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How Virginia Public School Superintendents Spend Their Time

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HOW VIRGINIA PUBLIC SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS SPEND THEIR TIME

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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Dedication

This effort is dedicated to my father, brothers, and my children, Ellie and Alex Armbruster. It is through the love, dedication, and focus of my family that I am able to share my life experiences with my children and live to provide them with examples of hard work, perseverance, and passion.
Acknowledgements

At no time in my life have I achieved anything without the help and support of friends, family, or colleagues. I must first acknowledge the support and encouragement of my cohort, and their enthusiastic and collaborative effort to guide one another to achieve. Their motivation helped me remain focused throughout this process. To each of you I give my most sincere thanks and gratitude and relish in the long-lasting friendships that have begun through this experience.

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have been a tremendous struggle. With each thought of this accomplishment, each of you will be fondly and admirably remembered.
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Abstract

HOW VIRGINIA PUBLIC SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS SPEND THEIR TIME

By Eric Timothy Armbruster, Ph.D.

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2011

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The purpose of this research is to examine how Virginia public school superintendents spend their time. The primary goal of this study is to determine the differences in how superintendents allocate their time in regards to their involvement with specific tasks. This descriptive study is designed to determine the level of involvement of superintendents throughout the state of Virginia in the areas of fiscal management, facility management, personnel, student personnel and special services, support services, instruction and curriculum, and community relations.

This study investigates how much time is spent by superintendents in specific performance areas as defined by the Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Superintendents. It also examines differences in superintendents’ time
and task apportionment related to differences in superintendent experiences, as defined by gender, years in current position, size of school division, and student achievement of the school division. Furthermore, it investigates to what extent the experiences of superintendents as defined by gender, years in current position, size of school division, and student achievement of the school division explain a need for professional development in each of the criteria of the Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Superintendents?

The results of this study may reveal a need for professional development in specific evaluation criteria areas related to planning and assessment, instructional leadership, and safety and organizational management for learning. The identified superintendent levels of time and task apportionment for professional development in specific performance criteria may assist superintendents, school board members, and professional support organizations in planning and implementing professional development for superintendents to meet specific learning needs. Recommendations of the study may include: differentiated professional development offerings for superintendents, more executive training opportunities for superintendents, replication of this study in other states, establishment of national standards for performance and evaluation, and a follow-up study of why superintendents desire professional development in specific criteria areas.
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Overview

According to Glass (2004), many superintendents perceive that their school districts are underfinanced, that high-stakes standards are making their jobs increasingly more strenuous, and that they are struggling to meet the expectations of special interest groups that advocate specific concerns. It is difficult to understand how some superintendents are effective in their positions because of the multitude of factors that affect their performance. Success for a superintendent involves not only personal attributes, but also a level of preparation for the position that involves a combination of work experience and education. Additionally, success in the position is dependent upon the unique district makeup and the political landscapes in which a superintendent serves.

School districts have become increasingly more complex, characterized by a broader range of federal, state, and local accountability. “State and federal policymakers have not hesitated to impose major mandates on districts, and a variety of special interests groups have become assertive about advancing their agenda through the schools” (Lashway, 2002, p. 2). Standards-based accountability and reform have become staples among superintendents’ minimum expectations for the job (Lashway, 2002, p. 2).
As expectations for public education in the 21st century have evolved, the superintendent's role has changed. To understand the change in complexities of the position, it is important to examine the evolution of the superintendency over time.

According to Kowalski (2005), the superintendency evolved from the gradual layering of roles and areas of concentration as early as the 1830’s. The initial role of the superintendent was based on the notion of superintendent as teacher-scholar. The teacher-scholar’s primary focus was to implement state curriculum, supervise, and serve as instructional leader. District superintendents were also responsible for overseeing the assimilation of students into the American culture, a national movement referred to as “the common school movement” (p. 3). “The common school movement was intended to assimilate students into American culture by having public schools deliver a set of uniform subjects and courses—a strategy that required centralized control and standardization” (Kolwalski, 2005, p. 3).

The characterization of the superintendent following the Civil War was summarized in an 1890 report on urban superintendents (Cuban, 1976):

It must be made his recognized duty to train teachers and inspire them with high ideals; to revise the course of study when new light shows that improvement is possible; to see that pupils and teachers are supplied with needed appliances for the best possible work; and to devise rational methods of promoting pupils. (p. 16)

During the late 1800s and early 1900s, superintendents never viewed themselves as being separated from the teaching profession (Callahan, 1966). Management functions were often assumed by school board members or relegated to subordinates because the superintendents did not want to be viewed publicly as either managers or as politicians (Callahan, 1966).
From approximately 1900 to 1920, leading education scholars and political elites demanded that school administrators learn and apply the principles of scientific management (Cronin, 1973). Budget development and administration, facility management, personnel management, and standardization of operation were the first tasks that they assumed (Kolwalski, 2005, p. 6).

As many organizations began moving toward decentralization in the 1930s, the demands placed on district superintendents increased. Superintendents were required to be both effective leaders and effective managers as the expectations for minimum levels of knowledge and skills escalated. The new reality that faced superintendents was not choosing between leadership and management, but in establishing an equilibrium between the two roles (Kowalski, 2005, p. 7).

According to Callahan’s (1966) historical analysis of the period between the 1930s and mid-1950s, the superintendent centered primarily on political leadership in a democratic context. The superintendent’s role was viewed as a political strategist and democratic leader (Björk & Gurley, 2003). The democratic leader characterization was anchored in both philosophical and political realities (Kowalski, 2005). Scarce fiscal resources in the 1930s forced school officials to engage more directly in political activity, especially in relation to lobbying state legislature. Public schools had to compete with other governmental services in order to acquire state funding (Kowalski, 2005). By the mid-1950s, superintendents became overly idealistic and insufficiently attentive to the realities of practice. “Everyday problems of superintendents were economic, social, and political; and knowledge and skills, not philosophy, were necessary to solve them” (Kowalski, 2005, p. 8).
Around 1955, efforts were designed to establish school administration as an academic discipline equal to business management and public administration, infusing social sciences into the curriculum for preparing school administrators (Culbertson, 1981). School administrators were expected to apply scientific inquiry to the problems and decisions that permeated their practice (Cooper & Boyd, 1987). Superintendents were expected to have the expertise necessary to research deficiencies and recommend policy (Fusarelli & Fusarelli, 2003). This expertise included the ability to reshape institutional cultures that deterred positive change (Kowalski, 2005). Superintendents were to deal expertly with social and institutional ills such as poverty, racism, gender discrimination, crime, and violence (Kowalski, 2005, p. 10). Although this emphasis lessened after 1980, superintendents were still expected to continue to utilize research in dealing with these issues (Kowalski, 2005).

Throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s, superintendents continued the challenge of balancing the superintendent’s tasks of business manager, managing districts needs, and instructional leadership (Cuban, 1976). Superintendents were evaluated and scrutinized for their ability to effectively manage a school district while simultaneously maintaining the integrity of the instructional leader (Kowalski, 2003). The contemporary superintendent, however, faces even more complex challenges and expectations.

The current emphasis placed on superintendents by lawmakers that "all children be taught" calls for different leadership from the superintendent (Cooper, Fusarelli, & Carella, 2000). Further, the uncertain political climate that now surrounds schools requires that the superintendent to be proficient in politics as well as the art of persuasion (Cooper et al., 2000). This work requires an ability to create and maintain relationships. Indeed, the modern
The superintendent is faced with the added pressures of navigating an uncertain terrain with skill and finesse.

In order to understand the terrain that superintendents face, one must understand the differences in demographic settings in which they work. According to the latest U.S. Census (2000), there are over 300 million people that live in the United States today. Our population lives in a variety of places, which can be divided into three main categories: urban, suburban, and rural areas. These areas provide for unique needs for schools and superintendents due to their differences in makeup, populations, organizations, and structure.

People often define urban areas, or cities, as land occupied by buildings and other structures used for residences and institutional and industrial sites (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). Urban areas often have some form of public transportation, such as buses, subways, or trains and have high population densities. Buildings are often closer together and built higher than those in suburban or rural areas. Suburban areas are those on the outskirts of cities. Residents of suburban areas often commute to the cities for work. Some suburban areas have commuter trains and buses that shuttle people to and from the cities. Structures in suburban communities are often lower and farther apart than in cities. Though they have smaller populations than cities, suburbs offer the same services including schools, health care facilities, and public works. The 2000 census showed that 59 million people live in rural areas. The U.S. Census Bureau (2009) describes these areas as having large amounts of land with significantly lower populations than urban or suburban areas. Structures are often far apart and some rural communities share hospitals or schools. Rural areas tend to be far from urban areas. When many students think of
rural areas, they think of farmland. However, people live in woodland forests, plains, deserts, and prairies, which are examples of rural areas.

According to the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Educational Statistics, school district locality is based on assigned codes. A locale code is not assigned on the basis of the central office address. It is derived from the locale codes of the schools in the district. If 50% or more of the public school students attend schools with the same locale code, that locale code is assigned to the district. For example, if 60% of students were enrolled in schools with a “rural–distant” locale code, and 40% were enrolled in schools with a “town–small” locale code, the district would be assigned a rural–distant locale code. If no single locale code accounts for 50% of the students, then the major category (city, suburb, town, or rural) with the greatest percentage of students determines the locale; the locale code assigned is the smallest or most remote subcategory for that category.

**Statement of the Problem**

Superintendents are faced with balancing a multitude of tasks and responsibilities within limited time constraints. The rising amount of pressure associated with balancing these tasks and responsibilities successfully, coupled with effectively managing a district, present great challenges for current and aspiring superintendents (Cooper et al., 2000). For superintendents to become well equipped for the challenges they may face, attention and consideration must be given to time management during their preparation (Anthes, 2002).

The National American Association of School Administrators (NASSP) conducted a nationwide survey of superintendents in order to provide information concerning the complexity of the superintendency (Cooper et al, 2000). The survey examined the problems and challenges
associated with the preparation of superintendents in order to effectively lead school districts. The study revealed several things. The results found that several states have responded to districts needs by revising their licensing and certification requirements for superintendents (Cooper et al., 2000). The study also revealed that some states have done away with university-based preparation programs, while others are responding by increasing standards and preparation programs for aspiring superintendents (Cooper et al., 2000).

This study explored how superintendents spend their time and whether superintendent experiences, as defined by gender, years in current position, size of school division, and student achievement of the school division impact their ability to effectively balance tasks and responsibilities. The study researched Virginia public school superintendents’ task and time apportionment. The data retrieved from this study contributes to the literature by identifying how superintendents in Virginia spend their time (Cooper et al., 2002). The results also identify a need for professional development in each of the criteria of the Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Superintendents (Appendix A).

**Purpose of the Study**

The study researches the tasks and time apportionment that face current public school superintendents in Virginia. Superintendents’ time was further categorized into the general areas that encompass all measurable responsibilities and experiences of the role. This study identifies superintendents’ need for professional development in performance criteria (Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Superintendents, 2000). It also identifies areas to assist superintendents, school boards, and professional support organizations with the planning and implementation of professional development for superintendents to meet
their learning needs. The data retrieved from this study contribute to the research by identifying how superintendents spend their time according to the multitude of tasks within their various districts.

**Research Question**

The primary research question is how do Virginia superintendents spend their time in their divisions? Although this question focuses on a superintendent’s time and task apportionment, other variables such as, gender, years in current position, size of school division and student achievement of the school division will be included for examination.

**Conceptual Framework**

Virginia superintendents are challenged with a plethora of responsibilities that combine management and leadership skills, knowledge, and abilities. Additionally, the concentration of time that a superintendent spends on various tasks is variable according to a district’s unique makeup and community needs. Time is a valuable resource. Therefore, superintendents must manage their time effectively. Moreover, superintendents must be adequately prepared to draw on the skill, knowledge, and abilities that assist in expediting their tasks in an effective and efficient manner.

The body of knowledge regarding the purposes and tasks of the superintendent is expansive. However, the apportionment of time spent by superintendents on tasks requires further examination. This study adds to that knowledge base by gathering statewide data regarding apportionment of Virginia superintendents’ time and tasks experiences, as defined by gender, years in current position, size of school division, and student achievement of the school division.
Roles, Task, And Responsibilities

Standards-based accountability and No Child Left Behind’s mandate of adequate yearly progress have become a reality facing school districts. Schools failing to meet the benchmark will face a variety of consequences that may include losing state accreditation. The superintendent’s instructional role in a district bears the ultimate responsibility for improving student achievement and meeting the annual state benchmarks and those associated with No Child Left Behind. Therefore, superintendents are expected to have an in-depth understanding of instructional strategies, coaching techniques, and the ability to use data to guide decision making. This does not require superintendents to immerse themselves in the details of instructional planning and execution, but it does suggest that they must be knowledgeable enough to hold principals and teachers accountable for effective practice (Anthes, 2002).

Additionally, superintendents are also expected to keep their districts operating efficiently while taking risks to make necessary changes that involve district’s fiscal, personnel, physical resources, and policies (Buchen, 2001; Garner, 2005). Buchen (2001) identified an extensive list of job requirements in vacancy postings for school superintendents. He noted that “in almost all cases, the management area reads like the typical duties of a CEO and not that of an educational leader” (p. 1).

These management requirements include managing a large complex organization; faculty planning, recruitment and retention; financial planning, budget and oversight; having strong implementation skills; understanding comprehensive fiscal and performance accountability; developing new initiatives and developing continuous quality
improvement; providing diversity management; displaying communication and interpersonal skills (Buchen, 2001, p. 1).

In addition to instructional and management tasks, superintendents must negotiate with multiple stakeholders to get approval for programs and resources. For example, district leaders serve at the pleasure of the board, and must continually work to maintain a relationship of credibility and support (Johnson, 1996). In most cases this is a highly interactive and personal process, based more on relationships and impressions than on tangible criteria (Johnson, 1996). They are also expected to work effectively with diverse school boards that have a diverse constituency.

In addition to school boards, superintendents are expected to collaborate with subordinates while initiating school improvement strategies. These subordinates may have firm political alliances with elected officials, professional organizations, and community and ethnic organizations. Therefore, the superintendency is faced with an organization of politics. Responding to these multiple pressures, preparation programs are challenged with providing superintendents with the skills in order to effectively address all stakeholders’ issues and needs.

**Preparation for the Superintendency**

Preparation programs may not be fully equipped to tackle the multiple experiences facing superintendents. Some superintendents identify current weaknesses of preparation programs as involving insufficient hands-on application, access to technology, and poor linkages of content to practice. Glass, Björk, and Brunner (2000) also indicated that increased number of changes in school systems must parallel changes in educational administration and supervisory leadership preparation programs. Furthermore, a focus in these programs that encompass such factors as
securing adequate financing to meet district-wide needs, student assessment and analysis of school and community data, increased state and federal accountability, as well as instructional innovations for increasing student achievement are necessary preparation programs to take in endeavoring to reconnect with the field of educational administration (Hoyle, Björk, Collier, & Glass, 2005).

Preparation must ready aspiring superintendents to also navigate the political arena in order to be effective. The research, therefore, hypothesized that this emphasis would be represented by the responses to the superintendents’ survey. Furthermore, it would identify the components of the position that require more attention through formal preparation. This research adds to the existing body of knowledge by taking a more in-depth look at Virginia’s specific path in defining and actualizing university based superintendent preparation programs.

**Research Hypothesis**

The researcher hypothesized that the data would show a need for changes to superintendent preparation programs based on a survey of current superintendents in the field. This researcher also hypothesized that there exists a need for greater preparation for the political arena associated with the position of superintendent poses a serious obstacle to school reform and improvement.

This study assumed that aspiring superintendents are neither fully prepared nor well trained in current issues and requirement of the position. In addition, this contributes to the likelihood that they will experience difficulties in their leadership roles. According to Farkas, Johnson, Duffett, and Foleno (2001), a majority of superintendents reported that the average supervisory leadership programs in university schools of education were not aligned with the
actualities of what is needed to effectively lead today’s public school systems. Farkas, Johnson et al. (2001) also stated that nearly one-half of superintendents surveyed believed that there exists a necessary link between revamping preparation programs and improving school leadership.

**Delimitations**

This study was restricted to Virginia public school superintendents only. Therefore, the responses by the respondents as well as the conclusion of the research may not be generalizable to districts outside of Virginia.

**Limitations**

This study is limited to school districts in Virginia. The researcher does not seek to include superintendents or school leaders from private, nonpublic, charter, or parochial school settings. The validity of this study is dependent upon the honest responses of the participants involved in this research. Administration of a survey is the primary technique used to gather data for this study.

**Summary of Methodology**

The purpose of this study is to examine the time superintendents spend in various tasks and activities. This study utilized a nonexperimental, mixed-methodology to investigate task and time apportionment of Virginia superintendents. The primary goal of the study was to determine whether or not significant differences exist among superintendents experiences, as defined by gender, years in current position, size of school division, and student achievement of the school division. The primary instrument used to collect data for this research project was a replication of the survey instrument used by Thompson (2008). Thompson’s instrument was a modified version used by Glass (2004) in “Superintendent Leadership Without Management Will Not
Reform.” In Glass’s original use of the instrument, work activities of the superintendent were separated into two areas: managerial and leadership. Managerial activities as defined by Glass (2004) include financial management, facility management, personnel management, student personnel and special services, and support services. Glass categorized leadership activities as curriculum/instruction, and community relations. Thompson’s (2008) version of Glass’s (2004) study combined both managerial and leadership activities as one.

Data collection occurred in the spring of 2010, shortly approval was granted by the Virginia Commonwealth University, Internal Review Board (IRB). The survey group included all superintendents in the state of Virginia. A statewide collection of data provided more definitive information regarding perceptions of superintendents’ activities. Demographic data were gathered as was related to district makeup. Survey data also identified the specific areas of task concentrations for superintendents. The data were collected electronically through Inquisite® (2006) software, which delivered the survey results directly into a database for analysis. A request for participation was sent to each superintendent through email, with one follow-up a week for 4 consecutive weeks. Once the data collection period had been completed, quantitative statistical analyses of data were conducted using the computerized program Statistical Package for the Social Sciences® (SPSS), Version 11.0.2 for Macintosh OSX.

After the Internet survey data were collected and reviewed, a telephone interview was conducted with eight superintendents; one superintendent each was selected from small, medium, and large divisions within the state’s eight educational regions. The interviews added qualitative data to the study. The telephone interviews were taped and transcribed. A third party reviewed the transcriptions for accuracy.
Key Terms

The key terms identified in this section describe the tasks that are commonly allocated to superintendents by school boards. The key terms section will be described in Appendix B.

Significance of Study

This study supported the research that outlines how experiences and contextual conditions may impact superintendents’ tasks in their various school districts. Additionally, it described superintendents’ activities and demonstrated patterns of time allocation. Significant findings of associations discovered between superintendents’ experiences and the activities of superintendents, might have practical implications for those structuring administrator-training and preparation programs, for candidates to the superintendency, for superintendents themselves, for district boards of education, and for state and federal policymakers.

Superintendent training programs, for example, could take into account the impact of the district’s location on superintendents’ roles. Depending on the strength of the association between district characteristics and the superintendent’s activities, courses of study could be tailored to address problems specific to a district defined as rural, urban, or suburban. In fact, some administrator preparation programs already focus their curricula on the particular leadership needs of rural or urban districts (Glass et al., 2000).

Among prospective candidates for the superintendency, awareness of how certain contextual conditions impact leadership opportunities in particular districts might assist them in making decisions about which jobs to apply for or accept (Glass et al., 2000). Consideration of the sorts of responsibilities that a job might entail clearly forms part of the thought process in which administrators engage in when they consider new positions. A clearer understanding of
the sorts of challenges and opportunities likely to be associated with a particular superintendency might encourage hesitant candidates to apply or less qualified candidates to remove themselves from the applicant pool (Glass et. al., 2000). Furthermore, knowledge of the sorts of demands that are likely to confront the leader who is hired should make board members and hiring committees more effective in assessing prospective candidates for a particular position.

Awareness of the ways in which specific contextual conditions tend to inadvertently shape leadership roles might also help superintendents make more deliberate decisions about how to use their time. Rather than allowing the conditions to determine how they prioritize time usage, superintendents can take a more proactive stance by hiring additional personnel, reorganizing the responsibilities of existing personnel, or developing structures to make more efficient use of time.

The knowledge that other superintendents in comparable districts are likely to face a common set of challenges might encourage some superintendents to establish networks in order to facilitate problem solving. Such networks have, in the past, been effective in advocating on behalf of districts that face common problems such as inadequate funding (Simon, 1999). In addition, awareness of role variations across districts might encourage superintendents to seek inter-district collaborations, enabling a group of districts, for example, to share resources or to work together to implement particular instructional reforms. Collaborations of this sort might enable certain types of districts (e.g., smaller or less affluent districts) to augment organizational capacity, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of the efforts undertaken individually by each district’s superintendent.
Overall, these measures would likely help superintendents make more judicious and intentional allocations of their time, a practice that would result in improved focus on important educational matters. It is hoped that better awareness of and planning for anticipated demands would enable superintendents to move beyond the routine performance of mundane tasks and toward working in service of the enriched roles associated with instructional leadership (Morgan, 2000). Additionally, a greater understanding and intentional choices about the allocation of time would enable superintendents to achieve the sort of balance between roles that some researchers see as necessary for effective leadership (Johnson, 1996).

