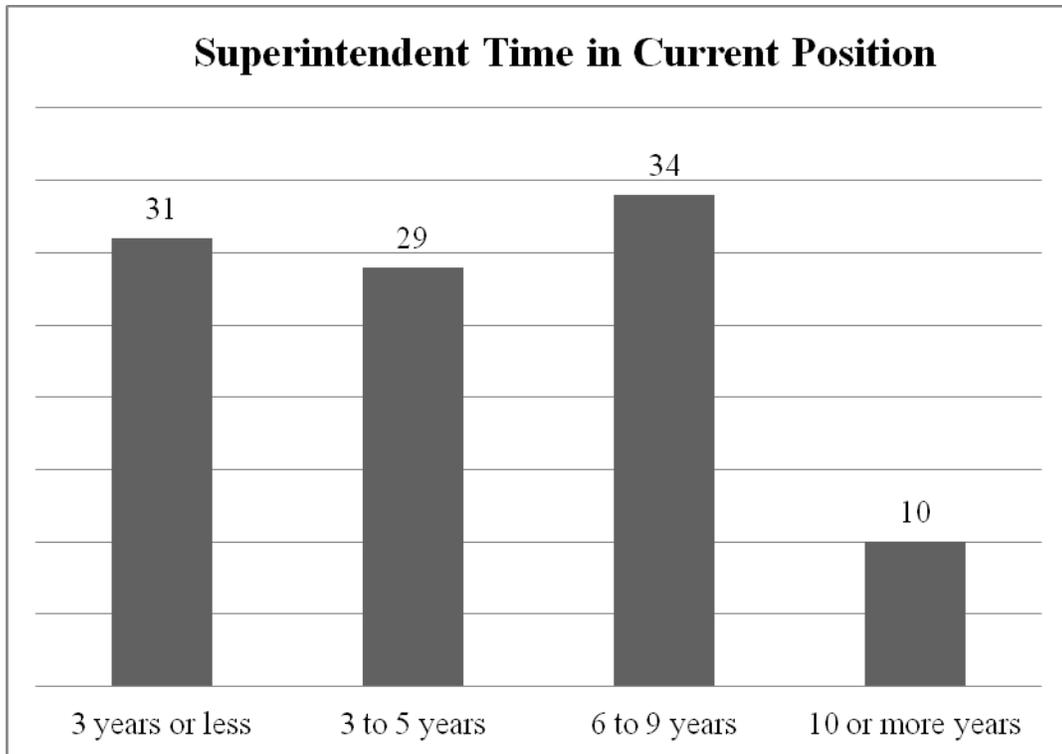


Figure 4.3. Superintendent time in position.

#### *Data Analysis and Findings*

This section is divided according to the questions presented in the study. Question one addresses the frequency of ideal superintendent behaviors. Question two addresses the frequency of real superintendent behaviors. Question three examines the gap between frequently identified ideal superintendent and frequently identified real superintendent behaviors as perceived by participants. Question four examines correlations between participants and variables. The variables are demographic information including gender of the board members, educational level of board members, length of time as a school board member, and length of time the superintendent has been employed in the position.

*Question one.* What is the frequency of ideal superintendent behaviors as perceived by school board members in upstate New York?

Table 4.1 presents participating board perceptions within a frequency table showing how often participants selected each variable and is recorded in columns of often/always and never/seldom. This table summarizes a set of data for Initiating Structure as indicated on the LBDQ- Ideal Questionnaire for superintendent behaviors. Items are scored using a scoring key provided in the LBDQ manual. Participants indicated their responses by drawing a circle around one of the five letters (A, B, C, D, E) following an item. As shown on the Scoring Key, items in this subscale are scored: A=5, B=4, C=3, D=2 and E= 1.

Table 4.1

*Frequency of Responses for Initiating Structure - Ideal*

Behavior	Never/Seldom	Often/Always
Sets group members expectations	0	96
Encourages uniform procedures	0	97
Tries out his/her ideas in the group	1	87
Makes his/her attitudes clear to the group	2	92
Decides what shall be done and how it shall be done	8	70
Assigns group members to particular tasks	10	70
Assures group member assignments	3	96
Schedules the work to be done	4	71
Maintains standards of performance	2	97
Sets standard rules and regulations	1	99

Table 4.2 shows the frequency of responses for participating board members selecting ideal superintendent often/always and never/seldom responses in the subset of Consideration as indicated on the LBDQ- Ideal Questionnaire for superintendent behaviors. Participants indicate their responses by drawing a circle around one of the five letters (A, B, C, D, E) following an item. As shown on the Scoring Key, some items in this subscale are scored: A=5, B=4, C=3, D=2 and E= 1. Items with the asterisk are scored in reverse (A=1, B=2, C=3, D=4, E=5).

Table 4.2

*Frequency of Responses for Consideration - Ideal*

Ideal Behavior	Never/Seldom	Often/Always
Friendly and approachable	1	99
Does little things to make it pleasant	3	72
Puts suggestions into operation	1	85
Treats all group members as equals	4	88
Gives advance notice of changes	2	96
Keeps to himself/herself *	72	7
Looks out for group members welfare	6	81
Willing to make changes	2	86
Refuses to explain his/her actions *	96	2
Act without consulting the group *	74	8

*Question two.* What is the frequency of real superintendent behaviors as perceived by school board members in upstate New York?

Table 4.3 shows the frequency of response for participating board member perceptions measured as often/always and never/seldom in the subscale of Initiating Structure as indicated on the LBDQ- Real Questionnaire for superintendent behaviors.

Table 4.3

*Frequency of Responses for Initiating Structure - Real*

Real Behavior	Never/Seldom	Often/Always
Sets group members expectations	1	86
Encourages uniform procedures	2	89
Tries out his/her ideas in the group	5	74
Makes his/her attitudes clear to the group	6	78
Decides what shall be done and how it shall be done	5	71
Assigns group members to particular tasks	20	53
Assures group member assignments	0	83
Schedules the work to be done	8	83
Maintains standards of performance	4	84
Sets standard rules and regulations	4	84

Table 4.4 shows the frequency of response for participating board members summarized as often/always and never/seldom in Consideration as indicated on the LBDQ- Real Questionnaire for superintendent behaviors. Table 4.4 shows the number of board members selecting real superintendent never/seldom and often/always responses

for Consideration. Items with the asterisk are scored in reverse (A=1, B=2, C=3, D=4, E=5) to show desired perceptions of board participants.

Table 4.4

*Frequency of Responses for Consideration - Real*

Real Behavior	Never/Seldom	Often/Always
Friendly and approachable	3	92
Does little things to make it pleasant	2	61
Puts suggestions into operation	5	74
Treats all group members as equals	10	82
Gives advance notice of changes	9	75
Keeps to himself/herself *	69	11
Looks out for group members welfare	8	70
Willing to make changes	7	75
Refuses to explain his/her actions *	86	6
Act without consulting the group *	67	14

*Question three.* Are there significant gaps between frequently identified ideal superintendent behaviors and frequently identified real superintendent behaviors as perceived by school board of education members?

Table 4.5 represents the response differences of board perceptions of Ideal and Real superintendent behaviors in the subscale of Initiating Structure. The table shows a distinction in perceptions of two items, decides what shall be done and how it shall be done; schedules work to be done. These two items show that some board members

reported that real superintendents displayed these behaviors more often than is even desired.

Table 4.5

*Frequency of Responses for Initiating Structure - Difference between Ideal and Real*

Behavior	Ideal	Real	Difference
Sets group members expectations	96	86	-10
Encourages uniform procedures	97	89	-8
Tries out his/her ideas in the group	87	74	-13
Makes his/her attitudes clear to the group	92	78	-14
Decides what shall be done and how it shall be done	70	71	+1
Assigns group members to particular tasks	70	53	-17
Assures group member assignments	96	83	-13
Schedules the work to be done	71	83	+12
Maintains standards of performance	97	84	-13
Sets standard rules and regulations	99	84	-15

Table 4.6 represents the response differences of board perceptions of Ideal and Real superintendent behaviors in the subscale of Consideration. Three items are scored in reverse order making the never/seldom response the desired perception. These items are marked with an asterisk \*.

Table 4.6

*Frequency of Responses for Consideration - Difference between Ideal and Real*

Behavior	Ideal	Real	Difference
Friendly and approachable	99	92	-7
Does little things to make it pleasant	72	61	-11
Puts suggestions into operation	85	74	-11
Treats all group members as equals	88	82	-6
Gives advance notice of changes	96	75	-21
Keeps to himself/herself *	72	69	-3
Looks out for group members welfare	81	70	-11
Willing to make changes	86	75	-11
Refuses to explain his/her actions *	96	86	-10
Act without consulting the group *	74	67	-7

A t test is used for investigating gaps between frequently identified ideal and frequently identified real superintendent behavior. The t test shows that the gap between ideal and real board perceptions of superintendent behaviors in Initiating Structure is significant at  $t(103) = 1.98, p < .05$ . The gaps between ideal and real board perceptions of superintendent behaviors in Consideration are also significant at  $t(103) = 1.98, p < .05$ . The responses of board members in ideal and real superintendent behaviors are higher for ideal behaviors with the exception of two items.

