THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SUPERINTENDENT TENURE AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN NEBRASKA AS MEASURED BY 2015 NESA-READING SCORES

by

Darron Arlt

B.A., Wayne State College, 1991

M.S., Wayne State College, 1997

Ed. S., Wayne State College, 2012

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Division of Educational Administration
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ABSTRACT

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The Relationship Between Superintendent Tenure and Student Achievement in Nebraska as Measured by 2015 NeSA-Reading Scores

Dissertation directed by Dr. David De Jong

Student achievement has taken on an increased significance in recent decades. Recognizing the vital importance of an educated populace in a democratic society, the federal government has justified its essential takeover of public school accountability with the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002. This was not just a simple reauthorization of a law already on the books, The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, it was an unmistakable message of being serious about holding schools accountable for the education of ALL students and if you underperform, you will be punished. My query and the impetus of this study was, "Does the superintendent play a direct role in student achievement? Does the superintendent matter when considering the variables that affect student achievement?"

The purpose of this study was to determine if there is an observable difference in student achievement in Nebraska school districts on the NeSA-Reading assessment regarding tenure, gender, and education level of the superintendent. Those variables included personal characteristics such as gender and education-level, in addition to human behavior and length of tenure. Normed Nebraska criterion-referenced reading assessment scale scores from 2010 and 2015 were analyzed. These scores were cross-

referenced among districts based on the above-mentioned variables of the

superintendent. Essentially, this study explored differences, and strength of any

difference, between student performance based on superintendent characteristics and

length of tenure.

The findings of this study proved to be inconclusive of any statistically significant

difference examined in each research question. This researcher is not able to determine

that the superintendent, whether by length of tenure in a district or by personal

characteristic of gender or education level, makes any difference in the achievement of

students on the Nebraska State Assessment reading test. Based on the findings of this

study, the researcher cannot declare that the superintendent has significant statistical

influence on student achievement simply based on the variables of length of service to

the district, their gender, or their education level.

This abstract of approximately 320 words is approved as to format and content.

I recommend its publication.

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DOCTORAL COMMITTEE

The members of the committee appointed to examine the dissertation of Darron M. Arlt find it satisfactory and recommend that it be approved.

Dr. David De Jong, Chair

Dr. Mark Baron

Dr. Karen Card

Dr. James Ossian

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Does the superintendent matter when it comes to the discussion about the variables that influence student achievement? Is the superintendent a primary leadership contributor to how well the students score on state criterion-referenced achievement tests? Many assume that superintendents are too far removed from classroom experiences to have any measurable impact on student learning (Glass & Franceschini, 2007). Having said this, the superintendent must be involved in the instructional processes of a school district if they are to be considered an effective leader (Grogan, 2000). Researchers have found that explicit superintendent behavior is linked to educational success (Moore, Dexter, Berube, & Beck, 2005; Wimpleberg, 1997). The 21st century superintendent must concentrate on student needs (Ezarik, 2001; Fullan, 2002; Wimpleberg, 1997).

William Bennett, former Secretary of Education under President Ronald Reagan, argued that superintendents are essentially part of the problem contributing to struggling school performance. They belong to a "blob" of school district employees that do not contribute to student achievement yet they soak up resources that rightly should be targeted to classrooms (Bennett, Finn, & Cribb, 1999). Bennett et al. went on to say,

The public school establishment is one of the most stubbornly intransigent forces on the planet. It is full of people and organizations dedicated to

protecting established programs and keeping things just the way they are.

Administrators talk of reform even as they are circling the wagons to fend off change, or preparing to outflank your innovation. (p. 628)

Robert Marzano and Timothy Waters devoted a generous amount of their 2009 book titled *District Leadership That Works: Striking the Right Balance* to debunking Bennett's claim. Quite the contrary, Marzano and Waters showed that district-level leadership can unite a school district around common, non-negotiable goals that will improve student achievement while allowing teachers to maintain their unique style of teaching and student management. They concluded that the ultimate goal of a stronger and more influential superintendent is student achievement, "since that is why educational systems exist in the first place" (Marzano & Waters, 2009, p. 71).