Finally, policymakers need to be made aware of the associations that might exist between various contextual conditions and the time allocations that influence superintendents’ efficacy. For example, if inadequate funding turns out systematically to interfere with optimal patterns of district leadership, state and federal policymakers have an obligation to redress inequitable funding schemes that deprive some districts of necessary resources. Or if government initiatives, such as accountability measures, are imposing such heavy burdens on superintendents that these school leaders are impaired in the performance of their leadership roles, policymakers may need to take action to modify these initiatives (Howley, Pendarvis, & Gibbs, 2002).

Summary

This chapter traced the evolution of the superintendent’s position, responsibilities, and roles. Further, it examined various typologies that have been developed to classify functions associated with that role. These three-part typologies categorize functions of the superintendent’s role under the broad headings of educational, managerial, and political
leadership. Additionally, the categorizations of roles are further outlined through a management grid for data collection that will be utilized as this study’s main data collection instrument.

The primary focus of this study is defined as an examination of the extent to which contextual circumstances of school divisions in Virginia, influence superintendents’ performance of their roles. This chapter also introduced the idea that time apportionment will be used as a useful gauge measuring the extent to which superintendents performs task related to their diverse roles.

Finally, the study’s potential significance was evaluated. The researcher explained practical ramifications of the study’s findings for various constituents, including educators who prepare school leaders, prospective superintendents, acting superintendents, district boards of education, and state and federal policy makers.
CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Chapter 2 will examine the complexities of the superintendency and the influence of context on superintendents’ handling of their tasks and activities in school districts throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. The chapter will describe past and current complexities as well as the embedded accountability superintendents face related to their specific districts. It will also describe superintendents’ role typology. Time and role apportionment studies will also be reviewed. This chapter will also examine preparation for the position and issues involving superintendent preparation. Chapter 2 will also examine literature that describes successful superintendents.

Complexities of the Position – Past and Present

The superintendency, a position that was created by local boards without statutory authority or support, emerged in the 20th century as a central and powerful position in education. As the number of local districts grew, more districts hired superintendents. The high water mark came in the 1960s when there were more than 35,000 superintendents nationally (Houston, 2001).

Their power and responsibility also increased and peaked at about the same time. During the first half of the century, the superintendent became the most powerful individual in the school district and one of the most visible members of the local community. They were
considered civic leaders who held their positions for many years and who wielded enormous authority over the daily life of the school system. The superintendent had little external interference in conducting the work of the school district and boards became secondary in the operations of the school districts. The role of the board of education was, in large part, to support and approve the work of the superintendent. Superintendents made most of the major decisions affecting the districts, and were normally supported by the local lay boards that saw their role as supporting this work. “Acrimony and disagreements were rare” (Carter & Cunningham, 1997).

By the 1960s, interests and control in education leadership began to change. The passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 1965 marked a much greater interest on the part of the federal government in education and a series of court cases curtailed the schools' role in loco parentis (in place of the parent), authority that had previously been the standard. The civil rights movement and the antiwar movement generated greater student activism, and schools were faced with dealing with expanded student rights and campus disruptions. This situation led to a dispersal of authority that had once been held by the superintendent, and much greater involvement and scrutiny by the public became the norm. “School leaders were no longer trusted to conduct the affairs of the schools without significant external observation and criticism” (Houston, 2001, p. 428).

During the last quarter of the 20th century, the country began to change its expectations for what schools should deliver. As the economy shifted from an industrial system to a more informational/high technology system, it required workers with higher skill sets. This challenge was compounded by federal legislation that placed the education of students with disabilities into
the mainstream of schools. Further exacerbating the situation was the increased immigration of students from all over the world; many immigrants arrived without knowledge of English and, in many cases, without the benefit of formal education in their home country (Carter & Cunningham, 1997).

In 1983 the Nation at Risk report was issued by Secretary of Education Terrell Bell and released by President Ronald Reagan (National Commission of Excellence in Education, 1983). The report indicated that American schools were being caught in increasing mediocrity and that serious reform was needed. Although the rising tide was really one of expectations that outstripped the schools' ability to deliver past their traditional role, the pressure on schools and subsequently school leaders became severe (Augenstein & Konnert, 1990). This report was followed by a spate of others and by tremendous media attention that was given to the so-called crisis in schools which led to renewed political interest in schools (Houston, 2001).

During the 1980s and 1990s, states reasserted their role in education by setting state standards and assessment systems. Even the federal government, despite its lack of constitutional authority, became more aggressive to the point that candidates for president of the United States laid claim to the title, "Education President" (Houston, 2001). This situation further undermined the authority of the superintendency, without alleviating the expectations for greater accountability from the role. At the beginning of the 21st century, the role was no longer seen as prestigious or one where power existed, leading to a shortage in the profession (Houston, 2001). Although it is not clear what the role will become in the future, it seems certain that change and uncertainty will be a consistent issue associated with the position. This change and
uncertainty will require a different set of expectations and preparation for those entering the profession.

Issues facing American school superintendents have become increasing more complex (Orr, 2002). Today’s superintendents are challenged with increased social and political pressures in addition to high standards and constituent demands (Rohland, 2001). As a result of these increased complexities, the superintendent, as the chief educational officer, has been faced with increased exposure to criticism (Jazzar & Kimball, 2004). Indeed, due to the complex nature of executive leadership itself, there will always be dissatisfaction among constituents that require a superintendent’s attention (Fullan, 1998). According to Parker (1996), if one calculates the number of teachers, students, parents, and community members, the possibilities for conflict and outside pressures are numerous. Successful superintendents appear to gain wisdom and experience from criticism and strengthen their ability to prevent poor performance (Harvey, 2003).

The increased complexities and pressures of the positions require unique preparation in order to respond to these pressures. Much criticism for public school superintendents in recent years has emerged from the increased demands from the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (U.S. Department of Education, 2002) as well as state accountability standards. The superintendent is ultimately responsible for the success or failure of student performance. Twenty-first century superintendents must have the preparation, knowledge, and skills to respond to the needs of the students and the district. They must be knowledgeable and skilled in current instructional methods, possess the ability to understand and disseminate assessment data, as well as be able to articulate their district’s achievement level (Hoyle et al., 2005). In order to effectively address
all of these components, academic improvement relies on effective leaders having ample time to implement broad, sustainable reform initiatives (Fullan, 2002).

Farkas, Foley, and Duffett (2001) reported that more than one-half of superintendents listed that the most daunting task faced in the job is that of increasing student achievement. Moreover, 41% of school boards identified raising student achievement as a primary mission. An effective superintendent is vital to the success of a district’s student improvement efforts (Forsyth, 2004). Although Byrd’s (2001) study revealed no significant correlation between a superintendent’s leadership style and student achievement, the managerial role of superintendents was noted to have a significant effect. Byrd implied that superintendents must focus on the lines of communication among all stakeholders and allow for site-based autonomy at the school level in order to have a positive impact on student academic achievement.

**Accountability and No Child Left Behind**

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) represents the most comprehensive change to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) since its enactment in 1965. Perhaps more importantly, this bill represents a major shift in thinking in the United States about the roles of school and school system leaders as it has implications for those who work in public education. Four areas of NCLB, (a) assessment and accountability, (b) parental choice, (c) resource flexibility, and (d) quality teachers strongly influence the work of district leaders in public education. Furthermore, questions arise about the role district superintendents will play in this political mêlée (Kowalski, Petersen, & Barnett, 2004).

Although for decades superintendents were considered to be managers more so than instructional leaders, the current climate and emphasis on accountability, and in particular
NCLB, has placed an enormous amount of political pressure on schools to demonstrate effective instructional leadership at the district level (Short & Scribner, 2000). No Child Left Behind has readjusted the focus of accountability, shifting it directly to school district leaders. Superintendents are held accountable for the performance of the schools and children in their district, and rewards and sanctions are in place to promote annual yearly progress (AYP). For the public school superintendent, this presents significant challenges.

At the heart of the issue for superintendents, we find an exigent relationship between constricting control over school district resources and decision-making, and a superintendent's ability to lead organizational change and improvement. Unlike previous accountability initiatives, NCLB's use of annual yearly progress data (from measures of student achievement) to make decisions about the future of particular schools, students and school personnel, brings about a more complicated and somewhat ominous challenge to the daily professional life of school superintendents (Fuhrman & Elmore, 2004). Moreover, these and other requirements of the legislation place an almost unrealistic demand on the already highly complex and demanding role of the district superintendent (Fuhrman & Elmore, 2004). NCLB had also a dramatic effect on how district administrators receive, allocate, and maintain funding for programs focused on instruction and learning. Yet, defining high quality in terms of credentials and certification creates an added burden for superintendents.

High quality subjects all existing and future district professional employees to higher levels of scrutiny. No more will an uncertified teacher be a simple red flag in the state supervisor's report. District administrators must also ensure that current teachers strengthen and improve pedagogy using researched-based instructional strategies in their teacher development
and continuing education programs. Although districts may be in compliance with NCLB's teacher quality provision, this does not ensure increases in student achievement. Superintendents must focus on the tasks associated with long-term, sustained success that begin by improving the quality of the novice teacher and ensuring that teachers already in the classroom have the resources and learning opportunities they need to be most effective (Cicchinelli, Gaddy, Lefkowits, & Miller, 2003)

**NCLB’s Influence on the Preparation of School District Leaders**

No Child Left Behind reinforces a change in the way school and school system leadership is thought about in the United States. Leadership is increasingly considered a major factor in the academic achievement of children in our nation's schools and school districts. The fact that expectations for today's principals and superintendents extend beyond general management functions to instructional leadership has substantial implications for leadership preparation and professional development. As programs seek to respond to the challenges presented by NCLB, specifically as they improve their capacity to prepare learning-focused leaders, attention should be given, at a minimum, to student recruitment, the leadership preparation provided, professional development, and departmental resources. In addition to having specialized training in using data to close the achievement gap, superintendents must also increase their knowledge and skills in the areas of teacher quality, instructional supervision, and capacity building. They must also develop their knowledge and skills in improving and enhancing teacher and building level administrative leadership, monitoring the effectiveness of teachers and paraprofessionals, rewarding success and applying consequences to non-achieving students, teachers, and administrators (Lipsky, 2003).
**Superintendent Preparation and Certification**

Few universities have programs tailored specifically for the position of superintendent, although most Ph.D. and Ed.D. programs in educational administration are considered to be preparation programs for superintendents. Most states provide superintendent licensure for individuals who earn such degrees. Exceptions to the above include, among others, the Harvard Urban Superintendents Program, the University of Virginia School Superintendent’s Licensure Program, and nonuniversity-based programs to include: the Kentucky Superintendent’s Leadership Development Program developed by the Kentucky State Department of Education, the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), and the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) (Guthrie and Sanders, 2001). Intense criticism has been focused on educational leadership preparation programs for the past few decades due to lack of research to understand and analyze the factors that support and detract from a program’s ability to provide quality leadership preparation (Guthrie & Sanders, 2001).

**Superintendent’s Tasks and Activities**

**Instructional**

The late 1980s and 1990s marked a dramatic change in the conceptualization of the work of superintendents. The principal was no longer to be seen as a building manager but as the instructional leader of the school. The instructional leader focus was based on research that found that schools in which all children, and particularly poor children of color, show significant increases in student achievement. These instructional leaders built structures of relationships in schools so that the resulting human energy in the school enhanced student performance. Smith and Andrews (1989) characterized the strong instructional leader as one who gives curriculum
and instruction the highest priority, rallies and mobilizes resources to enable the accomplishment of those goals, and creates a climate of high expectations for high academic achievement and respect for all students.

**Management**

Superintendents’ effectiveness relies heavily on adopting a hands-on approach (Cuban, 1984). These hands-on approaches utilize managerial influence, guiding the behaviors of principals and teachers, directly impacting student learning and achievement (Cuban, 1984; Hoyle et al., 2005). Characteristics of the managerial influence includes thoughtful staff selection and recruitment, clearly articulated mission and goals in regard to curricular issues, as well as financial planning that supports instruction (Hoyle et al., 2005).

**Budget and Finance Role**

According to Glass (1997), superintendents described managing limited resources as a never-ending struggle. In a study of superintendent self-perception of effectiveness, lack of fiscal resources was a major reason for inhibiting superintendent effectiveness and for explaining why superintendents are leaving the profession (Glass et al., 2000). Managing fewer resources for greater outcomes becomes a skill that needs to be included in superintendent preparation for the job (Glass et al., 2000).

**Political and Governance**

Superintendents are also faced with the challenges of working within the boundaries of school boards and with their constituents. While instructional leadership is integral to the role of the superintendent, the increasingly complex political aspects of the job must be considered and handled as well (Education Writers Association, n.d.; Hoyle et al., 2005). So important is this
emerging consideration, involving superintendent relationships with school boards, it has been considered by some to be a decisive element of superintendent tenure (Education Writers Association, n.d.). A conflict with the school board may explain a superintendent leaving a district and hence their attrition (Rausch, 2001). Allen (1998) observed that superintendents listed the relationship with the board as a second reason for involuntary nonextension of a contract, while board members listed relationships with the superintendent as the major cause. Glass and co-researchers (2000) surmised that the school board and superintendent must work together with the community for the success of the district.

While many school boards and superintendents described having mutually cooperative relationships (Foley, Foley et al., 2001), Farkas, Johnson et al. (2001) reported an astonishing 65% of superintendents believed that many school boards simply wanted leaders they could control. Even more revealing, over 80% of superintendents have reported feeling frustrated with the politics and bureaucracy of the job (Farkas, Johnson et al., 2001; Farkas, Johnson, & Duffett, 2003). One source of this frustration stems from superintendents feeling micromanaged by school boards involving their administrative responsibilities, with more than two-thirds of superintendents stating that their board meddled in issues not within the scope of their responsibility (Harvey, 2003). According to Goodman and Zimmerman (2000), a quality working relationship between effective leaders and school boards is a “key cornerstone of the foundation for high student achievement” (p. 1). “As local school boards are the sole evaluators of superintendent performance and renewal of contracts, a quality working relationship with members also directly influences the tenure of the superintendent” (Byrd, Drews, & Johnson 2006, p. 2).
After the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission of Excellence in Education, 1983), not only did citizens offer suggestions and advice to educators, but there were also many mandates requiring boards and superintendents to respond and principals to implement (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Murphy, 1995). “Education had entered the political arena full swing, and politicians felt compelled to make their mark on education” (Carter & Cunningham, 1997, p. 28). Unlike principals who were seen to be instrumental in carrying out the reforms, “superintendents were criticized by reformists as being blockers of reform” (Glass, 1997, p. 24). Drawing on Morris (1979), Kowalski (1999) argued that in contrast to managers in business, superintendents at this time paid more attention to their internal networks and subordinates than to the government agencies and civic leaders outside the school system. “The apparent insulation of the superintendent . . . became a primary reform issue for those who judged school officials to be insensitive to community needs and impervious to changing economic, political and social conditions” (Kowalski, 1999, p. 12). Thus, the job expectations of the superintendency expanded once again to include the capacity to generate broad based community support for whatever reform efforts were developed to increase student achievement.

Superintendents found themselves much more at the mercy of enactors than ever before. During this decade, state and local bureaucracies gained more control and influence over public education. One indication of this shift was President George Bush’s education summit in Charlottesville, Virginia, in 1989. The president and the nation’s governors met to establish national performance goals to enhance the United States’ global competitiveness. The summit “was clearly a response to the perception of a rising economic challenge from highly industrialized nations” (Carter & Cunningham, 1997, p. 29). These perceptions encouraged
various citizen groups to seek input into educational policymaking—interest groups whose main concerns were not education. At the same time, the charter school movement, privatization of public education services and management, and state or mayoral takeovers of school board functions also contributed to the erosion of superintendents’ authority and policy-making leadership (Glass, 1997).

Most recently, the superintendency has been characterized as an enormously challenging position. Not only are superintendents compelled to look outward as the earlier criticisms suggested, but they are also expected to be knowledgeable of all facets of education within the district.

**Time and Task Apportionment**

The studies reviewed in this section focus on the ways in which contextual conditions influence superintendents’ apportionment of time across various tasks and activities. The literature describes the functions and the range of activities performed by school superintendents. Considering the variation in districts demographics and circumstances, however, the degree to which individual superintendents perform functions may be influenced by a variety of factors relating to district context (Johnson, 1996).

Studies of time allocation have long been used to examine workers’ functions (Burns, 1957; Copeman, Luijk, & Hanika, 1963). Specific patterns of task enactment may be determined by examining administrator’s time allocation among educational and managerial functions. Mintzberg (1973) studied administrators’ time allocation in order to determine what comprised their functions.
Cuban (1988) examined variables associated with patterns of administrators’ time allocation among three core roles: teacher-scholar, administrative chief, and negotiator-statesman. He re-examined data from his earlier study of the writings of 251 urban superintendents in order to determine the percentages of superintendents who fit into each of these three role categories in every decade from 1881-1950. As a result of what he termed “patterns in discharging core roles” (p. 145), Cuban concluded that the percentage of time spent in educational leadership has continued to decline, while the percentage of the time spent on administrative and political leadership has steadily increased. These findings suggest that, in any given era, the extent to which superintendents focused on each of their functions depended upon “larger social and political forces, the districts in which they worked, and the particular experiences and values that they had” (p. 123). In addition, Cuban found that superintendents’ time apportionment also varied according to work setting and individual style (p. 145).

The claim that context influences time apportionment among functions of the superintendency is also supported by Tyack’s (1976) finding that the functions of superintendents in modest sized districts differed from those of superintendents in larger urban districts. It is further supported by Mintzberg’s (1973) conclusion that stressful conditions had an influence on the roles played by business administrators.

Many scholars argue that the optimal role of superintendents is one focused on educational leadership (Björk, 1993; Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Konnert & Augenstein, 1990). Neglect of instructional leadership, in fact, ignores the primary function of schooling. Increased teacher confidence, competence, and willingness to take responsibility are associated with superintendent’s attention to educational leadership (Kussy, 1995). Nevertheless, time
constraints, task overload, and situations involving conflict can often limit a superintendents’ focus on educational leadership (Bredeson, 1996; Wirt, 1991).

According to Johnson (1996), a relative balance among the functions, not a disproportionate emphasis on educational leadership, may constitute the most effective approach to leading a district. Findings from her study revealed that failure of a superintendent to pay attention to all functions and activities, collectively, had a negative impact on the district. For example, a superintendent’s failure to attend to educational leadership diminished his or her credibility with teachers and principals. Inadequate attention to politics and governance resulted in conflict and financial hardship; a lack of focus on managerial functions led to poor communication and distracting bureaucratic errors.

While some superintendents may intentionally achieve specific task allocations, including either an emphasis on educational leadership or a balance among the functions, others may not. In fact, superintendents’ allocation of time among their activities may depend more on their circumstances rather than on their intentions. Furthermore, these circumstances may be unique to and associated with districts described contextually by size or more specifically as being either rural, urban, or suburban.

Roles and Apportionment Studies – Contextual

A study by Gilstrap (1982) examined the impact of district size on the role of the superintendent by focusing exclusively on superintendents of small rural districts. According to Gilstrap, 1982 data showed that 83% (254) of school districts in Kansas had fewer than 1,500 students, and thus were classified as rural. However, enrollments in these districts ranged from 82 to 1,488 students, and Gilstrap speculated that such size discrepancies might be associated
with variations among superintendents’ roles. In order to test this notion, Gilstrap structured a study that evaluated the influence of district size on superintendents’ attention to various administrative functions. Gilstrap also sought to examine the relationship between the ideal and actual amounts of attention superintendents allocated to various administrative tasks. Finally, he examined the influence of a superintendent’s age, experience, and simultaneous employment as a principal on their attention to these functions common to the superintendency.

The population for the study consisted of the superintendents of all 126 rural districts in Kansas with fewer that 1,500 students. A three-part questionnaire first asked participants to indicate both the ideal and actual amounts of attention devoted to seven administrative functions comprising 49 different management activities. Participants were asked to indicate ideal and actual attention to each activity using values ranging from 1 (minimum) to 6 (maximum). The second and third parts of the questionnaire asked participants to rank administrative functions according to attention devoted to each and to provide certain demographic data.

One hundred-seven superintendents returned the questionnaire, providing an overall response rate of 84.9%. Fifty-two lower-quartile (smaller districts) and 55 upper-quartile (larger districts) superintendents responded, constituting respective response rates of 82.5% and 87.3%, respectively. In order to test his hypothesis, Gilstrap (1982) computed means and variances and then examined differences in means using the Cochran C-test.