Table 4.7 shows that Cohen’s d is used as a standardized mean difference. The mean is the average response on a Likert scale of 1-5 of participants in the study. Cohen’s d reveals an effect size for Initiating Structure of .71 and an effect size for Consideration of .44. The effect size for Initiating Structure and Consideration is considered medium to large and indicates a statistical significance. The effect size is important because it predicts that the results are not random. Initiating Structure is close to .8 which represents a large effect size, while Consideration represents a medium effect size. A t test for paired two sample means, and Cohen’s d show a mean difference ( $p < .001$ ) that is significant. For example; for Initiating Structure the mean for Ideal is reported at 4.40 with a standard deviation of .42 (SD in parentheses), the mean for Real is 4.01 (SD= .55), the mean difference is significant at  $p < .001$ , and Cohen’s d is .71.

Table 4.7

*Mean Response for Gaps in Frequently Identified Ideal and Real Superintendent Behaviors*

Superintendent Behavior	Ideal	Real	t test of mean difference	Cohen’s d
Initiating Structure	4.40 (.42)	4.01 (.55)	$p < .001$	.71
Consideration	4.32 (.48)	4.03 (.66)	$p < .001$	.44

*Question four.* If there are significant gaps between ideal and real behaviors in Initiating Structure and Consideration, are gaps correlated with any of the following variables?

1. Gender of the board member
2. Educational level of board member

3. Length of time as a school board member
4. Length of time superintendent has been employed in the position
5. Gender of the superintendent

The following section is divided into tables illustrating the results for each variable in question four. The tables reflect the correlation to these variables using mean, standard deviation and when applicable an analysis of covariance (ANOVA). This section shows the results of board member perceptions in correlation to the subsets Initiating Structure and Consideration.

The information in Table 4.8 illustrates the collective demographics for board participants in the study.

Table 4. 8

*Demographic Variables of Participants*

	Demographic Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Total	All participants	104	100
Gender	Male	63	60.5
	Female	41	39.5
Time on Board	< 3 years experience	31	29.8
	3-5 years experience	29	27.9
	6-9 years experience	34	32.6
	10 or > years experience	10	9.6
Education Level of board member	H.S. diploma	21	20.1
	Bachelors	30	28.8
	Masters	30	28.8
	Doctoral or Post Masters	23	22.1

The information in Table 4.9 illustrates the collective demographics for superintendents referred to in the study.

Table 4. 9

*Demographic Variables of Superintendents*

	Demographic Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Total	All participants	104	100
Gender	Male	73	70.1
	Female	31	29.8
Superintendent Experience	< 3 years experience	21	20.1
	3-5 years experience	37	35.5
	6-9 years experience	33	31.7
	10 or > years experience	13	12.5

Table 4.10 shows the results of a t test for board member perceptions of real and ideal superintendent behaviors correlated to gender of the board members. The table reports the gap mean and standard deviation. This table reflects no significant correlation to the gap between ideal and real superintendent behavior and the gender of the board member participants in the subscales of Initiating Structure and Consideration. For example, the mean gap of .378 for 63 male participants and .276 for 41 female participants shows an approximate 0.1 difference. Statistics with a +1 to -1 difference are not significant.

Table 4. 10

*Correlation between Board Member Perceptions of Ideal and Real Superintendent Behaviors and Board Gender*

	Gender	n	Mean	Standard Deviation
Initiating Structure Gap	Male	63	.378	.5129
	Female	41	.276	.3999
Consideration Gap	Male	63	.321	.5700
	Female	51	.266	.4963

Table 4.11 shows the results of a t test for board member perceptions of real and ideal superintendent behaviors correlated to education level of the board members. The table is presenting the n (number of participants), the gap mean, and the standard deviation. This table demonstrates the gap between each of the education levels of participants. This table lists the four levels: high school diploma, bachelors degree, masters degree, and doctoral or post masters degree. The number of participants in each group ranges from 21 – 30, with two groups having 30 participants. While there is a difference in perceptions correlated to education level in Initiating Structure, there is not a significant difference. However, in the subscale for Consideration there is a significant difference. Individually, the standard deviation shows the statistical measure of participants with a high school degree having a frequency distribution closer to the mean. The covariance demonstrates that there is a significant difference in the correlation to participants’ education level.

The table shows that more than half of the participants report having an education level beyond a high school degree. Participants having more than a high school degree

show less of a gap between their perceptions of ideal and real superintendent behaviors. For example the gap for participants with a high school degree was .576 and the gap for all other participants was a range of .250 - .320 (+1to -1). This shows there is a smaller gap among participants having an education level beyond a high school degree and that their perceptions are similar.

Table 4.11

*Correlation between Board Member Perceptions of Ideal and Real Superintendent Behaviors and Education Level of Board*

	Education Level	n	Mean	Standard Deviation
Initiating Structure Gap	High School	21	.576	.6332
	Bachelors	30	.250	.3875
	Masters	30	.320	.3056
	Doctoral or Post Masters	23	.257	.5350
	Consideration Gap	High School	21	.614
	Bachelors	30	.170	.4053
	Masters	30	.223	.5104
	Doctoral or Post Masters	23	.278	.5081

Table 4.12 shows the results of an ANOVA run to evaluate whether there are differences between the mean across education levels for Initiating Structure and Consideration. The ANOVA compares the means by using estimates of variance from which the participants selected to describe their education level. The participant responses are described in terms of variation of individual values around their group means, and of the variation of the group means around the overall mean. These measures are referred to as responses of group variability. This test is used to determine whether the variation is significant or not. In the ANOVA table, the Sig. column gives the probability (p) value. The p value is considered significant  $< .05$ . In this table the gap is not significant for Initiating Structure because  $p = .066$ . However the gap is significant for Consideration since  $p < .05$ . The test reveals an analysis of covariance demonstrating that the gap for Initiating Structure is close but not significant  $F(3,100) = 2.47, p = .066$ . The analysis of covariance reveals a significant difference in the perceptions between education levels of board members in the area of Consideration or  $F(3,100) = 3.38, p = .021$ .

Table 4.12

ANOVA between Groups/Descriptors

		df	F	Sig(p)
Initiating Structure Gap	Between groups/descriptors	3	2.473	.066
Consideration Gap	Between groups	3	3.380	.021

Table 4.13 shows the mean and standard deviation for the length of time participants serve as board members. The table shows the number of participants within

each item selected, in relation to the length of time the participant served on the board. The mean and standard deviation are included to show there is not a significant correlation in the length of time the participant has served as a board member and their responses. The mean is the average score in a frequency distribution. The standard deviation is a measure of how much the scores vary (are spread out) from the mean. This shows how much variation or dispersion exists. The length of time a board member is on the board is not significant relative to board member perception of the superintendent leadership behaviors in Initiating Structure and Consideration. The table does show that there is a wider spread between the mean and the standard deviation for board members with ten or more years experience on the board in the subset Initiating Structure.

Table 4.13

*Correlation between Board Member Perceptions of Ideal and Real Superintendent Behaviors and Length of Time as a Board Member*

	Length of Time as a Board Member	n	Mean	Standard Deviation
Initiating Structure	Less than 3 years	31	.265	.4378
	3-5 years	29	.459	.4555
	6-9 years	34	.318	.4852
	10 or more years	10	.280	.5770
Consideration	Less than 3 years	31	.181	.3851
	3-5 years	29	.417	.7026
	6-9 years	34	.318	.5225
	10 or more years	10	.260	.4624

Table 4.14 shows the ANOVA revealed there is not a significant difference in responses of participants based on the variable for number of years participants have been on the board. In both Initiating Structure and Consideration the  $p = .419$  and  $p = .401$  respectively. The difference is not large enough to be considered a significant difference and there is no correlation to board perceptions related to their length of time on the board,  $F = (3,100) = .95$ ,  $p = .419$  and  $F = (3,100) = .98$ ,  $P = .401$ .

Table 4.14

*ANOVA Between and Within Groups*

		df	F	Sig(p)
IS Gap	Between groups	3	.951	.419
	Within groups	100	.233	
C Gap	Between groups	3	.289	.401
	Within groups	100	.292	

Table 4.15 shows the mean and standard deviation for the length of time that participants' superintendents are employed in their positions. The table shows there is a correlation for Initiating Structure and the length of time the superintendent is in the position and the gaps found between the ideal and real superintendent behaviors for participants with less than 3 years on the board. There is also a significant correlation in Consideration associated with the length of time the superintendent is employed in the position for less than 3 years. The distribution of responses reflected in the standard deviation of .5240 and the mean of .219 shows a significant gap, as this is far more than the +1 to -1 accepted as not significant.