Louis, Dretzke, and Wahlstrom (2010) said that leadership is as "simple and complex" (p. 6) as establishing a clear direction for teachers and influencing them to move in that direction. The role of superintendent has the potential to unite and to inspire a team to move together. Anyone can write a vision statement that describes a better future for the students of a school district, but it "requires effective leadership to create a *shared* vision that addresses the hopes and dreams of people within the organization" (DuFour & Marzano, 2011, p. 201). Furthermore, the Institute for Educational Leadership published a report in 2001 that stated,

The challenge for district leaders is to unite the community around a common vision for the schools and then structure district leadership and the school system around that vision. To do this, leaders will have to focus on involving the

community in planning for leadership succession, developing and maintaining an informed leadership base, structuring a learning organization, and holding leadership accountable for gains in student achievement. District leaders will need expertise in organizational, public, and instructional leadership to succeed. (Usdan, McCloud, Podmostco, & Cuban, 2000, p. 32)

The superintendent is the highest paid employee in a school district, and as such, stakeholders may believe that too many resources are spent too far away from direct instruction in the classrooms. They may also expect that the superintendent would be the driving force of guiding student achievement and of success. Several indirect variables, such as allocation of resources and compliance with local, state, and federal mandates, are considered CEO responsibilities. Instructional leadership, however, may be the most direct variable influencing student achievement and it is this variable that is the impetus of this study.

The study of leadership in America is a frequent scholarly topic. There are thousands of volumes by hundreds of scholars making their own contribution to the research question: What makes a successful leader? Of all the organizations that prize effective leaders, our school systems should rank at the top since it is the institution through which all others must pass. It is our school systems that will produce the leaders for all other public and private entities whether they are business, civic, religious, or any other organization, which owes its success to effective leadership. A great irony would be if we could not find a direct correlation between the leaders of school systems (the superintendent) and the bedrock success of the school district (student

achievement) in which they led. Surprisingly, there is minimal research on the effectiveness of the main leaders of the systems that all other successful leaders must pass through (Chingos, Whitehurst, & Lindquist, 2014)!

Marzano (2009) claimed that the teacher is the most important variable in the classroom that influences student achievement. The classroom teacher is the certified staff member in the proverbial trenches with the student and has the most intimate contact with the student. Therefore, they will have the best opportunity to inspire, to motivate, and to impart knowledge and skills than any other school staff member. "More recent findings suggest that principals also have meaningful, albeit smaller, effects on student achievement. However, there is almost no quantitative research that addresses the impact of superintendents on student achievement" (Chingos et al., 2014, p. 1). Significant evidence exists that there is a link between effective superintendent leadership and student achievement, but there are few studies that show a direct correlation between the two (Waters & Marzano, 2006).

The school superintendent is the unquestioned leader, CEO if you will, of the school district. It is the position that is regarded as the face and the voice of the district. That does not mean that in every district the person holding that title is the best leader in the school district. The leadership potential and style of this person could have a tremendous impact on the effectiveness of the district. The primary leader sets the tone for the organization. As the leader goes, so goes the organization. Whether deemed effective or ineffective, the trickle down pervasiveness of the superintendent's attitude and approach will affect student performance in the district.

This hypothesis is particularly true in Nebraska where, according to the latest State of the Schools Report by the Nebraska Department of Education (2014-2015), 85% of school districts have fewer than 1,000 students in preschool through twelfth grade (Nebraska Department of Education, State of the Schools Report, 2015). In a school district with fewer than 1,000 students, the superintendent is generally quite visible to every staff member and likely works in one of the school buildings where student instruction occurs. Teachers generally see and talk to their superintendent every day in a majority of school districts in Nebraska and this intimate contact may bolster the relationship and thus the influence that the superintendent could have on the teaching staff. Indeed, Alsbury (2008) stated "...superintendents in very small districts are often housed in the school buildings and have daily intimate contact and oversight opportunities with building leaders, staff, and students" (p. 207).

Current or aspiring superintendent likely recognize the overwhelming pressure and scrutiny that public school districts face with the accountability measures authorized by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 and even with its reauthorization on the horizon, the age of accountability is most likely here to stay. As a result, the significance of leadership seems all the more important in this era of accountability where "...raising student performance is viewed by most superintendents as their most daunting task" (Forner, Bierlein-Paslmer, & Reeves, 2012, p. 1).

This is abundantly true in Nebraska where the pressures of meeting Adequate

Yearly Progress (AYP) are very real. Schools failing to do so for successive years run the

risk of being labeled as a Needs Improvement school which triggers a variety of

accountability measures up to and including removal and replacement of the building principal. As the defacto leader of the school, the superintendent bears the burden of answering to the public when a school is not meeting AYP. Whether one thinks it to be fair or not, it is the superintendent, as the face and voice of the district, that bears the primary responsibility for student achievement even if evidence suggests that they have little direct affect on student achievement.