In addition to significant differences based on superintendents’ ages and years of experience, Gilstrap (1982) found significant differences based on district size. Overall, superintendents of smaller rural districts reported giving the most attention to school-community relations, followed by personnel services. This order was reversed for
superintendents of larger rural districts, who reported giving the most attention to personnel services, followed by school-community relations. Though both groups of superintendents reported the least attention to pupil services, superintendents of smaller rural districts still reported significantly more attention to personnel services and facilities maintenance and operations. No differences were found between groups for reported attention to business and finance, curriculum and instruction, school-community relations, and transportation and food services.

School-community relations was selected by both small- and large-district superintendents as the administrative function to which ideally they wished to devote the most attention. Pupil services, food services, and transportation were chosen by both groups as functions to which they wished to devote the least amount of attention. This finding is interesting because it suggests that, across contexts, superintendents would prefer to spend more time on major political functions and less time on labor-intensive managerial functions. Despite these commonalities, comparison between groups revealed significant differences of ideal amounts of attention to facilities management and operation, school-community relations, and personnel services. Large-district superintendents, in contrast to small-district superintendents, thought more time needed to be devoted to these three administrative functions.

As part of a more extensive study of the superintendency, Duea and Bishop (1980) examined the impact of district size on the role of the superintendent. As leaders of the Practical Research into Organizational Behavior and Effectiveness (PROBE) at the University of Northern Iowa, Deua and Bishop structured their research to compare views of public school superintendents toward time management, job priorities, and stress associated with certain
administrative tasks. In their study, *time management* was defined as proportions of time allocated to administrative tasks. *Job priorities* meant the relative importance of these tasks, while *stress potential* was defined as the degree to which various tasks were likely to tax superintendents’ physical and mental reserves.

The sample consisted of 2,175 of the nation’s then 14,794 superintendents. Using stratified random sampling based on the number of districts in each state and on the size of the districts, the researchers identified a sample of 2,004 superintendents. In order to identify a large enough subgroup of superintendents from very large school systems, the researchers then added to the sample all superintendents from the nations largest 200 school districts.

Findings from this study indicated that as size of a district increased, superintendents tended to become more removed from the daily operations and from involvement with personnel. Compared to superintendents in the largest school districts, superintendents from the smallest districts reported allocating more time to personnel tasks and student affairs. Duea and Bishop (1980) suggested that these differences in superintendents’ time allocation might have resulted from differences in administrative staffing and specialization among districts of various sizes. Although the authors did not elaborate, it seems reasonable to assume that, compared to leaders of larger districts, superintendents in smaller districts have fewer support staff. As a consequence, superintendents in smaller districts may need to spend time on the sorts of managerial tasks that superintendents of larger districts are able to delegate to subordinates.

Lindsey (1989) also examined the impact of district size on superintendents’ roles. His stated purpose was to discover how superintendents spent their time, how these activities differed by district size, and how much unscheduled time superintendents had available. Lindsey also
examined the proportion of time superintendents spent on-task and off-task, and the extent to which superintendents’ perception of their work-time expenditure matched their actual observed work behaviors.

Lindsey (1989) delineated 19 categories of superintendent functions based on 31 duties required of superintendents by the Tennessee state code. He then used these categories to study the work behaviors of 17 Tennessee superintendents. His sample was based on convenience and included 5 superintendents from large districts (over 15,000 students), 5 superintendents from medium-sized districts (5,000-14,999 students) and 5 superintendents from small districts (1,000-4,999 students). Each superintendent was observed for 2 workdays, during which Lindsey monitored and catalogued their work activities. At 15-second intervals, Lindsey assigned observed tasks to 1 of his 19 categories of superintendent work functions. Due to the small sample size, he could not use inferential statistics to examine the differences across groups. Instead, he characterized the study as a snapshot of the superintendency, and presented descriptive statistics only.

Among Lindsey’s (1989) findings was that superintendents devoted more time to managerial than educational tasks. Superintendents in the study were also quite involved in political activities. As a whole, superintendents spent most time (19% or 2 hours daily) to tasks related to office management. Budget management, central office staff/visibility, and transition (moving between activities) each consumed another 8% to 9% (or 50 minutes per task) of superintendent’s work time. Lindsey reported that superintendents exhibited on-task behaviors for an average of nearly 84% of their workday and that unscheduled activities consumed on average 21% of work time. Lindsey also found small-school district superintendents spending
comparatively less time on instructional activities but comparatively more time on political activism.

Munther (1997) also examined how the work activity of public school superintendents varied according to the context of various districts. Participants included in the sample 16 full-time superintendents in the state of Washington who had at least 2 year’s experience, but who were more than 2 years from retirement. Two to four participants represented each of five district categories consisting of enrollments of 0-499; 500-1,999; 2,000-4,999; 5,000-9,999; and 10,000 and over. Munther modeled his study after Duea and Bishop (1980). He also replicated a methodology used by Andrews (1987) in a study of principals’ work activities. Participating superintendents kept work activity logs for 2 weeks in October and November of 1996, classifying daily time spent in each activity included within Duea and Bishop’s seven categories. Following completion of their activity logs, participants also responded to semistructured interview questions.

Munther’s (1997) findings suggested that superintendents in larger districts might be devoting more time than those in smaller districts to activities associated with political leadership. He also concluded that the ability to delegate was the condition associated with district size that was most likely to influence superintendents’ work activity. Because they had no personnel to whom they could delegate responsibilities, superintendents in smaller districts tended to perform a wider variety of tasks than those in larger districts. According to Munther, the finding that superintendents in larger districts devoted the most time to institutional (i.e., political) functions also resulted from their ability to delegate. Treating institutional functions as
most important and, therefore, the ones they should perform themselves, large-district superintendents chose to delegate technical and managerial responsibilities to subordinates.

Thompson (2008) also studied time allocation by investigating how Virginia superintendents allocate their time in the areas of management and leadership activities for small, medium, and large school districts. His study also examined the contextual variable of annual yearly progress and No Child Left Behind relative to the management activities of superintendents. Participants were randomly selected from small, medium, and large districts with each size equally represented. Survey data was collected from twelve school division superintendents. An analysis of data revealed no significant differences in the degree of involvement of superintendents in any management or leadership areas.

**Gaps in the Extant Literature**

The studies reviewed above considered the relationships between district size and superintendents’ performance of their tasks and activities. In general, the findings were not consistent. A synthesis of these findings, however, does reveal that superintendents in smaller districts generally spend more time on managerial duties (Duea & Bishop, 1980; Munther, 1997). On the other hand, the studies reviewed yielded contradictory findings. Differences in findings may be due in part to differences in classification systems across the various studies. Most importantly, all of the studies reviewed share a common weakness. Namely, by focusing on the functional roles of superintendents, these studies fail to consider the substantive concerns that occupy superintendents’ time. Substantive concerns may not only be described by district size but also by the conditions that might influence a superintendent’s role.
Rural, Urban, and Suburban School Districts

The literature review for this dissertation examined cases that have involved district size as a variable. District size can also categorize a school district as being either rural, urban, or suburban districts. These categorizations have distinguishable and unique features and challenges for superintendents.

Historically, a small rural school district hired a schoolmaster or teacher to serve multiple roles such as teacher, principal, nurse, cook, and custodian (Hilton, 1949). Today, many rural school districts continue this practice through the superintendent/principal position. Because small school systems lack the number of positions available in larger systems, a single administrator is often given several coordinated responsibilities that would normally warrant a separate position in a larger school district (Wylie & Clark, 1991). These administrators wear many hats. They are subject to what Katz and Kahn (1978) termed "role ambiguity" (p. 190), wherein uncertainty about what a job should include is coupled with an unwieldy range of role expectations leading to low job satisfaction and high tension (p. 190). Small rural school districts across America are confronted with many issues. Concerns over inadequate funding and increased state and federal mandates, such as No Child Left Behind continue to add to an already full administrative agenda. Therefore, superintendent/principals in small rural districts face the daily challenge of meeting these demands and providing effective leadership.

Urban districts are typically considered to be those located in the inner core of metropolitan areas having enrollments of more than 25,000 students (Chapman, 1997). The research and literature about large-city school districts portray conditions of poverty, chronic academic underachievement, dropouts, crime, unstable school boards, reform policy, and high
superintendent turnover (Chapman, 1997). The typical tenure of a superintendent in the largest large-city districts is 2 to 3 years. This brief tenure makes it unlikely that a superintendent can develop and implement reform programs that can result in higher academic achievement, let alone rebuild crumbling schools buildings, secure private sector assistance, and build a working relationship with the city's political structure (Chapman, 1997). The large-city superintendency is a position defined by high expectations, intense stress, inadequate resources, and often a highly unstable politicized board of education (Hill, 1998).

The literature involving suburban districts is less extensive than rural and urban. However, information about suburban school districts reveals unique challenges for superintendents. With the construction of interstate highways in the late 1950s and early 1960s, suburban towns began to grow with the areas most affluent citizens (Anyon, 1980). Today, suburban schools often display the greatest achievement academically (Hemmings, 1999). Additionally, suburban schools allegedly promote and exemplify the educational and social values that sustain the American ideal (Anyon, 1980).

Although most districts’ focus primarily on the “formal curriculum”, a suburban superintendent must also consider the social value of the suburban community in decision making. Superintendents must be prepared to tackle the “hidden curriculum” (Hemmings, 1999). The “hidden curriculum” are unstated norms, values, and beliefs that are transmitted to students through the community (Hemmings, 1999). For superintendents to remain productive in shaping school policy, they must be aware of the way hidden curriculum presents itself in the suburban school setting, a facet of culture that has been historically a sociological discipline (Hemmings,
However, for schools to move forward, superintendents must call into question all aspects of schooling and examine them with a critical mind.

**Successful Superintendents - Based on Tenure**

Hoyle and colleagues (2005) expressed that the success or failure of various superintendents (length of tenure) is a subject that is ambiguous and not thoroughly researched. Adding to the ambiguity, Gardner’s (1990) statement holds true, “Despite length of tenure, one thing is certain, for good or bad, the system will survive the superintendent” (p. 12). According to Cooper et al. (2000), the public perception of the superintendency is that of a job so daunting, few individuals desire to pursue the challenge. Given the challenges of the job, one pressing question is what are the factors that lead to superintendent turnover in the field?

Natkin, Cooper, Alborano, Padilla, and Ghosh (2002) have provided the most recent quantitative study on survival of the superintendency. Focused on the longevity of 292 superintendents from North Carolina and random districts across the U.S., these researchers found that superintendent turnover averaged 6 to 7 years, regardless of the district’s size or location. Factors significantly related to superintendents’ longevity in office were the extent of school board involvement in management, support for needed construction, consolidation of school systems, district poverty level, and superintendent’s postgraduate education. The research indicated that superintendent tenure had not markedly increased since 1975, and that superintendent turnover was not as serious an issue as once perceived. Despite this result, Natkin et al. revealed that when combined, high poverty of students enrolled in the district, minimal support for construction of new facilities, and micromanagement by school governance
lead to shorter tenure.

In 2003, the Council of Great City Schools (GCS) reported results of a survey conducted with member districts. Average tenure for urban superintendents was reported to be only 2.75 years (up from 2.5 years in 2001), but mean tenure for the immediate past GCS superintendents averaged over 4 years. Supporting GCS findings, the Council of Urban Board of Education (CUBE) reported the tenure of urban superintendents between 4 and 5 years (National School Board Association, 2002).

The most comprehensive study about superintendent characteristics within the past 10 years is the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) (2000) study of the American school superintendent (Glass et al., 2000). The 2000 AASA survey sampled 2,262 superintendents; average tenure of superintendents was estimated to be between 5 and 6 years, slightly lower than the previous survey in 1992. Glass and coauthors alleged the difference between the two surveys was due in part to new superintendents entering the field, maintaining that superintendent tenure has remained relatively static over the past 30 years. In fact, many superintendents have served more than half of their career in one district.

Important to note is the difference between average tenure for urban superintendents and other superintendents. As revealed in the literature, urban superintendents have historically experienced shorter tenure than other superintendents. Because the role of the superintendent is so diverse for various reasons, geography and size being only two, length of tenure varies.

**Issues Affecting Superintendents’ Success**

**Instructional Leadership**

Farkas, Foley et al. (2001) found that more than one-half of superintendents listed the
most daunting task faced in the job is that of increasing student achievement. Additionally, 41% of school boards identified raising student achievement as a primary mission. Effective superintendents are recognized as vital to the success of a district’s improvement efforts (Forsyth, 2004). Although Byrd’s (2001) study revealed no correlation between superintendent leadership style and student achievement, the managerial role of superintendents had a significant effect. Byrd suggested that superintendents must increase lines of communication among stakeholders and allow for autonomy at the campus level in order to have a positive impact on student academic achievement.

Superintendent as instructional leader differs from that of principal in that superintendents are responsible for regulating the overall capacity of the school system (Hoyle et al., 2005). Furthermore, superintendents of successful districts adopt a hands-on approach in regard to instructional matters (Cuban, 1984). These same superintendents utilize managerial influence over the behaviors of principals and teachers, in turn directly impacting student learning and achievement (Cuban, 1984; Hoyle et al., 2005). Managerial influence includes thoughtful staff selection and recruitment, clearly articulated mission and goals in regard to curricular issues, as well as financial planning that support instruction (Hoyle et al., 2005).

Superintendent and School Board Relations

While instructional leadership is integral to the role of superintendent, the increasingly complex political aspects of the job must be handled as well (Education Writers Association, n.d.; Hoyle et al., 2005). Superintendant relationships with school boards were found to be a decisive element of superintendent tenure (Education Writers Association, n.d.). Often, conflict with the school board is cited as a common reason for superintendents leaving a district and
hence their attrition (Rausch, 2001). Allen (1998) observed that superintendents listed the relationship with the board as a second reason for involuntary nonextension of a contract, while board members listed relationships with the superintendent as the major cause. Despite conflicts, Glass et al. (2000) surmised that the school board and superintendent must work together to connect the school district with the needs of the community (Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000).

While many school boards and superintendents described having mutually cooperative relationships (Foley et al., 2001), Farkas, Johnson et al. (2001) reported that 65% of superintendents speculated that many school boards simply wanted leaders the board could control. Furthermore, over 80% of superintendents have reported feeling frustrated with politics and bureaucracy of the job (Farkas, Johnson et al., 2001; Farkas et al., 2003). A primary source of superintendent frustration stemmed from school boards micromanaging or interfering in superintendents’ administrative responsibilities (Harvey, 2003), with more than two-thirds of superintendents stating that their board meddled in issues not within the scope of its responsibility. According to Goodman and Zimmerman (2000), a quality working relationship between effective leaders and school boards is a “key cornerstone of the foundation for high student achievement” (p. 1). As local school boards are the sole evaluators of superintendent performance and renewal of contracts, a quality working relationship with members also directly influences the tenure of the superintendent.

**Superintendent Preparation and Education**

An assumption can be made that superintendents who are neither fully prepared nor well trained are prone to experience difficulties in their leadership role. A majority of superintendents reported that the average supervisory leadership programs in university schools of education
were not aligned with the actualities of what is needed to effectively lead today’s public school systems (Farkas, Johnson et al., 2001; Farkas et al., 2003). Farkas, Johnson et al. (2001) also stated that nearly one-half of superintendents surveyed believed that revamping preparation programs would be very effective in improving school leadership. Superintendents identified the weaknesses of preparation programs as insufficient hands-on application, inadequate access to technology, and poor linkages of content to practice. Glass et al. (2000) further commented that the increased number of changes in school systems necessitated parallel changes in educational administration and supervisory leadership preparation programs. Thus, a focus on the increased challenges facing the superintendency today that include securing adequate financing to meet additional mandates, student assessment and analysis of school and community data, increased state and federal accountability, as well as instructional innovations for increasing student achievement would constitute a solid first step for preparation programs to take in endeavoring to reconnect with the field of educational administration (Hoyle et al., 2005).

Educational level attained by superintendents is an additional factor impacting tenure and turnover. In the AASA 2000 survey, 45% of superintendents had obtained doctorates, 89% of which were in educational administration or supervision (Glass et al., 2000). Yet, contradictions are apparent in recent studies connecting superintendent tenure and level of education. In a study of Texas superintendents, Largent (2001) reported that short tenured superintendents were more likely to hold doctorates. In contrast, Natkin et al. (2002) presented evidence suggesting a strong correlation between tenure and level of education. The researchers established that median tenure was lengthened roughly 1 year for each level of education acquired.
Summary

Chapter 2 examined the complexities, empirical, and methodological bases for the current study of the influences of context on superintendents’ roles. Two bodies of literature were reviewed. The first addressed the complexities of the superintendency, past and present. The second examined empirical studies of the time apportionment of superintendents.

Past complexities examined the evolution of the position of superintendency as a gradual layering of roles from teacher-scholar, effective manager to instructional and democratic leader (Cuban, 1976; Björk & Gurley, 2003; Kowalski, 2005). Current literature also suggests an additional layer of political savvy strategist (Björk & Gurley, 2003). Preparation for these all-inclusive areas of the position and the demand of local, state, and federal mandates related to accountability and NCLB require new expectations and preparation for the position.

A second part of the literature review examined studies focusing on the time apportionment of superintendents closely related to the current study. The five studies examined (Duea & Bishop, 1980; Gilstrap, 1982; Lindsey, 1989; Munther, 1997; Thompson, 2008) revealed the impact of size upon superintendents’ work activities. Though results were mixed, it appears that superintendents of smaller districts spend more time on managerial-type activities and on interaction with community members, school boards, and personnel than do superintendents of larger districts. However, with the exception of Duea and Bishop’s (1980) work, these studies all use a sample so small that their findings are unlikely to generalize to groups other than those studied.

The third part of the literature review examined factors explaining success of a superintendent based on tenure. These factors that relate to a superintendent’s longevity in the
position include the extent of school board involvement in management, support for needed construction, consolidation of school systems, district poverty level, and a superintendent’s postgraduate education. Furthermore, instructional leadership and superintendent and school board relations were discussed as issues affecting a superintendent’s success. The complexities involved with increasing student achievement and the increasingly complex political aspects of the job contribute to a superintendent’s tenure.

The final section of this chapter reviewed gaps in the extant literature. A primary shortcoming of existing research is a focus on functional roles, rather than substantive concerns. A second shortcoming is that few studies examine the impact of specific contextual features, other than district size, on superintendents’ roles. After a comprehensive search by the researcher using Dissertation Abstracts Online List of Records, InfoTrac OneFile, and ERIC online search engines, few current studies exist that involve a review of time and task apportionment for active superintendents. The current study was positioned to redress both of these gaps in the literature because it examined the contextual variables of size of school division, and student achievement of the school division on superintendents’ apportionment of time work associated with the educational, managerial, and political roles.
CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

Introduction to Research

The major purpose of this study is to analyze time and role apportionment reported by practicing K-12 public school superintendents in the Commonwealth of Virginia. More specifically, in what roles do current superintendents spend the bulk of their time, as well as the least of their time? Superintendent roles can be categorized into the areas of management and instructional leadership. Using nonexperimental survey and telephone interview methodology, this descriptive study sought to answer the following research question: How do Virginia Superintendents spend their time?

The primary source of data for this research project included a modified version of the instrument used by Thompson (2008) in “Management And Leadership Activities Of School Superintendents” (2008). The Thompson instrument utilized a management grid also used by Glass (2004) in “Superintendent Leadership Without Management Will Not Reform” (2004). Thompson’s (2008) study involved time allocation by investigating how Virginia superintendents allocate their time in the areas of management and leadership activities for small, medium, and large school districts. Utilizing Thompson’s modified instrument, the researcher conducted an analysis of data using varied quantitative analysis strategies, including frequencies and descriptive analysis of leadership and management tasks, as well as chi square crosstab comparisons in order to describe each of the management and leadership areas.
Large school districts are defined as those with student enrollment of more than 8,201 students during the 2008-09 school year. Medium school districts are defined as those enrolling between 1,901-8,200 students. Small school districts are identified as those enrolling 1,900 or less. This categorization was based on 2009-2010 enrollment data from the Virginia Department of Education, Spring 2010 Average Daily Membership (Layman, 2000). Prior to World War II, there were approximately 119,000 school districts in Virginia; today the number is estimated to be roughly 15,000. Only about 10% of these school districts enroll more than 5,000 students (Kowalski, 1999).

Based upon a review of the current literature regarding the superintendent’s time and task apportionment, both quantitative and qualitative research methods have been used to investigate this topic. Extant studies that sought to gather information from a larger population are more often quantitative in nature. Survey research is considered an appropriate design to identify perceptions, attitudes, and opinions of a larger audience and to generate findings, which can be generalized to a broader population (Jolley & Mitchell, 2004). Extant studies that sought to gather information from smaller groups often employ some type of interview process. Telephone interviews are appropriate to gather the perceptions, opinions, and attitudes of individuals on a case-by-case basis (Jolley & Mitchell, 2004)

Design of the Study

Subject Selection

Virginia public school superintendents identified by the Virginia Department of Education throughout the state were invited to complete an online survey. Currently, there are 132 school districts and 8 identified regions that host public school superintendents. In order to
participate in the study, superintendents had to be actively serving in one of these Virginia school
districts.