Table 4.15

*Correlation between Board Member Perceptions of Ideal and Real Superintendent Behaviors and Length of Time Superintendent Has Been Employed in the Position*

	Years of Employment	n	Mean	Standard Deviation
Initiating structure	Less than 3 years	21	.290	.5674
	3-5 years	37	.330	.3858
	6-9 years	33	.306	.4802
	10 or more years	13	.515	.5242
Consideration	Less than 3 years	21	.219	.5240
	3-5 years	37	.232	.3757
	6-9 years	33	.276	.5420
	10 or more years	13	.677	.8126

Table 4.16 shows the correlation for superintendent gender. The table shows there is little difference between the mean and the standard deviation, suggesting that there is not a relationship between gap score of ideal and real superintendent behaviors to the superintendent gender for Initiating Structure and Consideration. The mean shows the average score of frequency distribution. The standard deviation shows how much the scores vary (are spread out) from the mean. This shows how much variation or dispersion exists. The length of time a board member is on the board is not significant relative to their perceptions of superintendent leadership behaviors and therefore, superintendent gender is not significant.

Table 4.16

*Correlation between Board Member Perceptions of Ideal and Real Superintendent Behaviors and Superintendent Gender*

	Gender	n	Mean	Standard Deviation
Initiating Structure Gap	Male	73	.356	.4938
	Female	31	.294	.4211
Consideration Gap	Male	73	.273	.5162
	Female	31	.361	.5976

*Chapter Summary*

In answering question one, the data show that the frequency of board perceptions relating to ideal superintendent behaviors in Initiating Structure is often/always 99% - 70%. The frequency of ideal superintendent behaviors in Consideration is 99% - 72%. The responses selected for often/always reflect a higher frequency than responses for never/seldom.

In answering question two, the data show the frequency of board perceptions relating to real superintendent behaviors. The frequency for real superintendent behaviors in the subset Initiating Structure was 53% - 89% for often/always. The frequency of real leadership behaviors in Consideration was 92% - 61% for often/always.

In answering question three, the data show significant differences in the gaps between ideal and real board perceptions of superintendent behaviors in Initiating Structures and Consideration at  $t(103) = 1.98, p < .05$ . This data shows a t test of mean

difference at  $p < .001$  for Initiating Structures and Consideration and Cohen's  $d$  at .71 and .44 respectively. The results indicate that this is not random and is considered predictable.

In answering question four, the data present significant correlations within two of the following variables marked with an asterisk:

1. Gender of the board member
2. Educational level of board member\*
3. Length of time as a school board member
4. Length of time superintendent has been employed in the position\*
5. Gender of the superintendent

Although there are no significant correlations related to gender of the board participants, there are correlations to the education level of participants. The most significant correlations are noted among participants with a Bachelors Degree and Masters Degree. The results indicate that board members' education level plays a role in their expectations and perceptions of superintendents.

The data show that the time spent in the board member position or experience of board members is not significant in how board members perceive their superintendent's leadership behavior. However, the time the superintendent is in the position demonstrates a correlation in the construct of Consideration. There was no correlation between the time the superintendent has been in the position and in board perceptions of superintendent behaviors in the subscale of Initiating Structure. The data indicate that the longer the superintendent is in the position, the larger the gap between ideal and real superintendent behavior and the more significant the difference is in the subscale of Consideration. The

gender of the superintendent showed no correlation to board perceptions of superintendent behaviors in the subscales of Initiating Structure and Consideration.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

### *Introduction*

The relationship between school board members and the superintendent is critical to the effectiveness of the superintendent and the stability of leadership in the superintendent position. Smoley (1999) reports that boards and superintendents form a district's leadership team. The stability of a school district's leadership team is an important factor determining the success of both the superintendent and the district (NSBA, 1996). This research was designed to examine school board members' perceptions of superintendent behaviors that contribute to the board-superintendent relationship leading to stability in the position.

In a national study of superintendents and school boards, Rausch (2001) determines that the superintendent-school board relationship is a factor of superintendent length of service. Therefore, it is important that board perceptions of superintendent leadership behaviors and board-superintendent relationships are positive and lead to leadership stability (Marzano & Waters, 2007). This study identifies superintendent leadership behaviors that school board members ideally desire and that may lead to positive board-superintendent relationships.

The Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) is used to identify board perceptions of superintendent leadership behaviors in subscales of Initiating Structure and Consideration by comparing real or observed behaviors with those considered ideal. Hersey and Blanchard (1984) propose a model to explain why

leadership effectiveness varies across the two dimensions of task behaviors and relationship behaviors, similar in definition to the areas of Initiating Structure and Consideration identified on the LBDQ.

### *Problem Statement*

The relationship between school board members and the superintendent is vital to the effectiveness of the superintendent (Marzano & Waters, 2007). School board members are concerned about the number of vacancies currently created by retiring superintendents and the difficulty finding certified and qualified individuals willing to take on the challenges of running a school district (Conrad & Rosser, 2007). School districts across the country report difficulties filling leadership positions with highly qualified people (Gilman & Lanman-Givens, 2001) and research supports board satisfaction as a factor of superintendent turnover, stability, and effectiveness. In a national study of superintendents and school boards, Rausch (2001) determines that the superintendent-school board relationship is a factor in the length of time the superintendent remains in the position. The relationship between school board members and the superintendent determines satisfaction or non-satisfaction of superintendent behaviors and is the basis of board members perceptions on the topic.

Based on the problem statement, the purpose of the study is to improve school districts by providing research on positive school board-superintendent relationships contributing to stability in the superintendent position. This study uses the modified LBDQ XII Ideal and Real questionnaires for identification of board perceptions of superintendent leadership behaviors (Stogdill, 1963). The modified LBDQ XII Ideal and Real include the subscales of Initiating Structure and Consideration. Initiating Structure is

behavior in which the leader clearly defines his or her own role and lets followers know what is expected and Consideration is leader behavior regarding the comfort, well being, status, and contributions of followers. The LBDQ XII uses a five point Likert scale to record board perceptions of ten behaviors in each of the subscales. This scale records perceptions of observed superintendent behaviors occurring always, often, occasionally, seldom, or never. The following questions guided the quantitative research.

Question One: What is the frequency of ideal superintendent behaviors as perceived by school board members in upstate New York?

Question Two: What is the frequency of real superintendent behaviors as perceived by school board members in upstate New York?

Question Three: Are there significant gaps between frequently identified ideal superintendent behaviors and frequently identified real superintendent behaviors perceived by school board members?

Question Four: If there are significant gaps between ideal and real behaviors in Initiating Structure and Consideration, are gaps correlated with any of the following variables?

1. Gender of the board member
2. Educational level of board member
3. Length of time as a board member
4. Length of time superintendent has been employed in the district
5. Gender of the superintendent

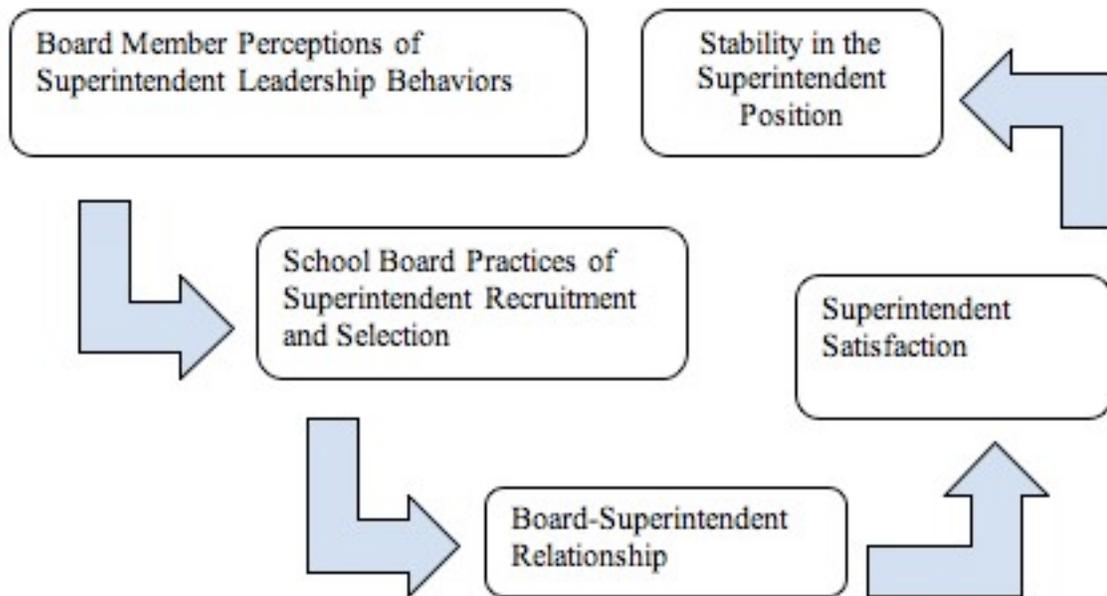
### *Implications of Findings*

The findings of this study contribute to the field of education and have implications related to school board member-superintendent relationship and satisfaction,

superintendent selection, and superintendent preparation programs. The findings from the study lead to the identification of leadership behaviors that satisfy boards and contribute to a successful board-superintendent relationship. A successful relationship, in turn, will contribute to superintendent stability.