Another piece of the puzzle is sustained leadership. Research correlates (Hart & Ogawa, 1987) that the superintendent's role and influence are significant in school districts that are deemed successful by the standards established in their state. Like other complex organizations, schools require strong, sustained leadership in order to achieve their goals. A quality educational leader may be leading the school district of one's choice, but if he or she does not stay and provide effective leadership for a length of time any successful momentum could likely be lost.

Teachers have seen superintendents come and go in Nebraska at a rate of one every 5.17 years (Ossian, 2014). The table located in Appendix A from Ossian (2014) provides some general data regarding superintendent tenure statistics in Nebraska at the start of the 2014-2015 school year. The first column is the year that superintendents are currently in at their present school. The middle column represents the total number of superintendents in Nebraska in that year at their present school. Finally, the third column is a running total of all superintendents in Nebraska.

Generally, a superintendent comes into a school with ambitious goals that likely require changes. Change is an uncomfortable process for teachers and thus prone to

their resistance. When a this person too shall pass mentality exists because they know that the superintendent position is somewhat of a revolving door, effectiveness can easily be stymied. For many aspects of a school district the status quo is appropriate. However, in this rapidly changing world of technology integration, meeting the unique needs of every learner, and accountability to the public, if a school is not changing, it is likely falling behind.

Sometimes leadership change is necessary and good, but more often than not, the last ones considered in the decision making are the children. During most superintendent's tenure, they have put into place policies, programs, and practices that, if given adequate time and support, will result in positive change for the children. Instead, the superintendent's tenure is shorter than the time it takes to create lasting change in a school district, and the new school district leader generally turns the ship in another direction. (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006, p. 151)

Some believe that the superintendency is one of the most complex jobs in the nation, and "The high rates of turnover indicate that today's superintendent vacancies are occurring more frequently" (Malone, 1999, p. 3). There is "evidence that when the top management person leaves, the entire organization structure is affected, regardless of the professional setting" (Shields, 2002, p. 5). The number of candidates available to fill these vacancies is diminishing due to retirements, board politics, and stresses of the position that include inadequate funding, increased state mandates, and educational requirements along with heightened community expectations (Chance & Capps, 1992).

What every school district desires, and what all school students would benefit from, is an effective superintendent who stays for a long period of time. This would provide the stability that an organization needs to build and to sustain momentum in addition to establishing a clear set of expectations and vision that everyone would understand. It would also provide the opportunity for the superintendent to build the right cohesive team that could embrace a common purpose and move the district forward toward rigorous student achievement goals.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine if there is an observable difference in student achievement in Nebraska school districts on the NeSA-Reading assessment in relation to tenure, gender, and education level of the superintendent. This study is not designed to identify why superintendent tenure is the shortest of all certified positions in a school district (Pascopella, 2011). While pragmatic people may conclude that educational opportunities should be equal for students regardless of which public school they attend in Nebraska, the potentially powerful factor of tenure is beyond the control of the decision makers who endeavor to foster a level playing field for all students. Do some students have an advantage over others because their school district is successful at retaining an effective superintendent for many years? Could this be a more significant factor than demographics, socio-economic status, size of district, teacher pay, or benefit package when it comes to variables that affect student achievement?

This study analyzed data to reveal if there is a correlation between superintendent tenure in Nebraska and student achievement on the Nebraska State Accountability (NeSA) Reading assessment. Further, demographics examined for effect on student achievement were gender and education level of the superintendent. Reading achievement was chosen as the student achievement measure because it is the most complex and most important skill taught in our schools (Moats, 1999). This is often the bull's-eye of a school curriculum, and it is the school improvement goal of over 75% of school districts in Nebraska (Nebraska Department of Education website, State of the Schools Report, 2014). This fact reveals that Nebraska school leaders recognize the importance of reading as a life skill that all students need if they hope to be college and career ready after high school. The grade spans chosen, third through eighth, provide a range of early and sustained achievement in the skill of reading. The eighth grade achievement scores are of particular significance because they will show trend data. These students were the first third-grade students, the grade where NeSA-R assessments begin, to take the NeSA-R and they have taken the assessment for all six years of its existence. Students do not take NeSA assessments again in Nebraska public schools after eighth grade until they are juniors in high school.