Procedure

The researcher used an email survey questionnaire to collect data. The descriptive survey
methodology is appropriate as it explores a variety of relationships in a timely and relatively
economical manner through data obtained from attitudes, feelings, or reactions of the
respondents. However, a major disadvantage to this technique is that the data are susceptible to
distortion through the introduction of bias. Therefore, procedures used in this study addressed
minimizing bias throughout the research process.

Instrumentation

This descriptive study required a survey instrument for data collection purposes. The
purpose of the survey instrument was to determine the managerial and leadership tasks and
activities of division superintendents. For the purposes of this study, the modified version of the
Will Not Reform” was chosen for this research project (see Appendix C). A modified version of
this instrument was used by Garner (2005) in surveying 625 superintendents in the state of Texas
in order to assess the management tasks and functions of school superintendents.

In Glass’s original use of the instrument, work activities of the superintendent were
separated into two areas: managerial and leadership. Managerial activities as defined by Glass
(2004) include: (a) financial management, (b) facility management, (c) personnel management,
(d) student personnel and special services, and (e) support services. Glass categorized leadership
activities as: (a) curriculum/instruction, and (b) community relations.
Based on the review of literature, the role of superintendent does require greater accountability for student achievement than for any of the superintendent’s other tasks. Glass (2004) acknowledged that the role of the superintendent could not remain effective unless the superintendent maintained both management and leadership tasks. According to Glass (2004), the managerial role of the superintendent is often thought of by many as supervising and making sure assistant superintendents are effectively and efficiently managing the areas of finance, personnel, curriculum, support services, student services, and special programs. The development of the management grid does not continue to contribute to this myth nor the existence the ‘monolithic’ superintendent role found in the literature written by academics and others; the leadership and management role dramatically differs in districts of varying size, wealth, and program configuration. (Glass, 2004, p. 12).

Garner (2005), however, omitted the leadership activities outlined by Glass (2004), (curriculum/instruction and community relations) from his research. Most of the work tasks and functions found in the management grid survey are listed in Kowalski’s (1999), The School Superintendent: Theory, Practice, and Cases, and others have been developed and identified by Glass through his expertise and experience in the field of educational leadership.

For the purposes of this study, respondents will be asked to treat both managerial and leadership activities as one component. This survey was modified in accordance with the operational definitions of key terms. The following subheadings under financial management were omitted from the original survey to minimize redundancy in respondent reporting based on the operational definitions of key terms:
1. Fiscal management (corresponds with fiscal planning/budgeting/accounting activities).

2. Worker’s compensations (corresponds with risk management activities).

The following subheadings under facility management were omitted from the original survey to minimize redundancy in respondent reporting based on the operational definitions of key terms:

1. Retrofit (corresponds with replacement activities).

2. Equipment (corresponds with maintenance activities).

The following subheadings under personnel management were omitted from the original survey to minimize redundancy in respondent reporting based on the operational definitions of key terms:

1. Payroll (corresponds with record keeping activities).

2. Safety/environment (corresponds with staff development activities).

The following subheadings under student personnel and special services were omitted from the original survey to minimize redundancy in respondent reporting based on the operational definitions of key terms:

1. Personnel management (corresponds with needs assessment activities).

2. Student health (corresponds with assessment/compliance activities).

The following subheadings under community relations were omitted from the original survey to minimize redundancy in respondent reporting based on the operational definitions of key terms:

1. Service clubs (corresponds with parent organization activities).

2. Board orientation/training (corresponds with board relations activities).

3. Professional groups (corresponds with parent organization activities).
Participants were asked to specify their level of engagement in the managerial and leadership categories using the following criteria:

Level 1 — The superintendent has 0%-25% direct involvement.

Level 2 — The superintendent has 26%-50% direct involvement.

Level 3 — The superintendent has 51%-75% direct involvement.

Level 4 — The superintendent has 76%-100% direct involvement.

For the purposes of this study, the instrument will be modified to allow participants to denote ranges of involvement in identified management and leadership activities. Demographic data will also be collected from participants to include: (a) gender, (b) ethnicity, (c) age, (d) total years in education, (e) total years as superintendent, (f) years in current position, (g) district size, and (h) accreditation.

**Reliability and Validity of the Instrumentation**

The questionnaire used for this study was a modified pre-existing instrument that was built on the work of Glass (2004). The degree to which an instrument consistently measures what it is supposed to measure is its reliability. Therefore, the instrument’s reliability and validity can be confirmed if it renders consistent results on more than one research study. In Garner’s (2005) study, Cronbach's alpha was used to measure the reliability and internal consistency of the survey instrument. A higher Alpha value usually suggests increased levels of reliability and internal consistency of the instrument. The internal consistency within the superintendent survey is reported in Table 1 (Garner, 2005, p. 84).

The management grid developed by Glass (2004) produced similar results in the Garner study, such as: (a) school superintendents in larger districts were involved in management tasks
Table 1

*Internal Consistency of Superintendent Survey*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey type</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Cronbach's alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Superintendent surveys</td>
<td>625</td>
<td>.9616</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Garner (2005), p. 84
only at a supervisory level; (b) superintendents of medium sized schools were involved at greater levels, such as coordinating and as coworkers; and (c) superintendents of small sized districts performed nearly all the tasks.

Data Collection

The survey instrument was converted to a web survey using Inquisite® (2006). Electronic mail (email) addresses of superintendents were obtained from the Virginia Association of School Superintendents (VASS) listing. An informed consent form was attached to the survey instrument being submitted for completion by the superintendents. Respondents submitted their consent by clicking on a button prior to taking the survey. The informed consent and cover letter, survey instrument, and instructions for completion was sent to all participants via Inquisite® (2006). Participants were asked to respond within a 2-week period. An email reminder notice was sent to all participants within 1 week of receiving the initial survey.

Telephone Interview Protocol

The interview protocol in this study was developed using the four scales of the survey instrument as a foundation. Individuals were presented with questions related to instruction, management, budget and finance, and political and governance. In each of the four areas, individuals were asked their level of involvement. Prompts, modified from the wording of the individual survey items, were provided. Choices of involvement were categorized as supervise, coordinate, or do it all. They were asked to respond by using one of the four choices: extremely, mostly, somewhat, or not at all. Interviewees were also encouraged to explain their responses.

Upon approval of this study by the dissertation committee, an Initial Review Submission Form was submitted to the Virginia Commonwealth University Internal Review Board (IRB).
This mixed-method research project was submitted for expedited review and requested waiver of documentation of consent, as the study presents no more than minimal risk of harm to study participants. A copy of the Research Subject Information form is provided in Appendix D.

The data collection process followed procedures suggested by Dillman (2007). The survey administration included the following steps: pre-notice, initial survey, and follow-up notice(s). A list of email addresses for study superintendents was gathered from the Virginia Department of Education website, as well as from individual district websites as needed.

**Data Analysis**

The majority of this study is descriptive in nature. The researcher used descriptive statistics, frequency counts and percentages where appropriate to strengthen the emerging descriptions of leadership role perceptions and the significance of those descriptions. All survey responses were coded and entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 15.0. Frequencies were reported for gender and ethnicity. In addition to these frequencies, total years in education, and years as superintendent were also reported. Chi square crosstab analysis were used to identify the level of involvement superintendents have in the work tasks and functions of small, medium, and large school districts, gender, and AYP status in the following areas of management: (a) financial management, (b) facility management, (c) personnel management, (d) student personnel and special services, and (e) support services. Descriptive analysis of leadership functions of superintendents was also analyzed: (a) curriculum/instruction, and (b) community relations. Specifically, the subsequent analysis includes an overview of the degree of involvement of superintendents in each of the seven management areas.
The intent of the analysis was to investigate the following:

1. The degree of involvement of superintendents in each of the seven management areas.

2. The differences of superintendent involvement in the seven management areas according to district distinction.

The instrument used in this study was a modified version of a survey design created by Thompson (2008) to identify perceptions of leadership roles (see Appendix D).

**Focus Group**

Due to the nature of an online administration of the instrument, it is important to ensure that directions are clear and that the software and process function properly before administering the final survey. Therefore, this instrument was reviewed by the methodologist specialists and dissertation committee members at Virginia Commonwealth University. This process assisted in establishing content and face validity, and was also reviewed for appropriate content for the research questions.

**Limitations**

This study has two apparent limitations. The survey is limited in its scope and may not identify the full range of perceptions about the issues related to the topic. In addition, the data represents the perceptions of superintendents at the time of data collection only. Also, the generalizability of the study is limited by the response number and location of respondents.

**Delimitations**

The results of this study are limited to Virginia public school superintendents.
Summary

This nonexperimental study examined superintendents’ responses regarding their roles. More specifically, what emphasis they placed on each task. Additionally, it examined their task and time apportionment. A stratified purposeful sample of superintendents throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia were surveyed using an instrument developed by Thompson (2008). Descriptive statistics were used to determine the statistical significance between tasks and time. Frequencies also revealed responses about task importance. Data gathered during this study were analyzed to determine statistically significance.
CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS

This study was conducted to examine how Virginia public school superintendents spend their time in various tasks identified by describing their level of involvement in the seven management and leadership areas. The study had three fundamental purposes: (a) to determine the differences in how superintendents allocate their time in regards to their involvement in specific tasks; (b) examine differences in superintendents’ time and task apportionment related to differences in superintendent experiences, as defined by gender, years in current position, size of school division, and student achievement of the school division; and (c) investigate to what extent the experiences of superintendents, as defined by gender, years in current position, size of the school division, and student achievement of the school division, explained a need for professional development in each of the criteria of the Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Superintendents?

Thompson’s (2008) management and leadership survey was used to collect data from all current Virginia public school superintendents regarding their involvement in leadership and management tasks. An analysis of the data involved the use of descriptive statistics to calculate the frequency of responses and Pearson’s chi-square to determine whether differences among groups were due to chance. The Pearson’s chi-square, a measure that is based on crosstabulations, is a test of significance that is most appropriate for nominal variables such as survey data. It estimates the probability that the association between variables is a result of
random chance or sampling error by comparing the actual or observed distribution of responses with the distribution of responses we would expect if there were absolutely no association between two variables. The Pearson’s chi-square test procedure tabulates a variable into categories and computes a chi-square statistic. This goodness-of-fit test compares the observed and expected frequencies in each category to test that all categories contain the same proportion of values or test that each category contains a user-specified proportion of values.

This chapter is divided into four parts. The first part analyzes the demographic aspects of the 40 participants who responded to the survey instrument distributed to all Virginia public school superintendents. The survey was sent to 132 Virginia public school division superintendents. The response rate was 30%. Four email reminders were sent to every superintendent on consecutive Wednesdays in order to solicit a greater return. The email reminders did not yield an increase in responses.

The second part used descriptive statistics to analyze the superintendents’ level of involvement in tasks. Descriptive statistics calculated included frequency and percentage to determine the level of involvement of superintendents in tasks and functions: (a) financial management, (b) facility management, (c) personnel management, (d) student personnel and special services, (e) support services, (f) instruction or curriculum, and (g) community relations. This analysis was used to answer the research question: How do Virginia public school superintendents spend their time. To calculate these rates the questions from each of the seven management and leadership areas were coded as individual tasks and grouped into the corresponding management and leadership areas. The mean, median, and modes were calculated for each of the 36 tasks based on the number of responses for level of involvement using the
following scale: (a) Level 1, 0%-25% direct involvement; (b) level 2, 26%-50% direct involvement; (c) level 3, 51%-75% direct involvement; and (d) level 4, 76%-100% direct involvement.

The third part used Pearson’s chi square to identify the differences in the level of involvement of superintendents in school districts based on district size, superintendent gender, annual yearly progress (AYP) status, and years in current position in the following seven areas: (a) financial management, (b) facility management, (c) personnel management, (d) student personnel and special services, (e) support services, (f) instruction or curriculum, and (g) community relations. Pearson’s chi square was also used to identify the differences in the level of involvement of male and female superintendents, based on gender in the same seven areas.

The final part consists of the qualitative responses attained through the superintendent telephone survey that describe the superintendents’ responses to eight telephone interviews as a follow-up to the management and leadership survey. One Virginia public school superintendent from each of the eight educational regions across the state was interviewed. Interview questions probed superintendents for how they spent their time, in what areas they would like to spend more time or less time, and if there was anything specific about their school division that dictated how they spend their time in the seven management and leadership areas.

**Demographic Data**

All 132 Virginia public school divisions were selected for participation in the survey. The school divisions were identified in three areas (small, medium, and large) based on student enrollment. Large school divisions were identified as those with student enrollment of more than 8,201 students during the 2009-2010 school year. Medium school divisions were those enrolling
between 1,901 to 8,200 students. Small school divisions enrolled 1,900 or less. This categorization was based on 2009-2010 enrollment data from the Virginia Department of Education, Spring 2010 Average Daily Membership (Layman, 2000). Respondents in all categories were identified in this study.

After multiple attempts to solicit a greater response rate to the survey, a total of 40 Virginia public school district superintendents participated in the survey. Four email reminders were sent to all potential respondents on consecutive Wednesdays for 4 weeks to solicit a greater response from Virginia public school superintendents. Telephone contact was made twice with the Virginia Association of School Superintendents Administration (VASS) in order to request assistance with soliciting a greater response to the survey. The VASS indicated that several district superintendents would be unavailable due to private matters. They also reported the death of one small, rural district superintendent.

The respondents (n = 40) represent variable district size as seen in Table 2. Respondents included 8 (20.0%) small district superintendents, 21 (52.5%) medium size school districts with a student population of 1,900–8,200, and 11 (27.5%) large school district superintendents, with an 8,200 or higher student population.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District Size (n = 40)</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small: 0 - 1,900</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium: 1,901 - 8,200</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>52.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large: 8,200 or higher</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Based on the Virginia Department of Education website, 2009-2010 Fall Membership by Division and Grade, the total number of students represented by Table 2 is approximately 520,565 students. District leaders who responded to the survey represent 42% of the total ($N = 1,245,270$) number of students in Virginia public schools.

School divisions were also identified by their 2009-2010 AYP status as “did not make” or “made AYP,” as respondents were asked to report the AYP status of their respective school divisions during the survey process. The responses to 2009-10 AYP status were then verified through the Virginia Department of Education 2009-2010 AYP website under the Virginia School Report Card link. Table 3 shows that 25 (62.5%) of the current school division superintendents who responded made AYP last year, and 15 (37.5%) did not make AYP.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District Annual Yearly Progress Status for 2009-2010 (n = 40)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AYP status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not make</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made AYP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. AYP = Annual Yearly Progress.

Table 4 shows the gender of the respondents. The participants consisted of 25 (62.5%) males and 15 (37.5%) females. The gender of the superintendents in the study represents a demographic that is somewhat higher than reported by the Virginia Department of Education (2009), which reports that there are 36 (or 27%) female superintendents out of the 132 superintendents in the state.
### Table 4

*Gender (n = 40)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>62.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5 show that the majority of participants in the study were Caucasian (n=34) comprising 85.0% of the survey population. One Hispanic participant and 5 African American participants responded, comprising the other 15.0% of population.

Table 5

*Ethnicity (n = 40)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>85.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants in this study were asked to indicate the number of years in their current position as superintendent within a range of 0 to 15+ years. Table 6 shows that the majority of superintendents who responded fell into either the 0 to 5 year range with 24 (60.0%) responses or the 6 to 10 year range with 11 (27.5%). Only 5 (12.5%) of the respondents had 11 or more years in their current position. Overall, 35 (87.5%) of the respondents had 0 to 10 years of experience in their current position as superintendent.

Superintendent respondents were asked to indicate their total number of years in the field of education within ranges. Table 7 shows that the majority (70.0%) of superintendents responded that they had 31 or more years in education: 15 (37.5%) 31-35 years in education; 9 (22.5%) 36-40 years in education; and, 4 (10.0%) greater than 40 years in education.
Table 6

*Years in Current Position as Superintendent (n = 40)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 to 5</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 to 15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15+</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7

*Years in Education (n = 40)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years in Education</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16 to 20</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 to 25</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 to 30</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 to 35</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 to 40</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41+</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The demographic findings demonstrate that most of the participants were Caucasian males from medium school divisions with over 30 years experience in education. Most of the respondents have less than 5 years of experience in their current positions as superintendent. Sixty percent of the superintendents’ current school divisions made AYP last year. District leaders who responded to the survey represent 42% of the total number of public school students in the Commonwealth of Virginia. According to the Virginia Department of Education website, 2009-10 Fall Membership by Division and Grade, the total number of students represented by all respondents was 520,565 students, 42% of the total (N=1,245,270) number of public school students reported through fall membership.

**Superintendent Level of Involvement in Tasks**

Superintendents were asked a series of questions to determine their level of involvement in the seven areas of management and leadership. The superintendents were asked to identify the level of superintendent direct involvement for 36 tasks using the following scale: (a) Level 1, 0%-25%; (b) Level 2, 26%-50%; (3) Level 3, 51%-75%; and (d) Level 4, 76-100%. Each task was grouped into one of the seven areas of management and leadership: (a) financial management, (b) facility management, (c) personnel management, (d) student personnel and special services, (e) support services, (f) instruction or curriculum, and (g) community relations.

A composite median score was compiled for each category. The median is the middle value of a set of data containing an odd number of values, or the average of the two middle values of a set of data with an even number of values. The median is especially helpful when separating data into equal sized groups for inferential testing. Median data takes into account outliers and keeps the data from being skewed toward one end. The median is the level of
involvement by superintendents that falls in the middle of all the response in an ordered data set (that is to say, a data set which is ordered from lowest to highest rate). With survey distributions, the median and mean often tell very different stories. This happens because the mean is biased by a few extreme scores. In other words, the mean will be affected by any extreme points in the data set, where the median will not. For this reason, the median is a better and more reliable measure of central tendency to use in assessment and design.

When calculating the composite median using statistical software (SPSS), the questions statistically line in a row the responses from highest to lowest. Each survey question specifically targeted a task. The analysis then took the middle number in the row. Each number was representative of the scale. For example, if the middle number is 1, then the median score represents Level 1, 0%-25% involvement in the task related to the question. The N represented the number of responses at each level.

**Financial Management**

Table 8 shows the responses to the eight questions dealing with financial management. In responding to their level of involvement in the area of financial management, superintendent respondents rated themselves in nine areas to include (a) fiscal planning, (b) budgeting/forecasting/demographic, (c) accounting/cash management, (d) purchasing/contracting, (e) inventory management, (f) materials distribution, (g) risk management, and (h) salary/wage management. Overall, 13 (32.5%) of the superintendents responded that they have 0%-25% direct involvement in financial management tasks, 14 (35.0%) responded that they have 26-50% direct involvement, 12 (30.0%) responded that they have
Table 8

*Financial Management Responses from Superintendents (n = 40)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th></th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th></th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th></th>
<th>Level 4</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Fiscal planning</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Budgeting/forecasting/demographics</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Accounting/cash management</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Purchasing/contracts</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>47.5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Inventory management</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>85.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Materials distribution</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Risk management*</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>51.3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Salary/wage management</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composite median score</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Missing response (n = 39).*
51%-75% direct involvement, and only 1 (2.5%) responded that he/she had 76%-100% direct involvement in financial management tasks.

The tasks that superintendents responded that they had 76%-100% direct involvement were fiscal planning (16, 40%); budgeting/forecasting/demographics (12, 30.0%), and salary/wage management (10, 25.0%). The tasks that superintendents responded that they had 0%-25% direct involvement included: accounting/cash management (21, 52.5%); purchasing/contracts (19, 47.5%); inventory management (34, 85.0%); materials distribution (30, 75.0%), and risk management (20, 51.3%). Figure 1 shows a pictorial representation of the percentage of direct involvement in financial management. Each number corresponds with the number of task in Table 8. CMS stands for composite median score.

**Facility Management**

Table 9 shows the responses to the three questions dealing with facility management. Respondents were asked their level of involvement in the areas of facility management to include work activities in (a) replacement, (b) maintenance, and (c) technology. The superintendents were asked to identify their level of involvement with each task using the following scale: (a) Level 1, 0%-25% direct involvement; (b) Level 2, 26%-50% direct involvement; (c) Level 3, 51%-75% direct involvement; and (d) level 4, 76%-100% direct involvement. Overall, 9 (22.5%) of the superintendents responded that they have 0%-25% direct involvement in facility management tasks, 18 (45.0%) responded that they have 26%-50% direct involvement, 11 (27.0%) responded that they have 51%-75% direct involvement, and 2 (5.0%) responded that they had 76%-100% direct involvement in facility management tasks.
Figure 1. Financial management tasks: Percentage of responses on each task by level of direct involvement (n = 40).

Note. CMS = Composite median score.
Table 9

*Facility Management Responses From Superintendents (n = 40)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Replacement</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Maintenance</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Technology</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>42.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composite median score</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>45.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The task that superintendents responded that they had 76%-100% direct involvement was replacement (6, 15%). The tasks that superintendents responded that they had 0%-25% direct involvement included: maintenance (15, 37%) and technology (9, 22.5%). Figure 2 shows a pictorial representation of the percentage of direct involvement in facility management. Each number corresponds with the number of task in Table 9.