Previous research (Fusarelli & Jackson, 2004; Hord & Estes, 1993; Kuncham, 2008, Tallerico, 2000) provides information in areas of superintendent traits and behaviors, satisfaction/dissatisfaction, recruitment and selection of superintendents, and stability in the superintendent position. This study connects previous research by supporting the need to understand gaps in board perceptions of ideal and real superintendent leadership behaviors in order to bring about stability in the position.

Figure 5.1 below illustrates the connection between previous research and findings of the study. Board perceptions begin with the search and selection of a superintendent. After the superintendent is selected the board and superintendent develop a relationship. Superintendent satisfaction occurs when the relationship is positive. As a result of a positive relationship there will be stability in the superintendent position.



*Figure 5.1. Connections in research leading to stability in the superintendency.*

According to Marzano and Waters (2007) superintendent stability is necessary for raising student achievement. The U.S. Department of Education funds state grants for Race to the Top (RTTT), which is a federal program that specifies aspects of educational reform and supports increasing student achievement and graduation rates. New York State is a recipient of RTTT funding and most districts are in the middle of implementing mandates connected to this reform. Stability in the superintendent position would add to a district's capacity to facilitate the changes required by this reform.

This research was based on a theoretical framework of leadership that includes a focus on a concern for people and a focus on production (Vechio, 2006). Fiedler's (1978) contingency theory predicts that relationship oriented leaders are more effective in moderate control situations. Contingency-situational theories indicate that the leadership style used is contingent upon such factors as the situation, the people, the task, the

organization, and other environmental variables. The interactions between a leader's behaviors and a given situation include the idea that superintendent leadership behaviors depend on the situation. Contingency theory explains the likelihood of different behaviors in any given situation (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Horner, 1997). Perceptions are based upon observed behaviors and reported behaviors. Fiedler contends that leaders have more influence if they maintain good relationships with group members who like, respect, and trust them. This theory supports that the more a superintendent exhibits behaviors desired by board members, the more likely that boards express satisfaction with the superintendent. The contingency theory of leadership has been applied to school board members' perceptions of leadership behaviors indicative of superintendent effectiveness and satisfaction (Fiedler, 1997). This is important for two reasons. Even with a positive relationship, there are situations that a superintendent reacts to that may be reported to board members by a third party. If board members perceive this behavior as undesirable and repetitive, the board members' perception of the superintendent changes to undesirable. Secondly, board perceptions are formed through trust and communication. This is built through behaviors that boards consider ideal.

The findings from this study contribute to research by confirming that satisfaction occurs more often when boards and superintendent communicate agreement in desired leadership behaviors. The superintendent leader behaviors associated with his/her ability to lead groups in completing tasks and the interpersonal relationships with employees lead to school board member perceptions of the superintendent. Board members rate communication/interpersonal behaviors as high priorities for superintendents. When board perceptions of real superintendent behaviors match perceptions of ideal

superintendent behaviors, board satisfaction occurs and successful board-superintendent relationships result. After researching perceived behaviors of board members, it appears that board members and superintendents may benefit with a clear knowledge of ideal behaviors desired by board members from their superintendents.

*Implications derived from question one.* The results for question one provide information that identifies the frequency of the superintendent leadership behaviors that board members desire. Board members are clear on what behaviors they consider ideal. They are able to identify and agree on the leader behaviors they are looking for in a superintendent. The high frequency of responses for often/always shows that board members have high standards for the ideal superintendent. Ninety seven board members selected often/always in response to the Initiating Structure behavior “encourages uniform procedures”. The intensity of responses reveals very definite expectations. It is clear that boards are looking for superintendents that establish and follow set procedures in the district. The study also shows that board members highly value the behavior “sets group members expectations” with ninety six board members selecting often/always and no member selecting never/seldom. This was much higher than anticipated. This shows that board members desire a leader that sets goals for the district and, with the assistance of group members, accomplishes these goals. Currently, new federal and state policies require such goal setting. Districts are expected to increase state student achievement and graduation rates each year.

There were two behaviors that showed board members disagreement as desired behavior: “decides what shall be done and how it shall be done” and “assigns group members to particular tasks”. Their lack of agreement implies that board members are not

generally looking for authoritarian behaviors. Connections can be made to the work of Talerico (1989) and Patrick (2006) who have stated that positive board-superintendent relationships are team oriented. In addition, it may be that experienced board members expect the superintendent to be a partner. The demographics of respondents show that a majority of board members participating in the survey have more than three years of experience. Board members seem to prefer superintendents that create a positive culture and climate and ideally manage the district through collaboration.

Board member responses for ideal superintendents for the subscale of Consideration are similar to those for Initiating Structure. Consideration behaviors refer to behaviors of friendship, trust, respect, warmth, relationship, and open communication between the superintendent and members of the organization. The frequency of response to the behavior “friendly and approachable” demonstrates that board members highly value this behavior with 99 board members selecting often/always and one board member selecting never/seldom. Similarly, board members shared high agreement across all variables in the subscale for Consideration. This means that boards have a high frequency of agreement on behaviors they perceive as ideal. Board members want a superintendent that fosters open communication. Communication is essential for boards and superintendents in building a leadership team. It is clear that board members perceive open communication as a leadership behavior necessary to establish a successful relationship. Since board members are in agreement on the ideal behaviors they want their superintendent to exhibit, this information is critical to consider during the search and selection of a new superintendent as well as during evaluation of a current superintendent.

Prior research by Normore (2006) identifies similar implications for policy pertaining to recruitment and selection of administrators. Normore suggests that districts work with higher education to deliver effective, well trained leaders. Normore's research also provides support for the study in confirming that additional measures should be added to the selection process to attract and retain a superintendent that boards perceive as satisfactory. Hord and Estes (1993) identify a lack of written policy and procedures for selecting superintendents. It is the lack of policy and procedures in the selection process that fail to identify behaviors board members want. Ray and Marshall (2005) contend that dissatisfaction in superintendent behaviors determine superintendent-board relationships. On the contrary, if boards select superintendents they know will exhibit the leadership behaviors foremost to their satisfaction, the result will more likely be a successful board-superintendent relationship. Further, when the board and superintendent establish a successful relationship, there will be more of a context for stability in the superintendent position.

*Implications derived from question two.* The results for question two provide information that identifies the frequency of the superintendent leadership behaviors that board members observe of their current superintendent. This information adds to the development of understanding in areas of leadership behaviors that are associated with the gaps between real and ideal superintendent leadership behaviors. Frequent responses for Initiating Structure-Real show that board members are able to identify the real leader behaviors demonstrated by their superintendent. However, there is less agreement than for ideal behaviors in a superintendent.

On the LBDQ for Initiating Structure-Real, the frequency of response to the behavior “assigns group members to particular tasks” shows that board members perceive superintendents displaying this behavior the least with 53 board members selecting often/always and 20 members selecting never/seldom. The behavior “schedules the work to be done”, with 83 board members selecting often/always and eight members selecting never/seldom and the behavior “assures group member assignments” with 83 often/always and zero never/seldom indicates that board members more frequently observe delegation of work by their superintendents. This may mean that board members observe other administrators leading and implementing district initiatives. It may also be a board perception that administrators other than the superintendent offer explanations for programs and data. Board members may feel that this is the superintendent’s responsibility.

Superintendents assign duties to others in order to make the changes needed for reform and achieving district goals. The overall range of frequency of behaviors listed on Initiating Structure-Real is 89 to 53 for often/always and zero to 20 for never/seldom. The study implies that board member do not see their superintendents involved in the process of implementing change or getting the job done. The perception of detachment from the work suggests that other administrators may be involved and may even cause confusion regarding what the superintendent actually does. On the frequency table showing LBDQ Consideration-Real, the frequency of responses to the behavior “act without consulting the group” shows that some board members see superintendents supporting their own agendas. On the response for behavior ‘treats all group members as equals’ with 82 board members selecting often/always and ten members selecting

never/seldom, the responses question how some superintendents are relating to board members and/or others in the organization. The response for the behavior ‘does little things to make it pleasant’, lists 61 board members selecting often/always and two selecting never/seldom. This means that 41 board members are undecided and selected occasionally, which implies that real superintendents do not clearly take initiative to make it pleasant for others. This also implies that board members understand that the behaviors of the superintendent have a direct effect on the climate and culture of the district.

The overall range of frequency of behaviors listed on Consideration-Real suggests that board members perceive their real superintendents are not team players. The awareness of this gap could help board members identify the behaviors they see lacking in the superintendent and provide feedback to help superintendents improve. This feedback might open lines of communication related to satisfaction and contribute to building a successful relationship between the board and superintendent. The combined results for the questions included on the LBDQ Ideal and Real highlight differences between board perceptions of superintendent behaviors. Assessing the similarity and differences in these responses provide board members with specific information that may be useful during evaluation of the superintendent. This is important to ensuring satisfaction and aligning more closely with ideal behaviors that boards identify.