Significance of the Study

Do superintendents matter when it comes to instructional leadership and to improving student achievement? Is the stereotype accurate that the superintendent is a faceless person who manages budgets instead of leading people? If proof exists at a significant level that superintendents can indeed positively influence student

achievement, school boards may be motivated to do what it takes to keep their superintendent satisfied and in the position as leader of their district for as long as possible. It is the school board that has the greatest effect on superintendent tenure (Alsbury, 2008). They have significant power over many of the variables that lead to premature superintendent resignation which include "...substandard compensation, micromanagement, and general school board disharmony" (Alsbury, 2008, p. 8). School boards, as the hiring and firing agents, would be well-served to understand that if longer tenures lead to higher student achievement, they must do what they can, for the sake of their students, to retain their effective superintendents for a long period of time.

Curiously, some high profile superintendents have been dismissed despite being recognized as innovators in districts that have seen above average student achievement scores or achievement gaps closed between different demographic student populations. There are obviously more factors than just student achievement that school boards consider when deciding whether to retain or to release their superintendent. Clearly, student achievement in some districts is not the primary factor that some school boards consider when determining whether or not to retain their superintendent.

The state of Nebraska has 246 school districts led by 239 superintendents. Of those 239 superintendents, 93 of them have served the same district for at least six years from the 2009-2010 through the 2014-2015 school year. The districts with sustained leadership for six years or more were analyzed for NeSA-Reading assessment achievement. The rationale for analyzing the previous six years is because that is the length of the history of the statewide reading achievement test known as NeSA-Reading.

Every public school district in the state of Nebraska has administered the NeSA-Reading test to their third-grade through eighth-grade and eleventh-grade students since the 2009-2010 school year. The 2014-2015 school year was the sixth year of this assessment, thus comparable data exists for all school districts on reading achievement in grades 3 through 8 and 11.

Research Questions

This research sought to determine if there is a correlation between the length of superintendent tenure, the gender of the superintendent, and the educational level of superintendent and the achievement scores, guided by the following research questions:

- 1. What is the difference in reading achievement scores for eighth-grade students in Nebraska based on superintendent tenure?
- 2. What is the difference in reading achievement score growth in Nebraska based on superintendent tenure?
- 3. What is the difference in reading achievement scores in Nebraska based on superintendent gender?
- 4. What is the difference in reading achievement scores in Nebraska based on superintendent education level; doctorate vs. non-doctorate?

Definition of Terms

The following definitions are provided to ensure uniformity and understanding of these terms throughout the study. The researcher developed all definitions not accompanied by a citation.

AASA: American Association of School Administrators. The School Superintendent's Association that advocates for the highest quality public education for all students, and develops and supports school system leaders (Retrieved from: http://www.aasa.org/About.aspx).

AYP: Adequate Yearly Progress. The minimum standard for growth established by the No Child Left Behind Act (Retrieved from:

http://www2.ed.gov/nclb/accountability/ayp/edpicks.jhtml).

CEO: Chief Executive Officer. (Retrieved from:

http://www.investopedia.com/terms/c/ceo.asp)

Compulsory: Obligatory; having the power of forcing someone to do something (Webster's Online Dictionary, 2015. Retrieved from: http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/).

Correlation: An association or relationship of things that happen or change together (Webster's Online Dictionary, 2015. Retrieved from: http://www.merriamwebster.com/dictionary/).

Criterion-referenced test: Tests in which the items are linked to explicitly stated objectives and where the scores are interpreted in terms of these objectives rather than a group norm (Retrieved from:

http://eric.ed.gov/?ti=Criterion+Referenced+Tests).

Curriculum: A written planned sequence of instruction (Webster's Online Dictionary, 2015. Retrieved from: http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/).

Demographics: A quantifiable characteristic of given population (Webster's Online Dictionary, 2015. Retrieved from: http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/).

ESEA: Elementary and Secondary Education Act (Retrieved from: http://www.ed.gov/essa).

Empirical: Observable evidence (Webster's Online Dictionary, 2015. Retrieved from: http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/).

Indirect Variables: Factors that are influenced or changed by the researcher.

McREL: Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (Retrieved from: https://www.mcrel.org/).

NeSA-R: Nebraska State Assessment-Reading (Nebraska Department of Education. Retrieved from: www.nde.gov).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB): Federal law effective in 2002 designed to close demographic achievement gaps (Retrieved from: http://www2.ed.gov/nclb/landing.jhtml).

Pragmatic: Dealing with problems that exist in a specific situation in a reasonable or logical way instead of depending on ideas and theories (Webster's Online Dictionary, 2015. Retrieved from: http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/).

Self-Efficacy: Intrinsic beliefs in ability to positively affect the environment (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008).

Subservient: Submissive; compliant (Webster's Online Dictionary, 2015.

Retrieved from: http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/).