![Facility Management Tasks](image)

**Figure 2.** Facility management tasks: Percentage of responses on each task by level of direct involvement (n=40).

Note. CMS = Composite median score.

**Personnel Management**

Table 10 shows the level of involvement of superintendents in the 10 areas of personnel management. Superintendents indicated their level of involvement in the areas of personnel management to include work activities in (a) program organization and management, (b) needs assessment, (c) recruitment, (d) evaluation, (e) induction, (f) staff development, (g) record keeping/payroll, (h) fringe benefits, (i) negotiations/contract management, and (j) grievance.
Table 10

*Personnel Management Responses from Superintendents (n = 40)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Program organization and management</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Needs assessment</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Recruitment</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Evaluation</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Induction</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Staff development</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>35.9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>38.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Record keeping/payroll</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>85.0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Fringe benefits</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Negotiations/contracts</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Grievance management*</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composite median score</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>47.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Missing response (n = 39)
management. The superintendents were asked to identify their level of involvement in each task using the following scale: (a) Level 1, 0%-25% direct involvement; (b) Level 2, 26%-50% direct involvement; (c) Level 3, 51%-75% direct involvement; and (d) Level 4, 76%-100% direct involvement.

Overall, 13 (32.5%) of the superintendents responded that they have 0%-25% direct involvement in personnel management tasks, 19 (47.5%) responded that they have 26%-50% direct involvement, 8 (20%) responded that they have 51%-75% direct involvement, and 0 (0%) responded that they had 76%-100% direct involvement in personnel management tasks.

The task that superintendents responded that they had 76%-100% direct involvement was need assessment 7 (17.5%). The tasks that superintendents responded that they had 0%-25% direct involvement included: program organization and management, 13 (32.5%); recruitment 24, (60%); evaluation 11, (27.5%); induction 18, (45%); staff development 14, (35.9%); record keeping/payroll 34, (85.0%); fringe benefits 24, (60.0%), and negotiations/contracts 16, (40.0%). Figure 3 shows a pictorial representation of the percentage of direct involvement in personnel management. Each number corresponds with the number of task in Table 10. CMS stands for composite median score.

**Student Personnel and Special Services**

Table 11 shows the level of involvement of superintendents in the 3 areas of student personnel and special services. Descriptive statistics were used to examine the level of involvement of superintendents in the area of student personnel and special services. Respondents were asked to identify the level of superintendent involvement in three areas of student personnel and special services, including activities in (a) assessment/compliance, and (b)
Figure 3. Personnel management tasks: Percentage of responses on each task by level of direct involvement (n = 40).

Note. CMS = Composite median score.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th></th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th></th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th></th>
<th>Level 4</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Assessment/compliance</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>47.5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Adjudicate problems</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composite median score</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
adjudicating problems. The superintendents were asked to describe their level of involvement with each task using the following scale: (a) Level 1, 0%-25% direct involvement; (b) Level 2, 26%-50% direct involvement; (c) Level 3, 51%-75% direct involvement; and (d) Level 4, 76%-100% direct involvement.

Overall, 12 (30%) of the superintendents responded that they have 0%-25% direct involvement in student personnel and special services tasks, 16 (40%) responded that they have 26%-50% direct involvement, 11 (27.5%) responded that they have 51%-75% direct involvement, and 1 (2.5%) responded that they had 76%-100% direct involvement in student personnel and special services tasks.

The task that superintendents responded that they had 76%-100% direct involvement was adjudicate problems, 4 (10%). The tasks that superintendents responded that they had 0%-25% direct involvement included: assessment/compliance 19, (47.5), and adjudicate problems 15 (37.5%). Figure 4 shows a pictorial representation of the percentage of direct involvement in student personnel and special services. Each number corresponds with the number of task in Table 11.

Support Services

Table 12 shows the level of involvement of superintendents in the three areas of support services. In the area of support services, superintendents reported their level of involvement in the areas of support services, to include activities in (a) student transportation, (b) food services, and (c) contracting. They were asked to identify their level of involvement in each task using the
Figure 4. Student personnel and special services tasks: Percentage of responses on each task by level of direct involvement ($n=40$).

Note. CMS = Composite median score.
Table 12

*Support Service Responses from Superintendents (n = 40)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Student transportation</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Food services</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>82.5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Contracting</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composite median score</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

following scale: (a) Level 1, 0%-25% direct involvement; (b) Level 2, 26%-50% direct involvement; (c) Level 3, 51%-75% direct involvement; and (d) Level 4, 76%-100% direct involvement.

Overall, 32 (80%) of the superintendents responded that they have 0%-25% direct involvement in support service tasks, 6 (15%) responded that they have 26%-50% direct involvement, 2 (5.0%) responded that they have 51%-75% direct involvement, and 0 (0%) responded that they had 76%-100% direct involvement in support services tasks.

The tasks that superintendents responded that they had 0%-25% direct involvement included: student transportation, 30 (75%); food services, 33 (82.5%), and contracting, 28 (70%). Figure 5 shows a pictorial representation of the percentage of direct involvement in support services. Each number corresponds with the number of task in Table 12.
**Support Services Tasks**

![Support Services Tasks](image)

*Figure 5.* Support services tasks: Percentage of responses on each task by level of direct involvement (n = 40).

Note. CMS = Composite median score.

**Instruction/curriculum**

Table 13 shows the level of involvement of superintendents in the 6 areas of support services. Superintendent participants were asked to describe their degree of involvement in the management and leadership areas of supervision and curriculum, including activities in (a) alignment, (b) assessment/testing, (c) adoption, (d) in-service, (e) accreditation, and (f) strategic planning. The superintendents noted their level of involvement in each task using the following scale: (1) Level 1, 0-25% direct involvement; (2) Level 2, 26-50% direct involvement; (3) Level 3, 51-75% direct involvement; and (4) Level 4, 76-100% direct involvement.
Table 13

*Instruction and Curriculum Responses From Superintendents (n = 40)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Alignment</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>42.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Assessment/testing</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Adoption</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. In-service</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>47.5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>32.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Accreditation</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Strategic planning</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Composite median score:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Strategic planning</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>47.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, 14 (35.0%) of the superintendents responded that they have 0%-25% direct involvement in supervision and curriculum tasks, 19 (47.5%) responded that they have 26%-50% direct involvement, 7 (17.5%) responded that they have 51%-75% direct involvement, and 0 (0%) responded that they had 76%-100% direct involvement in supervision and curriculum tasks.

The task that superintendents responded that they had 76%-100% direct involvement was strategic planning, 9 (22%). The tasks that superintendents responded that they had 0%-25% direct involvement included: alignment, 12 (30%); assessment/testing, 18 (45%); adoption, 21 (52.5%), and in-service 19 (47.5%). Figure 6 shows a pictorial representation of the percentage
of direct involvement in supervision and curriculum. Each number corresponds with the number of task in Table 13.

![Instruction and Curriculum Tasks](image)

*Figure 6.* Supervision and curriculum tasks: Percentage of responses on each task by level of direct involvement (n = 40).

Note. CMS = Composite median score.

**Community Relations**

Table 14 shows the level of involvement of superintendents in the four areas of community relations. In the area of community relations, respondents were asked to identify
Table 14

*Community Relations Responses From Superintendents (n = 40)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Board relations</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Citizen complaints</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Parent organizations</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Governmental agencies</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composite median score</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

their level of involvement, including activities in (a) board relations, (b) citizen complaints, (c) parent organizations, and (d) governmental agencies. Superintendents were asked to quantify their level of involvement in each task using the following scale: (a) Level 1, 0%-25% direct involvement; (b) Level 2, 26%-50% direct involvement; (c) Level 3, 51%-75% direct involvement; and (d) Level 4, 76%-100% direct involvement.

Overall, 1 (2.5%) of the superintendents responded that they have 0%-25% direct involvement in community relations tasks, 2 (5.0%) responded that they have 26%-50% direct involvement, 21 (52.5%) responded that they have 51%-75% direct involvement, and 16 (40%) responded that they had 76%-100% direct involvement in community relations tasks.

The tasks that superintendents responded that they had 76%-100% direct involvement were board relations, 36 (90%); governmental agencies, 18 (45.0%), and citizen complaints, 14 (35.0%). The task that superintendents responded that they had 0%-25% direct involvement
included parent organizations, 6 (15%). Figure 7 shows a pictorial representation of the percentage of direct involvement in community relations. Each number corresponds with the number of task in Table 14.

Figure 7. Community relations tasks: Percentage of responses on each task by level of direct involvement (n = 40).

Note. CMS = Composite median score.

Seven Management and Leadership Areas

Figure 8 shows a pictorial representation of the percentage of direct involvement in the seven management and leadership areas. Each letter corresponds with each of the seven management and leadership areas.
(a) financial management, (b) facility management, (c) personnel management, (d) student personnel and special services, (e) support services, (f) instruction or curriculum, and (g) community relations.

Figure 8. Seven Management and Leadership Area: Percentage of responses for each area by level of direct involvement (n = 40).
Comparisons of Involvement: District Size, Gender, AYP Status, and Years in Current Position

Chi-square crosstabs analysis was performed to determine the significant differences in the level of involvement of superintendents on (a) financial management, (b) facility management, (c) personnel management, (d) student personnel and special services, (e) support services, (f) instruction or curriculum, and (g) community relations in school districts based on four different independent variables: district size, superintendent gender, AYP status, and years in current position in the seven management and leadership areas. Superintendents were asked to quantify their level of involvement in each task using the following scale: (a) Level 1, 0%-25% direct involvement; (b) Level 2, 26%-50% direct involvement; (c) Level 3, 51%-75% direct involvement; and (d) Level 4, 76%-100% direct involvement.

A Pearson chi-square test is used with variables that are categorical (i.e., survey data) rather than continuous. The Pearson chi-square test measures the discrepancy between the observed cell counts and what you would expect if the rows and columns were unrelated. If the two-sided asymptotic significance of the chi-square statistic is less than .05, it's safe to say that the differences are not due to chance variation. To analyze the overall task category, the specific tasks falling under each of the seven management and leadership areas were combined to create seven composite median scores that were utilized as the dependent variables for the chi-square analysis.

If one wants to summarize data in one number, one can use different measures of which the most frequently used are the mean and the median. The mean is obtained by summing up all responses and dividing by the number of participants and the median represents the middle
response if there is an odd number of participants and the mean of the two middle responses if there is an even number of participants, after ordering all responses. In cases where the data are similar (very little standard deviation), mean and median are very similar and thus give the same information, but this is not always the case. The mean is very sensitive to outliers. The median is less sensitive to outliers (extreme scores) than the mean and thus a better measure than the mean for highly skewed distributions. Median was selected because of its reliability. It takes the middle ground in the data, avoiding extremes that would affect the data.

When calculating the median for the crosstabulation using statistical software (SPSS), the questions statistically line in a row the responses from highest to lowest. Each survey question specifically targeted a task. The analysis then took the middle number in the row. Each number was representative of the scale. For example, if the middle number is one, then the median score represents Level 1, 0%-25% involvement in the task related to the question. The \( N \) represented the number of responses at each level.

To measure the effect size between the variables, Cramer’s V and Kendall’s tau-b were analyzed. Effect size is a statistical concept that measures the strength of the relationship between two variables. The greater the effect size, the greater the difference between variables. The effect size helps us in determining if the difference is real or if it is due to a change of factors.

Cramer's V (crv) is a type of symmetric measure that gives some sense of the strength of the association. This parameter of effect size is denoted by \( r \). The value of the effect size varies between -1 to +1. According to Cohen (1988, 1992), the effect size is low if the value of \( r \) varies around 0.1. The effect size is called medium if \( r \) varies around 0.3, and the effect size is called
large if r varies more than 0.5. Kendall's tau-b (τb) is a nonparametric measure of correlation for ordinal or ranked variables that take ties into account. The sign of the coefficient indicates the direction of the relationship, and its absolute value indicates the strength, with larger absolute values indicating stronger relationships.

**District Size**

Table 15 shows the results of the Pearson’s chi-square test of independence performed to examine the relation between district size and the seven categories of tasks. The Pearson’s chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between district size and levels of importance of tasks. The relation between district size and support service was significant, $X^2 (4, N = 40) = 0.946, p < .05$, $(p = .041)$. The effect size, $crv = .353$ shows that although the relationship is not due to chance, it is not very strong and the effect size, $τb = -.321$ shows that the there is a weak negative association. All other associations were not significant, $p > .05$.

**Superintendents’ Gender**

Table 16 shows the results of the Pearson’s chi-square test of independence performed to examine the relation between superintendent gender and the seven categories of tasks. The Pearson’s chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between district size and levels of importance of tasks. The relation between superintendents’ gender and all other associations were not significant, $p > .05$.

**Annual Yearly Progress Status**

Table 17 shows the results of the Pearson’s chi-square test of independence performed to examine the relation between AYP status and the seven categories of tasks. The Pearson’s
Table 15

*Crosstabulation of District Size on Level of Involvement of Tasks (n = 40)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variable</th>
<th>District size</th>
<th>$X^2$</th>
<th>crv</th>
<th>πb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Small (n = 8)</td>
<td>Medium (n = 21)</td>
<td>Large (n = 11)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Level 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Level 2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Level 3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Level 4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facility management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Level 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Level 2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>3. Level 3</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>4. Level 4</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel management</td>
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</tr>
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<td>1. Level 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>4. Level 4</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table 15 - continued

<table>
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<th>Dependent variable</th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>Small (n = 8)</td>
<td>Medium (n = 21)</td>
<td>Large (n = 11)</td>
<td>$X^2$</td>
<td>crv</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student personnel and special services</td>
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<td>0.263</td>
<td>0.252</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Level 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Level 2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Level 3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Level 4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
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<td>Support services</td>
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<td>0.353</td>
<td>0.321</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Level 1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
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</tr>
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<td>4. Level 4</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruction or curriculum</td>
<td>1.376</td>
<td>0.131</td>
<td>0.122</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Level 1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Level 2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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### Table 15 - continued

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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>$X^2$</th>
<th>crv</th>
<th>$\pi_b$</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Small (n = 8)</td>
<td>Medium (n = 21)</td>
<td>Large (n = 11)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Level 2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Level 3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>4. Level 4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $p < .05$
### Table 16

*Crosstabulation of Superintendents' Gender on Level of Involvement of Tasks (n = 40)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variable</th>
<th>Superintendents' Gender</th>
<th>( \chi^2 )</th>
<th>crv</th>
<th>( \pi_b )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male ((n = 25))</td>
<td>Female ((n = 15))</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial management</td>
<td>2.643</td>
<td>.257</td>
<td>-.040</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Level 1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Level 2</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>3. Level 3</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Level 4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facility management</td>
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<td>-.022</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Level 1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Level 2</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Level 3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Level 4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel management</td>
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<td>-.094</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Level 4</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependent variable</td>
<td>Superintendents' Gender</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male (n = 25)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female (n = 15)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$\chi^2$</td>
<td>crv</td>
<td>$\pi_b$</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Student personnel and special services</td>
<td>2.319</td>
<td>.241</td>
<td>.111</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Level 1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Support services</td>
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<td>.126</td>
<td></td>
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<td>1. Level 1</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<tr>
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* $p < .05$
### Table 17

*Crosstabulation of Annual Yearly Progress Status on Level of Involvement of Tasks (n = 40)*

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96
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* $p < .05$
chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between AYP status and all other associations were not significant, $p > .05$.

**Years in Current Position**

Table 18 shows the results of the Pearson’s chi-square test of independence performed to examine the relation between years in current position and the seven categories of tasks. The Pearson’s chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between years in current position and all other associations were not significant, $p > .05$.

**Superintendents’ Telephone Survey**

Bogdan and Biklen articulated that qualitative data analysis is the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes, and other materials accumulated to increase your own understanding of them and to enable you to present what you have discovered to others (Bogdan & Biklen, 1991, p. 153). The researcher followed the trustworthiness criteria essential to all qualitative research. Data analysis included triangulation, the process of using multiple data collection methods, data sources, or theories to check case study findings (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 2002). Member checks, the process of having participants review statements in the researchers’ report for accuracy and completeness, were also utilized in data analysis (Gall et al., 2002). Peer debriefing and theme identification were also used to analyze the data. Qualitative data are reported in narrative form, maintaining participant anonymity. In the telephone interviews, participants were asked to identify how they spent most of their time. They were also asked questions involving preparation for their current position. Each was given the opportunity to be as expressive or as brief as they wanted. Each participant had succinct responses to the questions in relations to their various tasks and functions. The
Table 18

*Crosstabulation of Years in Current Position as Superintendent on Level of Involvement of Tasks (n = 40)*

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<tr>
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<th>( \pi_b )</th>
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Table 18 - continued

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*\( p < .05 \).
responses included (a) political and community relations, (b) budget preparation, (c) accreditation, and (d) curriculum planning. The researcher recorded these common themes during the interviews with each participant.

A purposeful sample of public school superintendents in Virginia school districts were interviewed regarding the time spent on tasks and various job responsibilities. They were also asked to provide information regarding their preparation for the position to include formal training, education, experiences, and mentorship. The sample consisted of 8 (6.0%) Virginia public school superintendents that were selected through purposive sampling. Gay and Airasian (2000) described purposive sampling as judgment sampling in which a sample is selected based on prior knowledge of the group or participants to be sampled. Superintendents selected for this study represented the eight various education service center regions across the state. One superintendent was selected from each region. Three superintendents were female and the remaining five were male.

Several common threads emerged throughout these interviews. All participants commented on time spent with school board members, board relations, and public relations as requiring much of their time. They also each discussed time spent managing and responding to various forms of communication to include emails, phone calls, and text messages. The responses as to how superintendents spend most of their time were categorized by all as involving political and community relations. The respondents also indicated a high level of involvement in working with the budget. Superintendents indicated that they had little involvement in accreditation, delegating this responsibility to their district leadership teams. Every superintendent expressed a desire to spend more time spent in schools. Responding to
questions involving preparation for the position, all superintendents interviewed indicated mentorship and on the job experience as valuable preparation for the position. Additionally, only two superintendents felt that they were prepared to address budget issues before entering into the position. Furthermore, all respondents expressed how the budget served a significant role in their position.

Political and Community Relations

The interview participants emphasized the importance and necessity of a close working relationship with their school board, based on trust, an understanding of each other’s unique roles and abilities, and a shared vision for the school district’s success. Not only is such a relationship a necessary prerequisite for their district’s success, but also the lack of a trusting, collaborative relationship between a board of education and its superintendent is a blueprint for failure. One superintendent reported her work with the school board.

My school board and board of supervisors are at vicious war with one another. They have been this way for some time. It requires me to be a referee and mediator. The focus for boards and superintendents must always be: how we can work together to ensure educational excellence for our children?

Another superintendent concluded that, “What makes working with the board so difficult or easy is whether it is well functioning or dysfunctional.” The time spent by superintendents building a positive relationship with the board involves a great deal of time. This is reflected in one superintendent’s response

I spend much time dealing with school board members, keeping them appraised of information and events, managing their expectations, determining policy direction and
the central tendency of the board, aligning it with the school system, brokering, becoming the middleman between the school system and the board.

Interview responses also explained how community relations are a primary focus for superintendents and require much of their time.

I answer every call. This takes up most of my mornings. However, it is very important. I am the face of the district; I spend most of my time speaking at community events and meetings. It is the most important part of my job. It is expected of me.

Superintendents indicated that communication with constituents is significant. One superintendent shared, “I spend two to three hours on emails, phone calls, and text messages, yes, text messages, dealing with expectations for communication.”

**Budget**

A school district is a trustee of both the community’s children and its tax dollars. The interviewees indicated that efficient and appropriate management of public tax dollars is a key responsibility for every superintendent. One superintendent described working with the budget as “political time.” Inarguably, this is a complex and time-consuming task for superintendents in districts of all sizes. A superintendent of a small district stated: “When I started this superintendency, I didn’t realize how much of my time would be spent on the budget. I was not ready for it. I had to learn quickly.” School districts are not stand alone businesses in managing revenues and expenditures. Instead, they are part of large state school funding programs that are complex and difficult to comprehend and implement at the local level. A superintendent commented, “A great deal of time and attention is placed on the budget in order to prevent losing teachers and programs.” High quality financial management is one characteristic of
academically high performing districts. Lack of competent fiscal and operational management skills may give boards a reason for dismissal of superintendents. One superintendent interviewed reflected, “I had no preparation for dealing with the budget process. I had to learn on the fly. It is the most exhausting and daunting task considering the current economic situation. It is overwhelming.”

**Accreditation**

The main oppositional forces facing these leaders regarding accreditation were organizational. A superintendent shared,

I would like to spend more time with curriculum and instruction, that is were my passion lies. My school board members, however, require most of my attention. Therefore, I depend on my district’s leadership team to handle the day-to-day operations and accreditation.