Responses for Initiating Structure-Real show that 89 – 53 board members selected always/often and 20 – 0 board members selected never/seldom to indicate how often they believe the actual superintendent engages in the listed behavior. Results suggest that

board members believe that actual superintendents do not readily display the leader behaviors perceived as ideal.

Responses for Consideration-Real show that 92 – 61 board members selected always/often and 14 – 2 board members selected never/seldom as how often they believe the actual superintendent engages in the listed behavior. As with Initiating Structure-Real, this also indicates that board members believe actual superintendents do not readily display the leader behaviors perceived as ideal. In addition to looking at how their superintendent acts with board members, boards look at the behaviors the superintendent exhibits toward others in the district. They form their perceptions through conversations with faculty, staff and community stakeholders.

School board members' perceptions are often based upon behaviors that their superintendents' exhibit and these perceptions are critical to the board-superintendent relationship (Richard & Kurse, 2008). Twinford and Harrison (1986) agree that the behaviors indicating satisfaction with the superintendent can be identified. Identifying the superintendent behaviors that lead to board satisfaction connect to satisfaction, help shape the board-superintendent relationship and, ultimately, help support stability in the position. This means that board members need to know what behaviors they perceive as ideal and what behaviors are actually occurring to avoid being swayed indirectly by others. No superintendent will match up perfectly with the behaviors desired by the board but identifying real superintendent behaviors provides insight and guidance in the development of the board/superintendent relationship.

*Implications derived from question three.* The findings for question three provide information to school boards, superintendents, search consultants, and superintendent

preparation programs. It is interesting that there is a highly significant gap between ideal and real superintendent behaviors as perceived by board members, especially since board members often select their superintendent through a search firm or consultant. Sometimes the candidates may even be recommended from superintendent preparatory programs (Talbot & Billsbury, 2007). The mean difference for gaps in Initiating Structure between ideal and real superintendent behaviors is  $p < .001$ . The mean difference for Consideration is  $p < .001$ . This gap predicts potential conflicts or dissatisfaction that might lead to instability in the superintendent position. Castallo (2003) explains that a positive board-superintendent relationship is a determining factor in superintendent satisfaction. Alsbury (2003) connects board satisfaction with board-superintendent relationship and the superintendent stability.

The demographic information shows that most of the responding board members and superintendents have been together for awhile. The study causes one to question if the issues related to these gaps are being addressed by the boards. Rickabaugh and Kremer (1997) found that communication must be honest, timely, consistent, and attend to the needs of both board members and superintendents. Communication is expressed through actions and words, communication behaviors are measured within the subscales of both Initiating Structure and Consideration. The study concurred with Tallerico's (2000) finding that there is no guarantee of satisfaction after the superintendent is hired. This certainly begs one to ask if there is disconnect in the way that "ideals" are identified during recruitment and selection of the superintendent.

Castallo (2003) finds the first step toward finding satisfaction between boards and the superintendent is the careful selection of the right superintendent. School boards have

the responsibility of selecting superintendents for a three to five year term. Districts must select candidates that fit the community's needs and avoid termination that may send a district toward instability (National School Board Association, 1996). Wallace (2003) finds that districts are looking for methods of selection that result in longer length of service or stability.

Board members do not believe their superintendents exhibit the desired behaviors. Therefore, board members are not totally satisfied with their superintendent. In this study, the largest difference is in Initiating Structure, which are the behaviors associated with management. Boards do not believe they hired a superintendent with the behaviors needed to manage the district. This is a critical issue during a time of great change. Board members want superintendents that attend to tasks in a timely manner, set and follow the rules, and provide honest and open communication. Board members are therefore uncertain that their superintendent can facilitate the changes needed to raise student achievement and implement the initiatives mandated in various federal and state requirements and policy changes.

*Implications derived from question four.* The results for question four provide a focus on independent variables and board members' perceptions of superintendent behaviors. Two of the five variables tested are found to significantly correlate with board members' perceptions. These two variables are the education level of board members and the length of time the superintendent has been in the position.

The LBDQ and the demographic survey to gather personal information that might be related to their perceptions were sent to board members during the time that school board members were discussing and completing the annual school budget for 2011 –

2012. The LBDQ ideal and the LBDQ real each consists of 20 questions and the demographic survey contains five demographic variables collecting information on gender of the board member, educational level of board member, length of time as a board member, length of time superintendent has been employed in the district, and gender of the superintendent. Budget time is a busy time of year for school boards and a time consuming process. Therefore, the response rate of 46% confirms board interest in the study.

The data show there is a significant correlation in the gaps between ideal and real superintendent behaviors and the education level of the participants for the subscale of Consideration ( $p < .05$ ). The education level of board members has an effect on their perception of superintendent behaviors that emphasize a deeper concern for group members' needs and includes behavior such as team participation in decision making and two-way communication. Board members want superintendents that are kind, honest and can be trusted. The gap is much larger in participants with a high school diploma. This has bearing on the study because boards in rural areas often have board members with a high school education. Rural areas also typically select from superintendent candidates with little to no experience. New superintendents move into the district as required by contract and when dissatisfaction occurs, they look for openings in order to move on. This contributes to instability in the position.

Although there is not a significant correlation to Initiating Structure, the correlation is moderate ( $p = .066$ ). Here too, board members having a high school degree show the largest gap. It is likely that board members having similar education levels to the superintendent are more understanding of superintendent behaviors. This may be due

to the fact that they see themselves able to associate with the superintendent on the same level. The study implies that when the board members' education level matches that of the superintendent, fewer gaps occur. Therefore, districts where the education level does not match that of the superintendent experience larger gaps and more dissatisfaction with the superintendent.

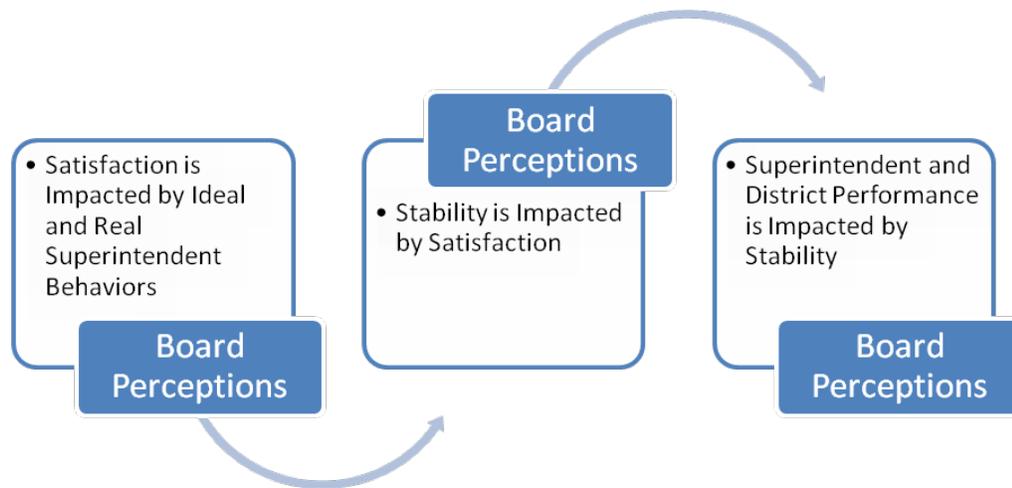
Communication may be an important element in providing superintendent satisfaction. Superintendents do not select their board members, they work with them to govern the district. It is up to the superintendent to provide the board with the knowledge and understanding for his/her decisions and actions. When communication is open and honest with all board members equally, there is better understanding of why the superintendent behaved the way he/she did and what led up to the behavior. This follows the theoretical framework for contingency theory which explains that performance or behavior is a result of the interaction between leadership style and situational favorableness. Fiedler (1967) indicates that ideal leadership behaviors are contingent upon internal and external constraints. When the superintendent takes the time to fully communicate the situation and his/her behavior, it is more likely the board will be satisfied.

The correlation of gaps between ideal and real superintendent behaviors in the length of time the superintendent has been in the position is significant in Consideration and not significant in Initiating Structure. These results suggest that gaps in board perceptions of the subscale Initiating Structure are not related to the superintendent's length of time in the position. However, the study results show a significant correlation between the gaps and the subscale of Consideration, implying that the longer the

superintendent is in the position, the larger the gap between ideal and real superintendent behavior in Consideration. The study finds that 79.9% of the superintendents have more than three years in the position, demonstrating that these superintendents may have renewed or extended their contracts with the district. The act of extending a superintendent's contract usually means the board is satisfied with the superintendent. This leads to the belief that there may be varying levels of satisfaction and dissatisfaction. This is where a better sense of perceptions of real and ideal behaviors may become an important factor in maintaining a positive relationship.