Taxonomy: The process or system of describing the way in which different living things are related by putting them in groups (Webster's Online Dictionary, 2015. Retrieved from: http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/).

Variables: Able or likely to change, or be changed (Webster's Online Dictionary, 2015. Retrieved from: http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/).

Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

There are many variables that may affect the results of the study that are not controllable (Limitations) or not chosen to be controlled (Delimitations) by the researcher. These variables and their interpretation could limit the generalizability of the study results.

 This study focused on student achievement results and on superintendent tenure in the state of Nebraska. Researchers could conduct this same study on different states, and the results of those studies may or may not produce similar results.

- 2. The student achievement data utilized in this study were Nebraska's state assessment taken by all students in grades three through eight, and eleven in Nebraska. By analyzing student achievement results from different standardized tests, a subsequent research study may or may not have similar results.
- 3. Since the Nebraska Department of Education only requires students to take the NeSA test in grades three through eight, and eleven, a researcher may find different results if it were possible to analyze the student achievement data in different grade levels.
- In order to control manageability of the data, the researcher did not consider student achievement in each grade that students in Nebraska are tested in NeSA-R.
- 5. The researcher did not consider the fact that some school districts may have just recently replaced a long-term superintendent who retired or was recruited to a new district and now that district is considered to have a temporary or interim superintendent.
- The researcher only chose reading achievement as a data source. Results could vary if data from another content area were chosen for study.
- 7. The researcher did not analyze other demographic variables that could affect student achievement such as socio-economic status, student mobility, and/or special needs populations, etc.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 presented the introduction, purpose of the study, significance of the study, research questions, a definition of terms, and limitations and delimitations of the study. The question Why? was answered with regard to the importance and relevance of the study. Chapter 2 contains a review of the literature and research related to the significance of effective superintendent leadership on student achievement. This review identifies the importance of the role of the school superintendent and examines if sustained, effective leadership has a positive correlation to student achievement. The specific steps used to synthesize the literature review as well as the methodology and procedures that were used to gather data and the conceptual framework are detailed in Chapter 3. The purpose of the study and guiding research questions are reviewed as well. Finally, the research procedures, including instrument detail, population description, and description of the analysis to be used are explained in Chapter 3. The results of the quantitative analysis and findings of the study are explained in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 includes a summary of the study and findings along with a discussion, implications for educational leaders, and recommendation for practice and further study.

CHAPTER 2

Review of Related Literature

This chapter provides a review of the research and literature related to the leadership role of the superintendency and its impact on student achievement. The length of service provided by the superintendent to an individual school district is part of the consideration of determining the overall effectiveness of the superintendent. This review will be divided into five sections that will include (a) the historic role of the superintendent, (b) the growing accountability for schools to increase student achievement, (c) the influence of superintendent gender on student achievement, (d) the influence of superintendent tenure on student achievement, and (e) the influence of superintendent education on student achievement.

The Historic Role of the Superintendent

The superintendent of schools is a very influential position, made all the more so since the turn of this century with the No Child Left Behind mandates and achievement accountability. However, it is one that is not clearly defined or understood. As the CEOs of their respective districts, superintendents must orchestrate all resources, both human and material, to fulfill the school district's mission and to realize its vision (Haddick, 2008). He or she has the ultimate responsibility to ensure that the children who attend the schools within the district secure the knowledge and the skills requisite for success after school in their chosen field of work or in an institution of higher learning. This has not always been the case, however. The evolution of the

superintendency has been convoluted enough that little has been written about it and even fewer formal research studies conducted to determine the most effective practices to benefit the primary role of schools, which is teaching and learning.

Historically, one can identify three specific periods of transition dating to the inception of the superintendency in the 1800s until today (Houston, 2015).

Initially, local public school superintendents did not exist. Nowhere in the United States Constitution does it address or provide for the right to a public education. That power and responsibility was reserved to the individual states as per the 10th

Amendment which states, "...the powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the states, are reserved to the states respectively, or to the people" (Hennessey, 2008).

In the early 1800s, interest grew throughout the country for formal public education, so states assumed this responsibility through their individual state constitutions (Houston, 2015). Individual state legislatures passed laws and allocated money to support them with their educational needs. To account for these public funds, state legislatures created local committees to oversee the spending and distribution of the money allocated. These committees evolved into our modern day state and local boards of education. Eventually, with the number of local committees increasing rapidly, states started to hire state officers to manage the accounting activities and other general responsibilities (Houston, 2015; Salley, 1980; Willower & Fraser, 1980; Wolf, 1988). These officers, called superintendents after 1812, were largely bureaucrats in the business of data collecting and distribution and had little influence on education

issues (Carter & Cunningham, 1997). Since this simpler time, the superintendent's role has shifted from the top of the organizational structure to the center of a complex network of interpersonal relationships (Peterson & Short, 2001).