A superintendent of a small division stated, “Instruction is where I spend most of my time, getting us where we need to be.” Other respondents indicated that they must be able to establish expectations or norms of teaching and learning for administrators and teachers alike while building organizational systems to support them and maintaining a professional climate that encourages practitioners to continue to learn. Additionally, most indicated that developing and managing the resources necessary to support the instructional system must be high-level priorities at all times, and holding professionals responsible for implementing quality instruction in classrooms and schools in order to reach desired goals is non-negotiable. How to do all this in school districts that vary widely in size, demographics, and quality of performance is and always will be among the thorniest dilemmas facing superintendents and their districts. One
superintendent addressed his involvement in accreditation stating, “I don’t pay attention to AYP because they are narrow measures. I focus on broad measures over time.” This approach offers him a manageable approach to his unique demographic.

**Preparation for Current Position**

Many of the superintendents interviewed said that they did not have the training to handle all the new demands being placed on them. Some of the new demands that they indicated included expansion of special education, school safety, the budget, political relations, and unique community concerns. All eight superintendents interviewed felt unprepared for the political leadership they would be involved with in their current positions. One superintendent stated: “Nothing prepared me in my traditional or formal training for political leadership. This is my job. It is on the job training.”

Six out of the eight superintendents interviewed felt like they were not prepared for managing a district’s budget. Two superintendents mentioned the same mentor and former colleague who helped them with learning how to manage their districts’ budgets. The superintendents have seen their responsibilities involving budget and finance multiply. In a recent study by Cooper et al. (2000) for the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), superintendents called for more support to ensure their well being and job success, and more opportunities for professional training and counseling. The superintendent, almost always a former teacher or principal who had risen through the ranks, was usually able to comply with board members’ orders, manage central office staff, keep the books balanced, and maintain orderly schools. Every superintendent interviewed cited on-the-job experience as the most important contributor to being prepared for his or her current position.
remarked about the personal skill sets needed for the position. “Universal training can never prepare you for the day to day. You must have a skill set that allows for flexibility, a good personality, and be palpable.” Another superintendent remarked: “You have to be able to withstand long days, 24 hours, seven days a week. I have no personal life.” Every superintendent mentioned mentorship as a key to their preparedness and success for their current position.

Superintendent Spending More Time

Every superintendent interviewed mentioned that they would like to spend more time visiting schools. One superintendent commented, “We would all like to spend more time visiting schools, face-to-face with staff and kids.” Another superintendent shared, “You always have control over how you spend your time, but others demand it.”

Summary

Chapter 4 investigated superintendents’ level of involvement in the seven leadership and management areas identified in Thompson’s (2008) study. Purposeful sampling included all public school divisions in the state of Virginia. Forty school division superintendents responded to the survey. Medium sized districts represented the largest response (52%). Large divisions made up 27.5% of the responses. Small school divisions represented 20% of all respondents. According to the Virginia Department of Education website, 2009-2010 Fall Membership by Division and Grade the total number of students represented by all respondents was 520,565 students, 42% of the total (N = 1,245,270) number of public school students reported through fall membership. However, with only 29.4% of superintendents in the Commonwealth of Virginia participating, there is little validity in stating that these findings are generalizable.
Sixty-two and a half percent of the respondents were male, while female superintendent participation was 37%. Glass et al. (2000) in the “Study of the American School Superintendent” reported that of the 95 respondents to their national survey, 83.2% of respondents were male, while 16.8% were female.

The majority of participants in this study were Caucasian, which comprised 85% of the survey population. Five African American participants responded, comprising 12.5% of the respondents. One Hispanic participant responded. Glass et al. (2000) reported the ethnicity of superintendents from their national study was Caucasian (78.6%), African American (14.7%), Hispanic (7.4%), and Other (1.1%).

The years in education ranges with the greatest frequency were 31 to 35, comprising 37.5%, and 36 to 40 with 22%. In the last decade, aspiring superintendents spent more time in the ranks before pursuing a superintendent position (Glass et al., 2000). Given the random method of school division selection, the demographic data of participants closely mirrors the national demographics of superintendents.

Years in current position as superintendent revealed low variability. Sixty percent ($N = 24$) indicated 0 to 5 years in their current positions.

Divisions making Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) were reported at 62.5%. Of the total respondents, 37.5% reported not making AYP. According to an August 12, 2010, Virginia Department of Education news release, “Six Out of 10 Virginia Schools Exceed NCLB Objectives,” 60 school divisions made AYP while 40 divisions did not make AYP for the 2009-2010 academic school year.
Statistical analysis utilized median and composite median for individual tasks in each of the seven areas. Chi-square crosstab analysis was performed to indentify any differences in the seven management and leadership areas based on district size (small, medium, and large), gender, AYP status, and years in current position.

The following results identify the level of involvement of superintendents in the tasks identified by this study in the seven management areas.

Financial management. The level of involvement in the area of financial management revealed a high degree of concentration by superintendents in the areas of fiscal planning, budgeting, forecasting, and wages. Over half their time, 51%-100%, in this leadership activity is devoted to planning and budgeting. Very little emphasis was reported for materials distribution and inventory management. The survey did not address current economic conditions, nor did the survey address budgeting cycles. One small district superintendent commented, “Most of my time is spent working with the budget because of my locality.” One superintendent related budget issues to political and community relations by describing working with the budget as “political time.” A superintendent of a medium size district commented,

My work with purchasing contracts is restricted to identifying the needs, securing a budget source, and developing criteria to identify the task/service. I had no preparation to prepare me for these responsibilities before becoming a superintendent. Our purchasing office handles all logistical portions of the actual procurement process.

Another respondent’s response concerning the budget shared issues that involve other areas of management and leadership: “A great deal of time and attention has been placed on the budget in order to prevent losing teachers and programs.”
Furthermore, two superintendents articulated their lack of preparedness to work with the budget: “When I started this superintendency, I didn’t realize how much of my time would be spent on the budget. I was not ready for it. I had to learn quickly.” A superintendent of a medium size district also stated; “I had absolutely no preparation for dealing with the budget. It was overwhelming. I had to get help with it.” Two superintendents of medium size districts also commented on their lack of preparation in working on the budget. “Nothing in my formal training prepared me for working with the budget. I received my training for working on the budget, on the job, and working with a mentor.”

Facility management. Superintendents indicated spending most of their time in facility management with replacement. The investigator did not ask probing questions that would reveal more information involving capital improvement projects or budget questions involving facility management. Technology and maintenance were reported low for direct involvement. There were no questions or indicators that distinguished the types of technology referenced in the survey (e.g., instructional technology).

Personnel management. Activities in the area personnel management revealed that superintendents spend 51%-100% of their time with grievance management and needs assessment, with a concentration at level 3, 51%-75%.

Two superintendents from large school divisions provided the following responses in this area: “I directly evaluate the performance of each principal and specialist. We work hard at induction; my involvement with staff development for administrative staff is very high.” “I am involved with some formal grievances. My work with fringe benefits is limited due to budgetary means to fund them.”
Student personnel and special services. Involvement by superintendents in the activities of program organization & management, adjudicating problems and assessment/compliance appear mostly distributed among levels 1 and 2. The area of special services may have been more clearly defined for superintendents to reference. For instance, exceptional education services fall within this area. Further clarification may have impacted the responses for direct level of involvement. Legislation considerations and review may also be considered under this area as they relate to assessment/compliance. A small division superintendent commented, “Other than communicating strong support for an inclusive model, most of this work is handled directly by other staff members. Due process proceedings generally require a bit of my time.”

Support services. In the area of support services, superintendents responded by indicating that they spend less than 50% of their time involved in these activities. The majority of the responses indicate that they spend less than 25% of their time in these tasks. From the findings, one can conclude that other district leaders manage this area. More information is needed to determine the level of collaboration the superintendents have with these leaders.

The superintendent of a large school division provided the following comment to his response to support services, “We are fortunate to have directors over various areas of operation. Size of division matters; I focus on broader issues.”

Instruction/curriculum. Strategic planning appeared to require the majority of direct involvement by superintendents in the area of instruction/curriculum with 87.5% of the respondents (n = 35) spending 51%-100% involvement with this task. All other areas appear to require similar involvement, less than 50%. Strategic planning does not indicate the level of involvement by superintendents in related activities such as community relations. This lack of
specificity may directly impact the findings based on superintendents’ interpretation of the leadership activity. Additionally, all other activities under instruction/curriculum may be interrelated.

A superintendent of a large school division in the area of instruction/curriculum provided the following comment, “My work always involves an instructional focus. I depend on my district leadership team to manage each instructional area as it relates to accreditation and annual yearly progress.”

Community relations. The findings of the level of direct involvement in community relations reveal that superintendents spend most of their time involved with board relations. This activity is measured at level 3 for the respondents. All other activities in the area of Community Relations also indicated a high level involvement at level 3 or level 4. Communication was not considered as an activity. This, however, would have provided additional data for the investigator to determine time apportionment as these activities interrelate.

One superintendent of a large district commented, “I am the face of the district; therefore, I must attend a lot of public events. This takes up most of my time.” Another large district superintendent reported, “Nothing prepared me for political leadership; this is my job.” A medium district superintendent said, “I spend the majority of my time managing communication: emails, media, phone calls, text messages, dealing with expectations for communication.” One small district superintendent explained how keeping the political peace in her district requires a lot of her time. “I have to play the referee between the school board and the board of supervisors. They never agree, and they always blame each other.” A superintendent of a large district described the task of working with school boards as extremely difficult. “It is very hard to
handle. What makes it so difficult or easy is a well functioning or dysfunctional school board.”

A superintendent of a large school division noted the following:

My time is split between working with political relations, and working with the districts’ leadership team. The district leadership team handles the day-to-day operations and accreditation. I don’t worry about that because; I have knowledgeable people in those positions. I also don’t worry about AYP because they are narrow measures. I focus on broad measures over time.

Chi-square crosstab analysis further investigated the level of involvement by superintendents in all seven leadership and management areas based on district size, gender, AYP status, and years in current position. Only one statistical difference was noted for all comparison. The difference revealed a higher degree of involvement of small school district superintendents rather medium and large division superintendents in support services. Although a difference was noted, the relationship was reported as weak.
CHAPTER 5. INTERPRETATIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Although it is not clear what the role will become in the future, it seems certain that uncertainty will be the hallmark of the job. That will require a different set of expectations for those entering the profession. The new imperative that ‘all children be taught’ will call for greater educational leadership from the superintendent. Further, the uncertain political climate that now surrounds schools will require the superintendent to be proficient in politics and the art of persuasion. Much of the work will revolve around the ability to create and maintain relationships. The modern superintendent will not be a superintendent of schools whose job is to oversee and manage—he or she will be a superintendent of learning who will have to navigate an uncertain terrain with skill and finesse. (Houston, 2001, p. 428)

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the research findings in the context of the literature and to present the implications of the study. General recommendations and recommendations for further study are also presented. This chapter is divided into six sections. The first section reviews the purpose, research questions, and methodology of the study. The second section synthesizes the findings of the study and links those findings to the literature and speculates further about deeper meaning in each finding. The third section of the chapter discusses the findings in the context of the limitations of the study. In section four, implications for practice are shared. In the fifth section, recommendations are made for further study.
Purpose and General Summary

The primary purpose of this study was to determine the amount of time superintendents spend in the general areas that encompass all measurable responsibilities and experiences of the position. These experiences are further defined by variables to include gender, years in current position, size of school division, and Annual Yearly Progress (AYP). The primary research question addressed how superintendents spend their time in their districts. The goal was to determine any emerging roles or shifts by superintendents with their involvement in the management and leadership of their districts.

The role of the superintendent has changed dramatically, from community leader to school manager to education leader to scapegoat, and it is anyone's guess where the job is headed. What is clear, however, is that today's educational climate calls for a new way of doing business. With the formal powers of their position stripped away by bargaining agreements, court decisions, state and federal mandates and local political infighting, 21st century superintendents must rely less on government and community support and more on their personal skills and knowledge and their ability to bring people together. Furthermore, this author states that today's superintendents are in essence facilitators, and relationships are built through collaboration. And to achieve harmony, they must understand the strengths of each person, recognize the contribution each makes to the strategic plan and bring out the best in each person.

Superintendents today must be communicators, collaborators, consensus creators, community builders, child advocates, champions of curriculum and masters of teaching and learning. At the same time, they are expected to fall in with the bureaucrats, carry out mandates for the policymakers, and placate the business community by managing school districts as if they
were conglomerates. School leaders today need to be versatile enough to respond effectively to these varied pressures while staying focused on the crucial mission of improving student learning.

Perhaps the greatest challenge facing school leaders today is leading the renewal of America's commitment to public education. A modern democracy cannot survive or thrive unless its citizens put aside their differences and their personal desires for the good of the whole. For this reason, superintendents need to be steady in their course, but be willing to moderate and mediate the shifting political pressures without abandoning their core values. They must recognize and honor the importance of relationships and relationship building.

As the pressure for educational reform mounted over the past decade, school superintendents have been faced with the need to act decisively to improve instruction in their school districts. The broad array of activities that compose the superintendent's management role may both constrain as well as provide opportunities for instructional leadership. If the superintendent believes that the most important purpose of the role is maintaining organizational stability, then the managerial role will dominate the superintendent’s activities and instructional leadership will be viewed as a separate layer of responsibility. If, on the other hand, the superintendent believes that ensuring the stability of the organization and advancing student learning are of fundamental importance, then he/she will seek to use his/her routine managerial activities to increase his/her effectiveness as an instructional leader. Studies indicate that superintendents in instructionally effective school districts have increased effectiveness as instructional leaders through using their position in the district hierarchy to directly and indirectly influence the improvement of curriculum, instruction and learning. They have used routine
management tasks to support instructional and learning processes in schools and have had more than a salutary effect on student outcomes as measured by standardized tests. This approach may be useful as we focus on other student outcomes such as critical thinking skills, information processing, problem solving and independent learning. Analyzing the routine management tasks of superintendents in instructionally effective school districts has not only contributed to broadening the concept of instructional leadership but has enabled superintendent practitioners to identify areas in which they can more effectively support instructional improvement in their districts. The highly interactive nature of instructional leadership among the key actors, however, may require a more consultative leadership style when working in with the instructional dimension of schools, a superintendent as versatile and collaborative facilitator.

The primary research question addressed how superintendents spend their time in their districts. To answer the research question, this study utilized mixed-methodology to investigate the task and time apportionment of Virginia public school superintendents. The primary instrument used to collect data was a replication of the survey instrument used by Thompson (2008) in “Management And Leadership Activities Of School Superintendents.” Thompson’s instrument is a modified version of the management grid used by Glass (2004) in “Superintendent Leadership Without Management Will Not Reform.” This management grid survey was used by Garner (2005) to survey 625 superintendents in the state of Texas in order to assess their management tasks and functions. In Glass’s (2004) original use of the instrument, the superintendents’ work activities were separated into two areas: managerial and leadership. Managerial activities as defined by Glass (2004) include: (a) financial management, (b) facility management, (c) personnel management, (d) student personnel and special services, and (e)
support services. For the purposes of this study, two management and leadership areas originally identified in the Glass (2004) survey were included. These areas were (a) instruction/curriculum, and (b) community relations. The researcher surveyed all 132 Virginia public school division superintendents. Forty superintendents from across the state responded to the survey. The survey respondents represented all eight educational districts within the state. The respondents also represented all district sizes (small, medium, and large) throughout the state.

Telephone interviews were conducted with eight survey respondents, representing each of the eight educational regions in the state of Virginia. The interview questions served as a follow-up to the survey and as a means to solicit narrative responses based on individualized experiences. The interviews included probing questions regarding how superintendents spend their time. It further investigated how superintendents would like to spend more or less time on various tasks. Additionally, the telephone interviews investigated each individual’s preparation for the superintendency.

The purpose of this research study was to examine the time and task apportionment of Virginia public school superintendents in management and leadership activities. Each of the seven leadership and management areas in the survey revealed tasks in which superintendents’ concentrate the majority of their efforts and time. This examiner explains additional considerations related to the results. Most importantly, the results of the survey reveal a focus on task and responsibilities that guide superintendents’ work in their districts.

Financial Management. The level of involvement in the area of financial management revealed a high degree of concentration by superintendents in the areas of fiscal planning, budgeting, forecasting, and wages. Furthermore, superintendents interviewed by telephone
expressed their lack of preparedness for working with the budget. Literature suggests that the area of financial management is arguably one of the most critical elements of superintendent leadership. The fiscal integrity of the school district is the responsibility of the superintendent; aside from poor school board relations, more superintendents are dismissed for mismanaging finances than any other reason (Glass, 2004). In a study of superintendent self-perception of effectiveness, lack of fiscal resources was a major reason for inhibiting superintendent effectiveness and for explaining why superintendents are leaving the profession (Glass et al., 2000). As a result of this study, it appears that managing fewer resources for greater outcomes should be a skill that is included in superintendent preparation for the job (Glass et al., 2000).

Studies conducted by Thompson (2008) and Garner (2005) both identified similar degrees of involvement in each of the five management and leadership areas with financial management as the area requiring the highest level of involvement. Their findings suggest that the role of business manager remains a basic aspect of the superintendent position (Kowalski, 1999). Those study results are contrary to the findings of this research. However, superintendent interviewees described the budget, a task identified in the area of financial management, as requiring much of their attention.

Facility Management. Replacement and renovation of buildings can be a major challenge for many school divisions. This may be an explanation for the high degree of involvement by superintendents in this particular area of facility management. However, the community relations component to building replacement may be the issue that creates the most attention for superintendents. According to Kent Stewart, *Avoiding School Facility Issues: A Consultant’s Guidance to School Superintendents* (2006), there exists much public emotion (individual and
group) surrounding a question to modernize or replace a school building. If the school board’s position on the question is different from the public position, disaster awaits on bond referendum election day (Stewart, 2006). Stewart (2006) suggests that a well-selected, and well-supported advisory committee can avoid this. “The public perception is that the project, whether modernization or new, is the board or superintendent’s project” (Stewart, 2006, p. 7).

Personnel Management. The personnel management group includes areas that may be assigned to various departments in a division. However, there was no indication by respondents as to the level of collaboration or delegation that was given to department leaders who oversee these areas of personnel management. Much of the superintendent’s direct involvement in personnel management can be determined by the size of the district and support staff (Kowalski, 1999).

Student Personnel and special services. The need and ability to provide support staff in this area may be a reason for the differences in superintendent involvement in this area. Given the complexities and legal implications in providing special education services and organizing programs, small school division superintendents may assume the responsibility of director or supervisor in the delivery of student services. This area also includes the administration of federal programs, such as Title I and Head Start.

Support Services. Of all of the areas surveyed, the area of support services suggested the lowest level of direct involvement by all superintendents. One explanation for superintendents’ lack of involvement is that the operation of food services and transportation are typically delegated to directors or coordinators in school divisions. Both are typically governed by managerial and technical knowledge and skills related to state and federal guidelines. Many of
the issues that arise from these areas can be political hotbeds due to either financial constraints on the district or new initiatives such as contracting (Kowalski, 1999). The reported low level of involvement by superintendents suggests that the superintendents may have stable operations and effective supervisors in this area, which therefore requires little direct supervision on their part.

Instruction/curriculum. All superintendents reported a high degree of involvement in the areas of strategic planning. This response supports the findings of Waters and Marzano (2006) that effective superintendents focus their efforts on creating goal-oriented districts. This approach creates greater opportunities to ensure that a collaborative goal-setting approach includes a broad range of stakeholders, including central office staff, building administrators and board members. Norton, Webb, Dlugosh, and Sybouts (1996) further assert that the role of the superintendent in curriculum and instruction is best established with a foundation of strategic planning and the support of policies.

Community relations. The responsibility to build consensus and support for division goals and initiatives is a key role of superintendents. Effective communication and monitoring of community climate and priorities is a time-consuming task for most superintendents. The superintendents participating in this study reported a high degree of direct involvement in this area. This emerging role as communicator is an increasing responsibility for superintendents. Glass (2006) acknowledged that the reform area has politicized the role of superintendent and in some extreme cases makes the role of the superintendent a community rather than educational one.

To further investigate influences on superintendents time and task apportionment, chi-square crosstabs analysis were performed to determine the significant differences in the level of
involvement of superintendents in (a) financial management, (b) facility management, (c) personnel management, (d) student personnel and special services, (e) support services, (f) instruction or curriculum, and (g) community relations in school districts based on four different independent variables: district size, superintendent gender, AYP status, and years in current position in the seven management and leadership areas.

One statistical difference was identified in the level of involvement of superintendents of small, medium and large school divisions in the seven management and leadership areas. The difference revealed a higher degree of involvement of small school superintendents than in medium and large division superintendents in support services. The differences in the level of involvement suggest that small school superintendents have a greater degree of direct involvement than their counterparts. This finding is consistent with Garner’s (2005) and Thompson’s (2008) findings that superintendents of small school divisions responded with a greater level of involvement in the area of support services.