The study adds to Rausch's (2001) national study of superintendents and school boards, which determined that the superintendent-school board relationship is a factor of the length of time the superintendent is employed in the position. As superintendents become comfortable in their positions over time they may become overly familiar with board members causing superintendents to take greater risks. However as boards change, this familiar behavior is less accepted by new board members and dissatisfaction occurs (Alsbury, 2003). If superintendents are aware that their behaviors are perceived as less satisfactory they are able to make adjustments to satisfy board members.

It is evident that board perceptions of superintendent behaviors impact their satisfaction with the superintendent and that satisfaction with the superintendent determines superintendent time in the position and stability in the position. The superintendent's effectiveness and district performance are impacted by superintendent stability in the position as shown in figure 5.2 below. This means that the length of time a superintendent serves a single school district can positively impact student achievement and influence the success of any change (Marzano & Waters, 2007).



*Figure 5.2.* Impact of board perceptions of superintendent leadership behaviors.

### *Limitations*

This study has one limitation. The study relied on only two subscales of the original LBDQ. The limitation of perceptions to Initiating Structure and Consideration introduces the possibility that other perceptions were not included. However, for the purpose of a study in education these two subscales were sufficient in answering the research questions. In order to address the limitation within this study, it would be beneficial to include all subscales on the LBDQ II. Completing the entire LBDQ Ideal and Real would require approximately 45- 60 minutes each. The additional information would provide a broader understanding of board perceptions on superintendent leadership behaviors. Given the insight gained from participants in this study, it is recommended that further studies include the use of the full LBDQ.

Little research exists to include the superintendents' perception of his or her leadership behaviors. Research of this nature provides additional information regarding the understanding of superintendent behaviors. Using the LBDQ self could help identify

the gap between board perceptions and superintendent perceptions of actual leadership behaviors. Caution is recommended in collecting this information however, to ensure that participants remain anonymous.

### *Recommendations*

The purpose of the study is to look at board perceptions of ideal and actual superintendent leadership behaviors. Stogdill (1963) endorses the Leadership Behavior Descriptive Questionnaire XII (LBDQ XII) for use in describing leader behaviors observed by others in the group. This study examines board member perceptions of superintendent leadership behaviors in two subscales on the LBDQ XII, Initiating Structure and Consideration. Initiating Structure and Consideration are defined in the LBDQ Manual. Initiating Structure refers to leadership behaviors in explaining the relationship between the leader and members of the group, channels of communication, and ways of getting the job done. Consideration refers to behavior indicative of friendship, mutual trust, respect and warmth in relationships between the leader and members of the organization. Understanding the gaps between board perceptions of ideal and real superintendent behaviors leads to better relationships and thus results in superintendent stability in the position.

*Recommendation for further research.* The information gathered in this study informs educational decisions leading to superintendent satisfaction and positive board-superintendent relationships. The result of positive board-superintendent relationships helps bring stability to the superintendent position.

Further research is recommended to provide additional understanding of board perceptions and superintendent stability using the complete LBDQ XXI. The process

could be replicated throughout New York State and applied to the stability of other administrative positions such as principals. This study also validates the need for a process to identify ideal and real leadership behaviors in several aspects of the superintendent process.

*Recommendation for professional practice of school boards.* The study results and process add value to school boards in their search and selection of a superintendent. Prior research of Patrick (2006) supports the importance of finding and selecting the superintendent having the leadership behaviors perceived as important. Boards need to establish a routine for assessing, ideal and real superintendent behaviors and gaps between the two. The use of the LBDQ allows school board members understand and communicate the leadership behaviors they value and are looking for in a superintendent. The identification of these leadership behaviors will allow school boards to select and hire the superintendent that best matches the needs and values of their district. Researchers agree that board dissatisfaction occurs when school boards take on new members (Alsbury, 2003). Administration of the LBDQ when boards turnover will provide the information necessary for board-superintendent communication that can assure satisfaction. The inclusion of the LBDQ self with candidates will allow boards to run a correlation to the board profile and will provide additional information for discussion in the final interview process. This study enhances the potential of selecting a superintendent that could potentially result in more stability in the position.

The process could be helpful in the selection of other administrative positions to assure the right person has been placed in the right position. School boards grant the approval and final decision to hire administrators recommended by the superintendent.

The LBDQ can be used for other leadership positions. One component of the Race to the Top (RTTT) is the annual professional performance evaluation for principals. A large portion of the evaluation is based on student achievement. This change impacts principal stability and funding available to the district through RTTT. Selecting a principal with the leadership behaviors and ability to provide instructional leadership and raise performance must be a team effort. Therefore, the significance of hiring the right superintendent is also connected with the planning and recruitment of all administrative personnel.

*Recommendations for professional practice of superintendents.* School boards and superintendents enter into contracts typically for three to five years. Superintendent candidates apply for positions understanding that if they are selected they will live in the school district. In many instances a move is necessary. Since moving is both time consuming, costly, and many times involves family adjustments, it is assumed that these candidates are looking for stability. Researchers have identified that satisfaction is associated with stability and that the relationship between the board and superintendent results in either satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Superintendents can learn from this study that knowing the gaps between board perceptions of ideal and real leadership behaviors can open lines of communication. This is especially helpful as the board turns over and new members are elected. Superintendents can use the process in this study as part of new board member training. This can assist in closing the gap between board education levels by providing an understanding of behaviors and information that can close the gap between ideal and real superintendent leadership behaviors. Knowing what board members are looking for can assist superintendents in making decisions that lead to satisfaction.

*Recommendations for superintendent preparation programs.* There are several programs across New York State designed specifically to prepare superintendent candidates for the field. These programs provide information related to school law, policy and procedures in the school district, finance, and governance. However, these programs offer little information related to what school boards desire other than a superintendent that matches the district needs. Superintendent preparation programs can use the process in this study to inform candidates of the importance in satisfaction/dissatisfaction, stability, and board perceptions of leadership behaviors. The LBDQ self can be given to superintendent candidates to better know themselves as they apply for positions. When school board members and potential superintendents know what behaviors they are looking for and possess, finding the match has concrete meaning.

Another recommendation for superintendent preparation programs is adding extensive skill building and strategies for communicating with the board. There is often the assumption that because superintendent candidates have a higher level of education they possess the ability to communicate well with others. Yet superintendents continue to involuntarily leave their position due to dissatisfaction caused by poor communication. It is ironic that more misunderstanding occurs in an age of technology and instant communication. It becomes especially difficult to communicate voice and feeling in a message using 21st century techniques. It is apparent that superintendent preparation programs have the daunting job of teaching communication behaviors that are effective.

### *Conclusion*

The National School Boards Association predicts a shortage of quality certified superintendent candidates ready to fill the anticipated openings because of superintendent

turnover in the field (Glass, Thomas, Bjork, & Lars, 2003). The number of vacancies created by retiring superintendents and the difficulty finding individuals willing to take on the challenges of running a school district concern school board members (Conrad & Rosser, 2007). Research shows that finding and keeping the right person in the superintendent position provides continuity, stability, and will lead to a successful school district (Marzano & Waters, 2007).

Studies show that school board member perceptions of superintendent behaviors contribute to the board-superintendent relationship (Tallerico, 2000). The relationship between school board members and the superintendent is critical to the effectiveness of the superintendent and the stability of leadership in the superintendent position. Houston and Eadie (2005) find the path to the superintendent's position is often filled by administrators having little experience with direct contact to the school board. When board members select these leaders into the position, they have full confidence in their abilities (Houston & Eadie, 2005). However, over time board perceptions often change and they become dissatisfied with the superintendent's behaviors. Once dissatisfied, the board loses confidence in the superintendent's abilities and effectiveness causing turnover in the position. Turnover in the superintendency is often attributed to poor relationships between the board and superintendent (Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000). Peterson and Short (2001) find that the board's ability to maintain a positive perception of the superintendent is critical to the stability in the position. Therefore, board perceptions of leadership behaviors are likely to affect superintendent stability. Metzger (2003) confirms that a turnover in the superintendent position is often related to board-superintendent relationship and is related to stress.

The purpose of the study is to improve school districts by providing research leading to positive school board-superintendent relationships that bring about stability in the superintendent position. This research investigates the relationship between board members and superintendents by focusing on board members' perceptions of ideal and real superintendent leadership behavior. A review of the literature on leadership finds that the high turnover rate of superintendents often accounts for poor relationships with their boards (Houston & Eadie, 2005). Therefore, the primary focus of this study is to determine if differences exist in board members' perceptions between ideal leader behavior and the real leader behavior of superintendents, as well as the significance of selected demographic variables that correlate to board perceptions.

Theoretical studies report that leadership has evolved from a one-person approach to a team approach (Donmoyer, 1999; Heck & Hallinger, 1999). Contingency theory supports the two main dimensions examined in the study. Current theoretical frameworks of leadership contain a focus on a concern for people and a focus on production (Vechio, 2006). Accordingly, two subscales of the LBDQ XII Questionnaire (Stogdill, 1963) were selected for this study. The subscales Initiating Structure and Consideration were used to collect data on board perceptions of leadership behaviors. Initiating Structure and Consideration focus on leadership behaviors related to those reflecting warmth in relationship, trust, respect, friendship, channels of communication and ways of getting the job done. More specifically, Initiating Structure includes behavior in which the superintendent organizes and defines team activities and relationships. Thus, the superintendent defines member roles, assigns tasks, plans ahead, establishes ways of getting things done, and pushes for production. This subscale includes efforts to achieve

organizational goals. Consideration is comprised of behavior demonstrating mutual trust, respect, warmth and relationship between the superintendent and school community. This subscale consists of a deeper concern for members' needs and includes behavior allowing school district members more participation in decision making and honest two-way communication.

The study is conducted in upstate New York. The area consists of 42 public school districts including urban, rural and suburban districts. The study focuses on the school board members of upstate area districts. The Leader Behavior Descriptive Questionnaire XII was used to gather board member perceptions of superintendent leader behaviors. Therefore, a quantitative methodology is used to study school board members' perceptions of superintendents' behaviors. Quantitative techniques for analysis of this research allow for perceptual data to be correlated with school board member perceptions of ideal superintendent behaviors and real superintendent behaviors to identify gaps. An additional survey is used to identify demographic variables that may be related to board members' perceptions. The returned questionnaires and survey reports conclude there is a return rate of 46%. Questionnaires and surveys are returned separately from letters of consent to provide anonymity to the board members and superintendents. However, review of the letters of consent verifies board members from rural, urban and suburban districts participated in the study.

The data is collected, analyzed and correlated using Excel and SPSS software by running frequency tests, t tests, and one-way ANOVA. The findings of these tests show the frequency that board members selected items on the LBDQ and gaps between ideal superintendent behaviors and real superintendent behaviors within each subscale. A

correlation is run between the gaps and the demographic variables listed on the board survey. Findings show that there are significant gaps between board perceptions of ideal and real superintendent leadership behaviors in both Initiating Structure and Consideration,  $t(103) = 1.98, p < .05$ . The tests for correlation to demographic variables show a correlation to the education level of board member and the length of time the superintendent has been employed in the district.

There are several implications in the study. The study identifies a gap between board member perceptions of ideal superintendent leadership behaviors and board member perceptions of real superintendent leadership behaviors. The study shows leadership behaviors board members desire and the leadership behaviors board members perceive in their superintendent. The study results provide information leading to positive board-superintendent relationships and stability in the superintendent position.

This study contributes to scholarship in the areas of education, governance, and leadership. The findings from the study contribute to leadership practice in education and include implications related to hiring superintendents, superintendent preparation programs, and board-superintendent relationship practices.

With mandated changes designed to raise student achievement, and the anticipated openings in superintendent positions, now is a critical time to understand practices that lead to good relationships between the board and superintendent providing stability in superintendent leadership. The research shows a direct connection between leadership behaviors the board desires and leadership behaviors they observe of their superintendent. Recommendations for further research include the use of the complete

LBDQ XXI, to be replicated throughout New York State as it applies to the stability of other administrative positions such as principals.

Recommendations emerge for school boards, superintendent preparation programs and superintendents. Closing the gap begins with superintendent hiring practices. Although studies show that boards use established practice and procedures to find and select superintendent candidates, they may not know and agree upon the leadership behaviors they are looking for in a superintendent.

The administration of the LBDQ ideal will allow board members to become familiar with what they perceive as desired leadership behaviors. Administering the LBDQ self to final superintendent candidates will provide the board with statistical information that may lead them to the superintendent candidate matching the behaviors desired. This information may eliminate the gap between ideal and real superintendent behaviors as perceived by board members, thus resulting in a good relationship leading to stability in the superintendent position.

Superintendent preparation programs offer many skills and strategies to candidates in the program in order to prepare them for the superintendent position. A common subject among superintendent preparation programs is referred to as the match between the superintendent candidate and the board. This match is discussed yet there is rarely an instrument used to determine if it exists. Administering the LBDQ self to program candidates will allow these candidates to know their leadership behaviors. This information will allow the candidates to determine the districts in which they apply.

Research shows that as boards turnover they become dissatisfied with the superintendent. The dissatisfaction often leads to the superintendent leaving the position.

Seated superintendents could suggest using the LBDQ ideal with new board members to better understand what behaviors are important to them and establish on-going communication that lead to satisfaction and stability in the superintendent position.

The study made connections between board member perceptions of superintendent behaviors and the board-superintendent relationship. It also identified the connection between board-superintendent relationship and superintendent stability.

The recommendation section of the study includes study results that contribute to further research and superintendent practice. There are recommendations for superintendent preparation program implications including curriculum enhancement specific to board-superintendent communication. This recommendation includes curriculum enhancement that would focus on study leadership behaviors boards perceive as ideal.

A recommendation is made regarding the use of the LBDQ or similar instruments by school boards to identify desired leadership behaviors prior to the selection and hiring process. The recommendation identifies the LBDQ ideal and real. These instruments are validated for use in education and free for use in educational research purposes. Additionally the LBDQ self is available for superintendent candidate use.

A recommendation is made regarding superintendent practices. It is cited that there is great value in behaviors connected to open communication, trust, honesty, and board satisfaction.

Recommendations are made for superintendent support of board training. The practice of participating in the use of the LBDQ with new board members leads to communication and understanding necessary in providing satisfaction. The study links

superintendent leadership behaviors to positive school board-superintendent relationships that bring about stability in the superintendent position.

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## Appendix A

### Informed Consent

#### **St. John Fisher College INFORMED CONSENT FORM School Board Member**

Title of study: School Board Members' Perceptions of Superintendent Leadership Behaviors

Name of researcher: Linda Rae Doty

Linda Doty is the Director of AIS/Data Management in the Oswego City School District and a doctoral candidate at St. John Fischer College.

Phone for further information: 315-529-1670 or 315-341-2033 or [ldoty@oswego.org](mailto:ldoty@oswego.org)

#### Purpose of study:

- The purpose of the study is to improve school districts by providing research on positive school board-superintendent relationships contributing to stability in the superintendent position.

As superintendents begin retiring at largely predicted numbers, it becomes critical that school boards have the knowledge necessary to identify the candidate that will lead to satisfaction and stability in the superintendent position.

Approval of study: This study has been reviewed and approved by the St. John Fisher College Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Instructor of Record: This study is being conducted with the permission of the course instructor(s): Marie Cianca, Ed.D, & C. Michael Robinson, Ed.D.

Place of study: This study will be conducted among school districts in upstate New York.

Risks and benefits: There are minimal to no risks associated with participation in this study. Board members work independently to complete the documents and mail them directly to the researcher. No documents will be marked for identification providing anonymity to board members and their superintendents. If you experience any distress as

a result of participation in this study, please contact the St. John Fisher Wellness Center (585-385-8280) for assistance.

Method for protecting confidentiality/privacy:

All inventories and results will be kept in a locked cabinet and will be destroyed after five years. No materials will be marked for identification and no superintendents will be connected to board member responses.

**Your rights:** As a research participant, you have the right to:

1. Have the purpose of the study, and the expected risks and benefits fully explained to you before you choose to participate
2. Withdraw from participation at any time
3. Refuse to answer a particular question
4. Be informed of the results of the study.

I have read the above, received a copy of this form, and I agree to participate in the above-named study.

---

Print name (Participant)  
Date

Signature

---

Print name (Investigator)  
Date

Signature

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact the researcher listed above.

Appendix B

Ideal Leader Behavior – Form XII Ideal

**IDEAL LEADER BEHAVIOR – F O R M X I I Ideal**

(What you Expect of Your Leader)

Originated by staff members of  
The Ohio State Leadership Studies

And revised by  
Studies in Leadership and Organization

On the following pages is a list of items that may be used to describe the behavior of your supervisor, as you think he should act. This is not a test of ability. It simply asks you to describe what an ideal leader ought to do in supervising his group.

Note: The term, “group” as employed in the following items, refers to a department, division, or other unit of organization that is supervised by the leader.

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The Ohio State University  
Columbus, OH 43210

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DIRECTIONS:

- a. READ each item carefully.
- b. THINK about how frequently the leader engages in the behavior described by the item.
- c. DECIDE whether he SHOULD (A) Always (B) Often, (C) Occasionally, (D) Seldom or (E) Never act as described by the item.
- d. DRAW A CIRCLE around one of the five letters ( A B C D E) following the item to show the answer you selected.