The findings in this study support those Garner and Thompson studies in that superintendents of small school divisions consistently reported a greater level of involvement in management and leadership areas than did superintendents of medium or large school divisions. One explanation for this consistency in response could be that, due to the limited number of staff, small school division superintendents have fewer individuals to whom they can delegate responsibilities, and therefore must directly oversee the development and implementation of strategies and objectives. Munther (1997) reported in his findings that, due to the lack of delegation, the smaller district superintendents spent a large percentage of time performing technical tasks.
Superintendents of small, medium, and large school districts in the area of support services reported another area of difference. Of all of the areas surveyed, the area of support services suggested the lowest level of direct involvement by all superintendents. Although small school division superintendents reported a higher degree of direct involvement than medium and large school divisions, 50% reported level 1 or, 0-25 percent, direct involvement. The reported low level of involvement by superintendents suggests that the superintendents may have stable operations and effective supervisors in this area, which therefore requires little direct supervision on their part.

As noted in previous studies (Garner, 2005; Jones, 2004; Munther, 1997), superintendents in smaller divisions have fewer staff to which they can delegate responsibilities. Therefore, they are involved in more day-to-day operations. Kowalski (1999) suggested that superintendents in medium sized school divisions tend to directly supervise the work completed by the central office staff and building principals. This may explain less direct involvement by superintendents in instruction/curriculum in medium school divisions in this study. Munther (1997) indicated in his findings that large-district superintendents chose to delegate technical and managerial responsibilities to subordinates allowing for a greater focus on instruction/curriculum.

Chi-square crosstabs analysis was also performed to determine the significant differences in the level of involvement of superintendents in school districts achieving AYP and those not achieving AYP in the seven management and leadership areas. In each of the seven management and leadership categories, no significant differences were identified in the level of
involvement between superintendents in school divisions achieving AYP and those who did not during the 2009-2010 school year.

The findings of no significance in identifying differences in superintendent involvement in the seven management and leadership areas by superintendents of school divisions achieving AYP and those who did not may be attributed to other variables that were not assessed in this study. These findings of no significance of differences differ from earlier studies. The findings of the Jones (2004) study suggest that No Child Left Behind may have an impact on how superintendents allocate their time; consideration of additional variables in evaluating time allocation and management activities of superintendents is also supported in the findings of the McIntyre (2003) study. McIntyre’s study also examined the differences of time allocation between superintendents in states with high stakes tests and those in states without high stakes tests, the study failed to reveal any significant relationships between superintendents in states with high stakes tests and those without concerning the time allocated to instructional leadership.

Chi-square crosstabs analysis were also performed to determine the significant differences in the level of involvement of superintendents in school districts based on gender, and years in current position. In each of the seven management and leadership categories, no significant differences were identified in the level of involvement between superintendents in school divisions based on their gender or years in education.

The examiner also investigated specific performance areas as defined by the “Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Superintendents” as they relate to the findings. Superceding the 18 performance criteria in the Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Superintendents are five super-ordinate
categories. The categories include: planning and assessment (Criteria 1, 2, 3), instructional leadership (Criteria 4, 5, 6, 7), safety and organizational management for learning (Criteria 8, 9, 10, 11), communication and community relations (Criteria 12, 13, and 14), and professionalism (Criteria 15, 16, 17, 18). In reviewing superintendent responses to the survey and telephone interviews, it is noteworthy to point out the categories with the greatest levels of positive association.

The findings revealed concentration areas in the standards for further development and preparation based on responses from the survey and telephone interviews. Differences and similarities in superintendent responses, based on their experiences, gender, size of school division, and student achievement of the school division, indicated areas for further professional development. These areas include community and political relations, financial management (budget), and oversight of district leadership teams.

In a 2001 study of school board chairpersons’ perceptions of the superintendent evaluation in the Commonwealth of Virginia, school board chairpersons ranked the evaluation criteria from the most important to least important as: (a) instructional leadership, (b) planning and assessment, (c) communication and community relations, (d) safety and organizational management for learning, and (e) professionalism (Marston, 2002). Superintendents responding to the same question ranked the following with one difference: (a) instructional leadership, (b) planning and assessment, (c) safety and organizational management for learning, (d) communication and community relations, and (e) professionalism. Qualitative findings from that study indicated that superintendents felt that their relationships with school board members were
a more significant factor in their evaluation than any of the state’s criteria (Marston, 2002; Robinson & Bickers, 1990).

The results of this current study also suggests that time spent interacting with school board members is the most significant performance task for superintendents in the state. It also indicates that the most significant area of direct involvement for superintendents in management and leadership activities is defined under the heading by the Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Superintendents as communication and community relations. The findings also indicated a need for further preparation with working with the budget according to responses to questions involving financial management. Uniform and Performance Standards, Criteria 4 and 12, both address the effective allocation and management of fiscal and other resources. The results of this study further indicate that superintendents tend to delegate student achievement responsibilities to their district leadership teams, collaborating with the teams for student success. Criteria 2, 6, and 18 address collaboration and oversight by superintendents for student achievement.

**Findings Through the Lens of the Literature and Speculation**

Findings from this study revealed community relations as the area with the highest level of involvement. Superintendents identified community relations as the highest level of involvement regardless of division size, gender, and AYP status. The task that required the most attention was board relations. Literature involving political governance suggests that so important is this emerging consideration involving superintendent relationships with school boards, that it has been considered by some to be a decisive element of superintendent tenure (Education Writers Association, n.d.; Hoyle, et al., 2005). Survey participants also indicated that
government agencies, citizen complaints, and parent organizations as identical in task attention. The consistent results of the superintendents’ responses suggest that there is a consistent effort on the part of superintendents to engage and involve stakeholders in school matters. Glass (2004) notes that due to the highly visible nature of the superintendency, school division leaders must make community relations a high priority for their agendas and schedules.

The influence of political and community relations on the allocation of superintendent time has been substantiated through the review of literature. Today’s superintendents are challenged with increased social and political pressures in addition to high standards and constituent demands (Rohland, 2001). The findings in this study support the assertion of previous studies that superintendents are challenged with the task of working within the boundaries of the school boards and with their constituents. Byrd’s (2001) study implied that superintendents must focus on the lines of communication among all stakeholders and allow for site-based autonomy at the school level in order to have a positive impact on student academic achievement.

While instructional leadership is integral to the role of the superintendent, the increasingly complex aspects of the job must be considered and handled as well (Education Writers Association, n.d.; Hoyle, et al., 2005). Following community relations in sequential order, superintendents indicated the areas of facility management, financial management, instruction/curriculum, personnel management, and student personnel and special services as requiring about the same amount of time. The least important was support services. Support services is consistent with the respondents in the Garner (2005) and Thompson (2008) studies.
Both reported the lowest level of involvement in support services. This area can be further defined by its tasks: contracting, student transportation, and food services.

The results of this study differ from the findings in the Garner (2005) and Thompson (2008) studies as to how superintendents spend their time in the seven management and leadership areas. Superintendents in those two studies ranked the following areas in sequential order as to their level of direct involvement: financial management, instruction/curriculum, personnel management, student personnel and special services, facility management and support services. Financial management and curriculum and instruction ranked higher in the Thompson study than was indicted by respondents in this study.

The two areas that were added to the management and leadership survey, as in Thompson’s (2008) and Garner’s (2005), were instruction/curriculum, and community relations. Superintendents participating in the Garner (2005) and Thompson (2008) studies ranked instruction/curriculum as a second priority and community relations as a fourth. This study, however, indicated community relations as number one and instruction/curriculum as fourth. The task that required the most direct involvement over all other tasks was reported by superintendents as board relations for the area of community relations. Though the data indicated that instruction/curriculum ranked fourth by superintendents overall, this area may also be interrelated to the area of community relations. In the area of instruction/curriculum, superintendents indicate that the task of strategic planning requires the most direct involvement. The literature indicates a link between strategic planning and board relations. The superintendent and the school board are the two most important members of what we call the district's strategic leadership team, whose continuous, close, creative collaboration are essential
in areas that are critical for a district's long-term success: strategic planning, policy formulation, goal setting and public relations, to name but a few. (Eadie & Houston, 2003, para. 3).

Limitations of This Study

The nature of voluntary participation, considered in light of the low return rate, makes it difficult to suggest with certainty that the perceptions gathered in this research represent the thoughts and feelings of larger populations throughout the state. Likewise, limitations resulting from the telephone interviews and subject responses bias should be considered (Krosnick, Lavrakas, & Visser, 2000). The interview responses contained within this study are those of specific individuals. As with much qualitative research, these responses are not indicative of the perceptions of all superintendents throughout Virginia but are those of specific persons at the time of the interviews. The perceptions of superintendents as reported in the telephone interviews may be limited also due to the fact of their lack of exposure to issues that are not relevant in their various districts.

Another limitation to consider is the lapse in time between the delivery of the Internet survey and the subsequent telephone interviews. While the overall timing of the two was at about the same time of the academic year, there was a lapse of approximately 2 months. While one might assume that the responses should be about the same, given the timing within the academic year, it is important to consider that additional superintendent training and policy shift during that period of that year may have occurred. This could have led to changes in perceptions and responses by superintendents. Additional factors related to the timing of the survey, method of contacting potential participants, and Internet delivery of the survey may have limited the participation of some superintendents.
The number of superintendents who responded to this study (40, 32%) in Commonwealth of Virginia was small; of 132, the study represents 40. Extending this study nationwide with similar research conditions may confirm the findings or change the significance in the variance of the responses. A challenge to expanding this study to a national audience is that superintendents in other states do not use Virginia’s “Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Superintendents” as a uniform performance measure. National standards like the ISLLC (Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium) Standards should be adopted state to state and evaluation instruments designed around those standards should be in place before a replication of this study is performed to ensure consistency among findings.

**Implications**

The No Child Left Behind Legislation of 2002 evaluates school communities and superintendents on the continuous improvement of student achievement scores in order to meet established federal standards. This level of accountability suggests that superintendents should feel more compelled to devote greater attention to instructional leadership and the development of educational programs. However, the current findings suggest that political and community relations as well as working with the budget require most of their attention and time. The current findings are of no notable difference in superintendent involvement between school divisions achieving AYP and those who did not, suggesting that the level of involvement of superintendents in management and leadership areas is not focused on one particular activity, but rather a strategic approach to effective management and leadership based on the demographics and context of their division’s needs.
In the examination of the level of involvement of superintendents of Virginia school divisions in specific management and leadership activities, the results of this study are consistent with previous literature in showing how superintendents allocate their time (Castagnola, 2005; Garner, 2005; Jerry, 1963; Jones, 2004; McIntrye, 2003; Munther, 1997). In each study, superintendents of small school divisions were found to be more directly involved in the day-to-day management activities of the district. It is therefore quite evident that district size plays an important role in the management and leadership activities of superintendents. With the modern challenges facing the superintendency in meeting state and federal standards for student achievement, it is critical that a greater understanding of the complexities of the position be acknowledged and addressed in order to prepare emerging superintendents with the necessary training to meet these upcoming challenges.

The findings in this study also have implications for school boards in the establishment of goals and work performance objectives for school division superintendents. Given the accountability standards for student achievement, greater awareness and understanding of the complexities related to aligning resources and developing strategies to improve student learning outcomes can better assist school boards in selecting and working with superintendents.

With the significant changes in budgets due to the current economic climate, community and political demands and expected learning outcomes for students, the landscape of superintendent leadership also has evolved. The training and preparatory programs for school and school division administrators should reflect the changes that current division administrators are enacting and managing. Given the consistent findings of the impact of community relations on the management and leadership activities of superintendents, educational leadership programs
should reflect in their programs the various needs of communities and districts across the state of Virginia.

With different performance and evaluation standards from state to state, it would be reasonable to speculate that some superintendent responses would change depending on how each of the different criteria is interpreted. In general, the researcher believes that there would be relatively little variance from the findings of this study due to the similarities in conditions, work environment, and expectations of the superintendents. It is within the similarities of conditions, work environment, and expectations where the researcher speculates that commonalities in the responses exist to a greater degree than the demographic variables selected for this study.

Professional development and growth is a transformative process, (Cranston, 1997) personal to the participant. As we pay greater attention to professional development, it is also important to focus on what professional development is provided and the ways that professional development is delivered. This study only examines what professional development opportunities need to be provided.

The findings of this study are important because the need for professional development in specific criteria areas of evaluation have been established. These findings reveal the area of need for professional development of school division superintendents, which will give superintendents themselves, school boards, and professional support organizations a better understanding of what performance criteria should be tied to the evaluation superintendents. As the learning needs of superintendents are met through professional development, superintendents might develop a greater sense of professional efficacy, which could transcend into higher student achievement
This study contributes to the existing body of literature that focuses on training and preparation programs related to leadership in the superintendency. The study identified superintendent desirability for professional development in performance criteria to assist superintendents themselves, school boards, and professional support organizations with the planning and implementation of professional development for superintendents to meet their learning needs.

School boards will benefit from these findings because they can more clearly identify specific knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for potential candidates to possess in seeking superintendents for their divisions. These findings could potentially help to determine the learning needs of superintendents and better able superintendents to identify areas of needed professional growth and importance (Marston, 2002).

Additionally, these findings could also help to shape discussions between superintendents and their school boards about the superintendent’s learning needs associated with their specific district. Specifically, school boards in the Commonwealth of Virginia could review evaluation results annually with their superintendents to design a professional development plan that meets the superintendent’s needs as a learner. In particular, school boards could send superintendents to executive training sessions to fulfill a perceived need for business-style leadership such as working with the budget. Supporting organizations that provide professional development, such as the Virginia Association of School Superintendents or the Virginia Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, will benefit knowing which
criteria areas superintendents desire most for professional development.

Ultimately, these findings could lead to expanded opportunities for superintendent executive training, which is a major obstacle to superintendent professional learning (Bowmaster, 2007). Specifically, the Virginia Association of School Superintendents and the Virginia School Boards Association could design specific executive training geared toward strategic planning and data analysis to meet the professional development desires of superintendents. Further, they could also design separate executive training for novice and experienced superintendents in communication. Mentorship programs could be created to align novice and experienced superintendents with proven skill sets with those who require assistance with particular tasks and functions.

The findings of this study are at best nominally useful at determining superintendents’ level of need for executive training based on superintendent experiences, as defined by gender, years in current position, size of school division, and student achievement within the school division. In a very limited capacity, professional support organizations would also be able to use these finding to differentiate professional development to meet the need of varied groups of superintendents, based on their experiences as noted in this study, particularly, the qualitative responses.

**Recommendations**

The results of this study suggest an apparent paradigm shift for superintendents is taking place among superintendent roles. It centers on the individual but emphasizes one's responsibilities and relations with others in the referent group. It no longer is automatically
gained through one's role in the hierarchy. Knowledge has always carried power, but as knowledge has become the basis of work for all employees, expertise is now recognized as residing in all levels of the organization. The superintendent has become a versatile and collaborative facilitator, facilitating and working with people at various levels in various areas in order to bring the district success.

Organizations are becoming less hierarchical; authority is becoming based on one's knowledge and expertise, and members of the team share responsibility. The times are both difficult and exciting. What makes it more difficult is that society is in a state of transition. Our norms are changing; our way of life is changing but we carry with us the traditions and views of the immediate past and have difficulty determining what it is we should shuck off and what we should keep. That is certainly true of the school. The modern school was born in the 19th century as a means to promote industrialization and citizenship. The metaphors of industry have had a profound influence on schools; they have tended to reflect the industrial model, sorting and grading students, organizing the system hierarchically, concentrating responsibility at the top of the pyramid and allocating tasks through tight job descriptions. There is recognition that things must change but there is no broad consensus as to what the specific changes should be. The Superintendent has the task of leading the school system towards significant change without there being social consensus as to what the changes for students and the school should be.

A new kind of leadership is required of the superintendent. The superintendent works in a milieu that is quite different from senior officers of other organizations. First, it is a public office. A school board made up of elected trustees employs the superintendent. They are accountable to the voters and the superintendent is accountable to them. The uniqueness comes
from the superintendent being both a teacher and an administrator. His/her allegiance as a
teacher is to young people first and secondly, to the trustees and the community. Schools are not
merely branch plants of the superintendency; they are individual communities made up of
students, teachers, principals, support staff, parents and other citizens. This is a highly complex
and decentralized system (even where the structures try to centralize), the larger the school
system, the more complex it appears. The industrial model of coordination, control and
supervision, while necessary for some management functions, do not provide the leadership
needed in type of organization. The superintendent is there to help the system work its way
through uncertain times by seeking out common values and collective views. To get this work
accomplished, I would like to suggest the emerging leadership role that interrelate most all work
activities, superintendent as versatile and collaborative facilitator. Superintendent as versatile
and collaborative facilitator is a key role.

There is no blueprint for instructional leadership, and research indicates that
superintendents can influence student achievement through the various elements of staff
selection, principal supervision, establishing instructional goals, and effective financial planning
as a versatile and collaborative facilitator. The findings of this study reveal a new versatile and
collaborative superintendent who can facilitate positive results. It also reveals a skill set that
emphasizes a need for educational leaders who can motivate and lead people, build consensus,
work with diversity, have outstanding people skills, be good listeners, be able to work with
various stakeholders, and be able to communicate a message. As a result of this new paradigm,
this researcher suggests a need for nontraditional executive superintendent training and
certification programs that emphasize these skills and abilities of a versatile and collaborative
facilitator. A superintendent can utilize his/her individual skills, knowledge, and ability to work with others to get the task completed as a versatile and collaborative leader. This is especially useful in the political arena.

By the nature of the job, superintendents are in the political realm. They answer to politicians and must be aware of the political winds blowing and to know what is possible to do at a given time. Superintendents make things happen; they not only respond to events but they see them coming and they seize the opportunities that arise to move the system along the vision path. But those who are there to build professional organizations and a supportive community for students are not opportunists; their work is based on integrity. Baddley and James (1987) put "acting with integrity" and "psychological game playing" at the opposite ends of a continuum. A “reading” dimension runs through the continuum and has to do with the ability to read an organization, to read its decision processes, its overt and covert agendas, the location and bases of power inside and outside the organization, one's own power bases and abilities to exercise influence, the organizational culture and its style, its political purpose and direction, its small and large 'p' “politics. (Baddley & James, 1987, p. 8, 9)

The superintendent with integrity and political competence will use the data gained to move the organization towards the vision. It may mean that compromises on procedural values will have to be made. It may mean that initiatives have to be put on hold until there is more support for it within the organization. The Superintendent must constantly read the environment and make judgments as to what to do based on core values and the school system's vision.

The superintendent is responsible for developing the culture that comes to exist within a school system. Superintendents must mobilize resources to build a culture, which is committed
to learning, professionalism and development of community. Superintendents use policies as a means of gaining consensus on procedural values and of mobilizing forces in support of them. Policies are developed through dialogue and study of alternative proposals. Depending on the issue, input is sought from all constituents -- parents, teachers, administrators and students.

This study is timely and important because of the high stakes associated with the current era of accountability and current economy of fiscal retrenchment; high consequence test scores; and fiscal decisions that determine the professional fates of public school superintendents. Ongoing professional development and training is needed to assist superintendents to lead their school divisions to high levels of student achievement. However, today’s superintendents are faced with limited options for ongoing training and professional learning to hone their leadership skills to meet the responsibilities placed on them as chief executive officers (Glass et al., 2000) of their school division. Additionally, the results of this study provide practicing superintendents with information related to planning, management, and decision making to assist them in addressing the leadership challenges of the superintendency in the 21st century.

Currently, there are no state or national professional development and executive training programs for superintendents other than those offered by professional support organizations. In most cases, these professional development and training programs are not aligned with a set of standards or even with measures of evaluation. DiPaolo and Stronge (2001) agree with the National School Boards Association and the American Association of School Administrators and have identified several reasons why superintendent appraisal is necessary, to include: clarification of roles of the superintendent and board members; communicating expectations; enhancing
professional development; fulfilling legal requirements; making employment decisions; and most importantly, accountability for the superintendent (Björk, 2001). Although not all states require appraisal of superintendent performance, it is reasonable to conclude that there are significant benefits to appraising the work of superintendents (DiPaolo & Stronge, 2003). It is recommended by this researcher that a set of national standards for superintendent competency and evaluation be adopted and used as the foundation for superintendent learning options and programs. The quantitative and qualitative findings from this study suggest further preparation for superintendents in the seven management and leadership areas.

Financial Management. More executive training and preparation is needed in working with the budget. The activities of working with replacement and renovation also require attention.

Personnel Management. Personnel needs as well as handling grievances require attention through executive training.

Student Personnel and special services. The findings indicate a need for specific preparation in adjudicating special education, health, and behavioral issues.

Support Services. The findings indicate a need for preparation of small district superintendents in handling transportation and food service contracts. It also suggests that this area is mostly delegated to directors. Therefore, some collaboration is necessary.

Instruction/Curriculum. The findings indicate a need for specific preparation and training in strategic planning, and collaboration with principals and instructional staff.

Community Relations. The findings strongly suggest preparation and training for aspiring
and active superintendents in school board relations, political leadership, and building relations with all stakeholders.

Superintendents who were interviewed by phone expressed a desire to spend more time in schools working with principals and visiting teachers and students. However, they also indicated that they have little opportunity to do so due to time constraints. Further preparation and training could offer superintendents more control of their time in order to focus on areas they feel are important to students’ success.

The final recommendation of this study is the pursuit of more research in the field of superintendent learning and executive training. There is little research on executive training and learning tactics of school division superintendents (Bowmaster, 2007; Glass, Carter, & Hord, 1993; Jackson, 1995; Norton et al., 1996). If superintendents are one of the most significant figures in American public education, as many claim (Glass et al., 1993; Norton et al., 1996), then greater attention should be focused on improving superintendents in preservice learning and inservice development.

**Recommendations for Further Study**

Recommended for further study are the following:

1. A study that examines superintendents with and without education backgrounds;

2. A study of why Virginia superintendents responded they way that they did in this study;

3. A study of various superintendent evaluation instruments to establish differences and commonalities;
4. A study of different state standards for superintendent competency and professional development in order to establish a set of national standards;

5. A study of Virginia superintendent’s desirability toward executive training opportunities.

6. Replication of this study using an expanded list of independent measures to determine more significant relationships between superintendent experiences and levels of desirability for professional development in specific criteria areas related to evaluation should be considered.

Summary

The role of the superintendent has changed dramatically, from community leader to school manager to education leader to scapegoat, and it is anyone's guess where the job is headed. What is clear, however, is that today's educational climate calls for a new way of doing business. Superintendents must rely less on government and community support and more on their personal skills and knowledge and their ability to bring people together through relationships. Furthermore, this author states that today's superintendents are in essence facilitators, and relationships are built through collaboration. And to achieve harmony, they must understand the strengths of each person, recognize the contribution each makes to the strategic plan and bring out the best in each person.

Superintendents today must be communicators, collaborators, consensus creators, community builders, child advocates, champions of curriculum and masters of teaching and learning. At the same time, they are expected to fall in with the bureaucrats, carry out mandates for the policymakers, and placate the business community by managing school districts as if they
were conglomerates. School leaders today need to be versatile enough to respond effectively to these varied pressures while staying focused on the crucial mission of improving student learning. They must also work to build relationships to accomplish division goals. This study suggests an evolving role of superintendent as versatile and collaborative facilitator, emphasizing versatility and collaboration to accomplish the goals of the district as outlined through a strategic plan. At the same time, they must use these skills and abilities to successfully get the job done in the various management and leadership areas.
List of References
List of References


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Guidelines Developed in Response to Education Accountability and Quality Enhancement Act of 1999 (HB 2710 and SB 1145) Adopted by the Virginia Board of Education January 6, 2000

Superintendent Evaluation Criteria

Planning and Assessment
The superintendent effectively employs various processes for gathering, analyzing, and using data for decision making.
The superintendent organizes the collaborative development and implementation of a division strategic plan based on analysis of data from a variety of sources.
The superintendent plans, implements, supports, and assesses instructional programs that enhance teaching and student achievement of the Standards of Learning.
The superintendent develops plans for effective allocation of fiscal and other resources.

Instructional Leadership
The superintendent communicates a clear vision of excellence and continuous improvement consistent with the goals of the school division.
The superintendent oversees the alignment, coordination, and delivery of assigned programs and/or curricular areas.
The superintendent selects, inducts, supports, evaluates, and retains quality instructional and support personnel.
The superintendent provides staff development programs consistent with program evaluation results and school instructional improvement plans.
The superintendent identifies, analyzes, and resolves problems using effective problem solving techniques.

Safety and Organizational Management for Learning
The superintendent actively supports a safe and positive environment for students and staff.
The superintendent develops procedures for working with the board of education that define mutual expectations, working relationships, and strategies for formulating division policies.
The superintendent effectively manages human, material, and financial resources to ensure student learning and to comply with legal mandates.
The superintendent demonstrates effective organizational skills to achieve school, community, and division goals.
Communication and Community Relations

The superintendent promotes effective communication and interpersonal relations within the school division.

The superintendent establishes and maintains effective channels of communication with board members and between the schools and community, strengthening support of constituencies and building coalitions.

The superintendent works collaboratively with staff, families, and community members to secure resources and to support the success of a diverse student population.

Professionalism

The superintendent models professional, moral, and ethical standards as well as personal integrity in all interactions.

The superintendent works in a collegial and collaborative manner with school personnel and the community to promote and support the mission and goals of the school division.

The superintendent takes responsibility for and participates in a meaningful and continuous process of professional development that results in the enhancement of student learning.

The superintendent provides service to the profession, the division, and the community
APPENDIX B

Key Terms

The following managerial tasks are common to every school district regardless of size or wealth. They are prescribed actions in both highly centralized and decentralized organizational structures. Most of the activities are closely monitored by state departments of education and other regulatory agencies. In brief, they constitute a nonnegotiable managerial imperative for superintendents to supervise, coordinate, perform, and be held accountable to the school board and community. If the tasks are performed efficiently and effectively, fiscal costs to the district can be substantially reduced, thereby creating an opportunity to transfer “saved” dollars to “instructional” accounts (Glass, 2004, p. 12).

Financial Management

*Fiscal planning.* Pertaining to long-range planning regarding revenues and expenditures, especially integrating these considerations into comprehensive strategic plans (Kowalski, 1999).

*Budgeting, forecasting, demographic.* An annual process of developing a document that details program needs, estimates costs of programs, and estimates revenues (Kowalski, 1999).

*Accounting and cash management.* A process that determines the fiscal condition of a school district, usually mandated by state law, serving as both a measure of accountability and a source of public information (Kowalski, 1999).

*Purchasing and contracts.* An ongoing process of procuring necessary equipment and materials for the operation of the school district, including specific functions such as bid preparation, cost analysis, and recommendations for board action (Kowalski, 1999).

*Inventory management.* The control and storage of equipment and materials that will be used at some future date (Kowalski, 1999).

*Materials distribution.* The process of disseminating equipment and materials from storage areas to specific sites as the materials are requisitioned (Kowalski, 1999).

*Risk management.* The procurement and management of insurance policies protecting the school district and its property, including specific functions: developing specifications, obtaining competitive bids, selecting insurance carriers, and actual management (Kowalski, 1999).

*Salary or wage management.* A function that includes recordkeeping and the dissemination of checks to employees, as well as the management of fringe benefit programs (Kowalski, 1999).
Facility Management

Replacement or retrofit. The development and implementation of plans to replace worn-out buildings, change the functions of other buildings by remodeling, and bring other buildings up to current building and safety codes via retrofitting (Glass, 2004).

Maintenance. The provision of an organizational structure for maintenance and custodial services to ensure that maintenance and custodial services are properly supervised and that adequate human and material resources are provided so that the goals of educational programs can be reached (Kowalski, 1999).

Technology. Providing students and staff with access to information via computers and other technologies that integrate voice, data, video, and the Internet for work and instruction (Kowalski, 1999).

Personnel Management

Needs assessment. Determination of the number and types of positions needed and the associated costs (Kowalski, 1999).

Recruitment. The posting of vacancies and securing of applications, including hosting or participating in job fairs (Kowalski, 1999).

Evaluation. The process of determining the effectiveness of employment practices, including formative and summative evaluation of staff (Kowalski, 1999).

Induction. The provision of orientation and induction activities for new teachers, including support regarding adjustment to the school and the work role of staff (Kowalski, 1999; Glass, 2004).

Staff development. The provision of workshops and seminars for the continuous improvement of employee skills and efficiencies linked to state certification and licensing requirements, including required training for environmental and general safety procedures (Glass, 2004).

Recordkeeping and payroll. The maintenance of personnel files and working with fiscal management to provide necessary information regarding compensation (Kowalski, 1999).

Fringe benefits. The management of insurance, vacation, sick leave and other types of employee benefits (Kowalski, 1999).

Negotiations and contracts. Discussing, arranging, and issuing contracts as well as salary increases (Kowalski, 1999).

Grievance management. Handling formal and informal employee complaints (Kowalski, 1999).

Student Personnel and Special Services

Program organization and management. Centralized supervision of school health services, special education, attendance, student records and student discipline (Glass, 2004).

Assessment and compliance. The fulfillment of state and federal regulations, including NCLB (Glass); the provision of services for the assessment and diagnosis of student health problems and fulfillment of state laws and district policies relative to health screening tests (Kowalski, 1999).


**Adjudication of problems.** The handling of formal and informal parent or student complaints, including the services of an attorney (Glass, 2004).

**Support Services**

*Student services.* Development and management of transportation budget, personnel, routing and policy (Kowalski, 1999).

*Food services.* The provision of district resources in terms of buildings, personnel, utilities, budget, supervision and required management hours (Glass, 2004).

*Contracting.* The outsourcing of services such as payroll, food service, janitorial service, technology, and transportation, including the oversight of bids, contracts, contract management, and evaluation of outsourced services (Glass, 2004).

**Instruction and Curriculum**

*Alignment.* A form of strategic planning requiring a vision to be accomplished, constant monitoring of student progress, and participation from teachers to identify goals and ensure their correct sequencing in the instructional program (Hoyle, Björk, Collier, & Glass, 2005).

*Assessment or testing.* The process of benchmarking and tracking student progress through charts and graphs to guide instructional delivery and planning (Hoyle et al., 2005).

*Adoption.* The development of internal and external policies that align the purpose of schooling with the district’s academic programs (Hoyle et al., 2005).

*In-service.* The provision of training to assist teachers, administrators and staff to acquire a new skill or improve the use of an old skill (Hoyle et al., 2005).

*Accreditation.* The implementation of processes and procedures to establish school accreditation standards (Hoyle et al., 2005).

*Strategic planning.* A process in the school district designed to gain an understanding of changes in the surrounding environment, assess organizational strengths and weaknesses, develop and implement specific operational plans, and motivate employees to work toward the operational and long-term goals (Kowalski, 1999)

**Community Relations**

*Board relations.* The establishment of clearly defined roles and responsibilities for the board and superintendent, thereby providing for board orientation and training (Norton et al., 1996).

*Community complaints.* The mediation of small localized tensions and conflicts between staff and individuals in the community (Hoyle et al.)

*Parent and professional organizations.* Groups established for the purpose of informing the public about the ways in which the district is responsibly managing the human and fiscal resources entrusted to it (Hoyle et al., 2005).

*Governmental agencies.* Organizations to whom the school division reports regarding its response to the demands for accountability from state legislators and the state department of education, including the development of strategies to meet established benchmarks (Hoyle et al., 2005).
APPENDIX C

Management Grid
(Glass’ (2004) Superintendent Work Tasks and Functions Grid)

Level 1 — Supervise  The superintendent has only 25% direct involvement.
Level 2 — Coordinate The superintendent has 50% direct involvement.
Level 3 — Coordinate The superintendent has 75% direct involvement.
Level 4 — Do It All  The superintendent performs the entire task at 100%.

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<tr>
<th>Work Tasks / Functions</th>
<th>Level 1 Supervise 25%</th>
<th>Level 2 Coordinate 50%</th>
<th>Level 3 Coordinate 75%</th>
<th>Level 4 Do All 100%</th>
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<td><strong>Financial Management</strong></td>
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<td>3. Budgeting/Forecasting/Demographics</td>
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<td>5. Purchasing/Contracts</td>
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<td>6. Inventory Management</td>
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<td>8. Risk Management</td>
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<td>9. Salary/Wage Management</td>
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<td><strong>Personnel Management</strong></td>
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<td>16. Needs Assessment</td>
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<td>17. Recruitment</td>
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<td>19. Induction</td>
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<td>20. Staff Development</td>
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<td>21. Record Keeping</td>
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<td>23. Fringe Benefits</td>
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### Superintendent Managerial Grid for the Average District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work Tasks / Functions</th>
<th>Level 1 Supervise 25%</th>
<th>Level 2 Coordinate 50%</th>
<th>Level 3 Coordinate 75%</th>
<th>Level 4 Do All 100%</th>
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#### Student Personnel & Special Services

27. Program Organization and Management
28. Supervision of Services
29. Personnel Management
30. Assessment/Compliance
31. Adjudicate Problems
32. Student Health
33. School Attorney

#### Support Services

34. Student Transportation
35. Food Services
36. Contracting and Outsourcing

#### Instruction/Curriculum

37. Alignment
38. Assessment/Testing
39. Adoption
40. In-Service
41. Accreditation
42. Strategic Planning

#### Community Relations

43. Board Orientation/Training
44. Citizen Complaints
45. Professional Groups
| 46. Service Clubs |   |   |   |
APPENDIX D

Request For Research Participation Letter And Consent: Survey

Dear Colleague:

The superintendent is challenged with serving in a multitude of roles for the success of the district. Limited research, however, has been done to identify the amount of time a superintendent spends attending to various tasks. This research effort is designed to assess perceptions of practicing K-12 superintendents across the Commonwealth relating to the elements of leadership tasks and apportionment of time.

The title of this study is *How Virginia Public School Superintendents Spend Their Time*. Results may be used to design staff development programs for school superintendents and provide information to institutions preparing men and women for the superintendency. You are invited to participate in this important research study.

If you choose to participate, you will be completing an online survey. The survey contains questions that will ask you to provide your opinion regarding the importance and frequency of each task as it pertains to you and your particular district. Additionally, you will be asked to complete demographic information about yourself and your district. You are free to answer the questions in their entirety, partially, or not at all.

*RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS*

There are no known risks in completing this survey. You are being asked about your experiences and opinions related to your position. You do not have to respond to any items you choose to skip, and you may choose not to complete the survey. If you become upset, the study staff will give you names of counselors.

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You may not get any direct benefit from this study, but the information we learn from people in this study may help us design stronger preparation programs for superintendents.

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There are no costs for participating in this study other than the time you will spend in filling out questionnaires.

*CONFIDENTIALITY*

Potentially identifiable information about you will consist of surveys. Data is being collected only for research purposes. Your data will be identified by ID numbers, not names. All personal
identifying information will be kept in password-protected files, and these files will be deleted upon final approval of this dissertation study. Only information contained in the final dissertation itself will be kept indefinitely. Access to all data will be limited to study personnel. A data and safety monitoring plan is established.

We will not tell anyone the answers you give us; however, information from the study and the consent form signed by you may be looked at or copied for research or legal purposes by Virginia Commonwealth University.

What we find from this study may be presented at meetings or published in papers, but your name will not ever be used in these presentations or papers.

**VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**
You do not have to participate in this study. If you choose to participate, you may stop at any time without any penalty. You may also choose not to answer particular questions that are asked in the study.

If you wish to receive the results of the study, please indicate your desire in an email response. If you have questions, please email me at etarmbru@henrico.k12.va.us. Thank you for your time and assistance.

Sincerely,

Eric Armbruster  
etarmbru@henrico.k12.va.us  
Doctoral Student  
Virginia Commonwealth University  
Richmond, Virginia

**QUESTIONS**
In the future, you may have questions about your participation in this study. If you have any questions, complaints, or concerns about the research, contact:

Whitney H. Sherman, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor and Chair  
Department of Teaching and Learning  
School of Education  
Virginia Commonwealth University  
1015 West Main Street  
Richmond, VA 23298  
Telephone: 804-828-827

By clicking on the link below, you GIVE CONSENT to participate in this study.
Superintendent Work Tasks and Functions Survey

Instructions: Please mark each one of the Work Tasks and Functions Below with an “X” that best describes your level of involvement with each one. Please complete the survey in its entirety. Please refer to the levels below for the percentage of involvement.

Level 1 – Supervise; The superintendent has 0-25% direct involvement.
Level 2 – Coordinate; The superintendent has 26-50% direct involvement.
Level 3 – Coordinate; The superintendent has 51-75% direct involvement.
Level 4 – Do it All; The superintendent has 76-100% direct involvement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work Tasks/Functions</th>
<th>Level 1 Supervise 0-25%</th>
<th>Level 2 Coordinate 26-50%</th>
<th>Level 3 Coordinate 51-75%</th>
<th>Level 4 Do it All 76-100%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Financial Management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Fiscal Planning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Budgeting/Forecasting/Demographics</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Accounting/Cash Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Purchasing/Contracts</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Inventory Management</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Materials Distribution</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Risk Management</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Salary/Wage Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facility Management</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Replacement</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Maintenance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Technology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel Management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Needs Assessment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Please mark each one of the Work Tasks and Functions Below with an “X”

That best describes your level of involvement with each one. Please complete the survey in its entirety. Please refer to the levels below for the percentage of involvement.

Level 1 – Supervise; The superintendent has 0-25% direct involvement.

Level 2 – Coordinate; The superintendent has 26-50% direct involvement.

Level 3 – Coordinate; The superintendent has 51-75% direct involvement.

Level 4 – Do it All; The superintendent has 76-100% direct involvement.

### Superintendent Managerial Grid for the Average District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work Tasks/Functions</th>
<th>Level 1 Supervise 0-25%</th>
<th>Level 2 Coordinate 26-50%</th>
<th>Level 3 Coordinate 51-75%</th>
<th>Level 4 Do it All 76-100%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Personnel &amp; Special Services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Program Organization &amp; Management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Assessment/Compliance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Adjudicate Problems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Student Transportation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Food Services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Contracting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruction/Curriculum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>29. Alignment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

166
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>30. Assessment/Testing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31. Adoption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. In-Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Accreditation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Strategic Planning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Community Relations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>35. Board Relations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>36. Citizen Complaints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. Parent Organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. Governmental Agencies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PERSONAL INFORMATION: PLEASE MARK ONE OF EACH**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>39. Gender</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>40. Ethnicity</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Asian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>42. Total Years in Education</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>11-15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>43. Years In Current Position as Superintendent</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>6-10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>44. Please rank the (7) management areas below in order of importance in your division with (1) being most important and (7) being least important.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Financial Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facility Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Personnel and Special Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum/Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Relations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>45. District Size</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-1,900</td>
<td>1,901-8,200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Annual Yearly Progress Status
For the 2008/2009 School Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did not make AYP</th>
<th>Made AYP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX E

Request For Research Participation Letter And Consent Telephone Interview

Dear Colleague:

The superintendent is challenged with serving in a multitude of roles for the success of the district. Limited research, however, has been done to identify the amount of time a superintendent spends attending to various tasks. This research effort is designed to assess perceptions of practicing K-12 superintendents across the Commonwealth relating to the elements of leadership tasks and apportionment of time.

The title of this study is *How Virginia Public School Superintendents Spend Their Time*. Results may be used to design staff development programs for school superintendents and provide information to institutions preparing men and women for the superintendency. You are invited to participate in this important research study.

If you choose to participate, you will be completing a telephone interview. The interview contains nine questions that will ask you to provide your opinion regarding the importance and frequency of time spent with tasks and functions as it pertains to you and your particular district. Several questions will also ask you about your experience and preparation. You are free to answer the questions in their entirety, partially, or not at all.

*RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS*
There are no known risks in completing this interview. You are being asked about your experiences and opinions related to your position. You do not have to respond to any items you choose to skip, and you may choose not to complete the interview. If you become upset, the study staff will give you names of counselors.

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Telephone: 804-828-827

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APPENDIX F

Interview Questions

1. In what areas of your position do you find yourself spending the most time?
   
   Prompt:
   a. Refer to quantitative survey areas for further description of each area.

2. Could you explain your time spent in a typical day?

   Prompts:
   a. During an instructional workweek?
   b. During the summer?

3. In what area/s would you like to spend more time / less time? Why did you choose those area/s?

4. Do you feel that you have control over how you spend your time? Explain.

   Prompts:
   a. How does the school board encourage how you spend your time?
   b. How does accreditation encourage how you spend your time?

5. Can you describe your preparation for becoming a superintendent?

   Prompts:
   a. Formal training?
   b. Informal Training / Experience?
   c. Tapping / Fast Tracking?

6. Is there any area in which you feel like you were more prepared than other areas?

   Prompt:
   a. Contributes to current successes?
   b. Any area not described by the study that requires attention?

7. Thinking back to your experience and/or preparation for the superintendency, do you feel as though you were well prepared for your current position?
Prompts:
  a. Education, training, experience, exposure to issues?

8. Is there any area in which you feel you were least prepared?

  Prompt:
  a. Any area not described by the study that requires attention?

9. Do you think there is anything contextual about your school division that dictates how you spend your time?
VITA

Eric Timothy Armbruster was born June 8, 1967 in Barberton, Ohio and is a citizen of the United States of America. He graduated high school from Green Run High School in Virginia Beach, Virginia in 1985. After completing a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia in 1991, he moved to Richmond Virginia to begin a career in Graphic Art. He pursued a career in education after completing a Master of Teaching Social Studies in 1999 and a Post-master’s Certificate in Administration and Supervision in 2001 from Virginia Commonwealth University. He has worked as a teacher, assistant principal, and principal. He served as an Adjunct Instructor at the University of Richmond during several semesters from 2010 until 2011 and currently serves as principal of Maybeury Elementary School in Henrico County, Virginia.