A = Always  
B = Often  
C = Occasionally  
D = Seldom  
E = Never

- |   |           |
|---|-----------|
| 1. Let group members know what is expected of them                          | A B C D E |
| 2. Be friendly and approachable   | A B C D E |
| 3. Encourage the use of uniform procedures                                  | A B C D E |
| 4. Do little things to make it pleasant to be a member of the group         | A B C D E |
| 5. Try out his ideas in the group   | A B C D E |
| 6. Put suggestions made by the group into operation                         | A B C D E |
| 7. Make his attitudes clear to the group                                    | A B C D E |
| 8. Treat all group members as his equals                                    | A B C D E |
| 9. Decide what shall be done and how it shall be done                       | A B C D E |
| 10. Give advance notice of changes  | A B C D E |
| 11. Assign group members to particular tasks                                | A B C D E |
| 12. Keep to himself   | A B C D E |
| 13. Make sure that his part in the group is understood by the group members | A B C D E |
| 14. Look out for the personal welfare of group members                      | A B C D E |

- |  |           |
|--|-----------|
| 15. Schedule the work to be done                                   | A B C D E |
| 16. Be willing to make changes                                     | A B C D E |
| 17. Maintain definite standards of performance                     | A B C D E |
| 18. Refuse to explain his actions                                  | A B C D E |
| 19. Ask the group members to follow standard rules and regulations | A B C D E |
| 20. Act without consulting the group                               | A B C D E |

## Appendix C

### Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire – Form XII Real

#### **LEADER BEHAVIOR DESCRIPTION QUESTIONNAIRE – Form XII Real**

**Originated by staff members of  
The Ohio State Leadership Studies  
And revised by the Bureau of Business Research**

#### Purpose of the Questionnaire

On the following pages is a list of items that may be used to describe the real behavior of your supervisor. Each item describes a specific kind of behavior, but does not ask you to judge whether the behavior is desirable or undesirable. Although some items may appear similar, they express differences that are important in the description of leadership. Each item should be considered as a separate description. This is not a test of ability or consistency in making answers. Its only purpose is to make it possible for you to describe, as accurately as you can, the behavior of your supervisor.

Note: The term, “group” as employed in the following items, refers to a department, division, or other unit of organization that is supervised by the person being described.

The term “members,” refers to all the people in the unit of organization that is supervised by the person being described.

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Columbus, OH 43210

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\* Items in bold indicate subscales to be used

**DIRECTIONS:**

- a. READ each item carefully.
- b. THINK about how frequently the leader engages in the behavior described by the item.
- c. DECIDE whether he/she (A) Always (B) Often, (C) Occasionally, (D) Seldom or (E) Never act as described by the item.
- d. DRAW A CIRCLE around one of the five letters ( A B C D E) following the item to show the answer you selected.

A = Always

B = Often

C = Occasionally

D = Seldom

E = Never

- e. MARK your answers as shown in the examples below.

Example: Often acts as described                      A B C D E

Example: Never acts as described                      A B C D E

Example: Occasionally acts as described                      A B C D E

- 
1. Lets group members know what is expected of them                      A B C D E
  2. Is friendly and approachable                      A B C D E
  3. Encourages the use of uniform procedures                      A B C D E
  4. Does little things to make it pleasant to be a member of the group                      A B C D E
  5. Tries out his/her ideas in the group                      A B C D E
  6. Puts suggestions made by the group into operation                      A B C D E
  7. Makes his/her attitudes clear to the group                      A B C D E
  8. Treats all group members as his/her equals                      A B C D E

- |  |           |
|--|-----------|
| 9. Decides what shall be done and how it shall be done                           | A B C D E |
| 10. Gives advance notice of changes  | A B C D E |
| 11. Assigns group members to particular tasks                                    | A B C D E |
| 12. Keeps to himself/herself   | A B C D E |
| 13. Makes sure that his/her part in the group is understood by the group members | A B C D E |
| 14. Looks out for the personal welfare of group members                          | A B C D E |
| 15. Schedules the work to be done  | A B C D E |
| 16. Is willing to make changes   | A B C D E |
| 17. Maintains definite standards of performance                                  | A B C D E |
| 18. Refuses to explain his/her actions.  | A B C D E |
| 19. Asks that group members follow standard rules and regulations.               | A B C D E |
| 20. Acts without consulting the group.   | A B C D E |

## Appendix D

### Personal Data Sheet

Please complete the following information. This information will be used in the correlation of demographic variables (\*see below). This information will NOT be used for identification purposes.

1 My gender is:

- Male  
 Female

2 My length of time as a school board member:

- Less than 3 years  
 3 to 5 years  
 6 to 9 years  
 10 years or more

3 Length of time superintendent (on survey) has been/was employed as superintendent in our district:

- Less than 3 years  
 3 to 5 years  
 6 to 9 years  
 10 years or more

4 Gender of superintendent (on survey):

- Male  
 Female

5 My educational level is:

- High school diploma  
 Bachelor degree  
 Masters degree  
 Doctoral or law or post-masters degree

*\*This is data sheet is part of a correlation study in which a researcher investigates associations between variables. Correlation research allows us to find out what variables may be related. A correlation coefficient may be calculated. This correlation coefficient is a quantitative measure of the association between two variables*

## Appendix E

### Participant Information Letter

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St John Fisher College  
*Ed.D Executive Leadership Program Candidate*  
Linda R. Doty  
(315) 934-4019 (315)529-1670  
[lrd08281@sjfc.edu](mailto:lrd08281@sjfc.edu)

Dear School Board Member,

I am a doctoral candidate in the Ed.D program in Executive Leadership at the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. School of Education at St. John Fisher College. I am in the process of writing my dissertation and I am planning my research study for the Spring of 2011.

I am reaching out to you as an educational professional because my study is in the area of school board members' perceptions of superintendent leadership behaviors and satisfaction that leads to stability in the position.

My dissertation, entitled School Board Members' Perceptions of Superintendent Leadership Behaviors, is dependent on the participation of school board members. I look to you to assist me as I venture to make a contribution to scholarship and practice in the educational governance profession and the field of education.

I am asking you to complete two sub-sections of the survey called the Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire and a personal demographic survey. Each questionnaire will take approximately 5 minutes to complete. Included is also a data sheet of additional factors that may relate to school board member perceptions of superintendent leadership behaviors.

Please feel free to discuss this study with your superintendent and assure him/her that no superintendent will be identified in any way. All information will be kept in the strictest confidence and materials will not be marked for identification. Two envelopes are provided to return the consent form and the questionnaires/survey separately to prevent connections between board members answers and superintendents.

Thank you for completing and returning your letter of consent and the questionnaires/survey. If you experience any distress as a result of participation in this study, please contact the St. John Fisher Wellness Center (585-385-8280) for assistance.

Please call or email me with any questions you might have and thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

*Linda R. Doty*  
Linda R. Doty  
[lrd08281@sjfc.edu](mailto:lrd08281@sjfc.edu)  
315-934-4019

## Appendix F

Use of survey information:

### LEADER BEHAVIOR DESCRIPTION QUESTIONNAIRE – Form XII

Originated by staff members of  
The Ohio State Leadership Studies  
And revised by the Bureau of Business Research  
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#### Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ)

The Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) was developed by the staff of the Personnel Research Board, The Ohio State University, as one project of the Ohio State Leadership Studies, directed by Dr. Carroll L. Shartle. The LBDQ provides a technique whereby group members may describe the behavior of the leader, or leaders, in any type of group or organization, provided the followers have had an opportunity to observe the leader in action as a leader of their group. Use of the LBDQ components should be for research purposes only and no monetary gain should be realized from their use. There is no cost and no need to request permission to use the LBDQ forms provided via this website.

<https://fisher.osu.edu/offices/fiscal/lbdq/>

## Appendix G

### Participant Invitation Reminder Letter

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St John Fisher College  
*Ed.D Executive Leadership Program Candidate*  
Linda R. Doty  
(315) 934-4019 (315)529-1670  
[lrd08281@sjfc.edu](mailto:lrd08281@sjfc.edu)

Dear School Board Member,

Several days ago I sent you a packet of materials to participate in an educational study for the completion of my doctoral dissertation as a candidate in the Ed.D program in Executive Leadership at the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. School of Education at St. John Fisher College.

I am reaching out to you as an educational professional because my study is in the area of school board members' perceptions of superintendent leadership behaviors and satisfaction that leads to stability in the position. Please consider completing and returning the questionnaires and survey to me in the upcoming week. Thank you in advance for your consideration as a participant.

My dissertation, entitled School Board Members' Perceptions of Superintendent Leadership Behaviors, is dependent on the participation of school board members. I look to you to assist me as I venture to make a contribution to scholarship and practice in the educational governance profession and the field of education.

I am asking you to complete two sub-sections of the survey called the Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire and a personal demographic survey. Each questionnaire will take approximately 5 minutes to complete. Included is also a data sheet of additional factors that may relate to school board member perceptions of superintendent leadership behaviors.

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Thank you for completing and returning your letter of consent and the questionnaires/survey. If you experience any distress as a result of participation in this study, please contact the St. John Fisher Wellness Center (585-385-8280) for assistance.

Please call or email me with any questions you might have and thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,  
*Linda R. Doty*  
Linda R. Doty  
[lrd08281@sjfc.edu](mailto:lrd08281@sjfc.edu)  
315-934-4019