As the population continued to grow and to expand, state committees were not able to keep up with the number of school districts, so local communities, comprised of county volunteers, evolved as committees with more local control. In 1837, Buffalo, New York and Louisville, Kentucky hired the first local superintendents as more cities responded to the state mandates of compulsory education, (Glass, 2002, Griffiths, 1966;). As these tasks became too burdensome, paid county positions began to spring up which led to the County Superintendent as the standard public school officer by the end of the Civil War.

There existed reluctance in the first half of the 19th century by many Americans to appoint what are now called superintendents. This stemmed from an anti-executive sentiment that existed among the American colonists toward the British Monarchy. The first generations of Americans distrusted central authority for fear that power in the hands of only a few could easily trample on the rights of the lay people. As a result, the earliest superintendents were not granted the type of sweeping authority that they would later come to possess. The first superintendents were quite subservient to their local boards of education. In fact, in the decades just prior to the Civil War, clerks were used to assist boards of education with the day-today activities related to schooling (Campbell, Cunningham, Nystrand, & Usdan, 1985; Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Norton, Webb, Dlugosh, & Sybouts, 1996).

The American Association of School Superintendents (AASA) was created in 1865 to serve this growing population of school officials. Around the turn of the century, the role of the superintendent had expanded to the point where they became viewed as career professionals who had high expectations placed on them by their boards (Callahan, 1962; Webb, Montello, & Norton, 1994). The role expanded yet again in the 1950s as social and public issues inspired public criticism of the school system and its leader. The superintendent was now being called upon to be a public relations expert and shrewd politician (Tyack & Hansot, 1982). Cuban (1976) synthesized data and journals from numerous educational sources in 10-year increments from 1870-1950 and concluded that there were three general functions that superintendents carried out at one time or another. He called them "dominant conceptions of leadership" (p. 114) which included teacher-scholar, administrative chief, and negotiator-statesmen (pp. 14-19). It is this final entry, that of negotiator-statesmen, which requires the superintendent to shape policies, to allocate resources, to build coalitions, and to resolve conflict.

Lay boards continued to hire superintendents as the country grew, and the number of school superintendents reached a peak in the 1960s when there were over 35,000 superintendents nationwide (Houston, 2001). The power and the influence of the superintendent also grew as their lay boards were more than happy to turn over the reins of power, and to give the superintendent enormous authority over the day-to-day running of the school district (Houston, 2015). Superintendents became civic leaders and held their positions for lengthy periods of time. School districts were big business

for most communities as one of the primary employers in addition to collectors and spenders of millions of local tax dollars.

The second half of the last century saw dramatic change in the landscape of the public schools and its management. There existed increased public criticism spawned by Sputnik and a wave of distrust ushered in by the union, the anti-war, and the civil, women's, and disabilities rights movements. As a result, the status of the superintendent deteriorated (Brunner, Grogan, & Bjork, 2002). School districts were pressured to be more reflective of the communities they served. Thus, school board membership began to take on more of a blue collar quality. With the passage of the ESEA (Elementary and Secondary Education Act) in 1965, the federal government became much more active in local school business. Much greater involvement and scrutiny by the public ensued, as school leaders were no longer trusted to conduct the affairs of the school without significant external oversight and criticism (Houston, 2015).

In the mid 1970s, the school reform movement, was initiated the decade prior, began to place new demands and expectations upon the superintendent to provide direction and leadership to improve the teaching and learning environment of the public schools they served (Barraclough, 1973; Goodland, 1978; Odden, 1980). A thorough review of the school reform literature during the decade of the 1970s would reveal that educational leadership was for the first time a highlighted characteristic of effective schools (Brookover, Beady, Flood, Schweitzer, & Wisenbaker, 1979; Edmonds, 1979; Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, & Ouston, 1979). As Cuban (1988) noted,

Given that the literature on effective schools suggests that no school can become effective without the visible and active involvement of a principal hip-deep in the elementary school instructional program, then it also seems likely that no school board approving policies aimed at system wide improvement can hope to achieve that condition without a superintendent who sustains a higher than usual involvement in the district's instructional program. (p. 146)

Throughout this evolution of the superintendency, studies identified varying roles that were perceived among stakeholders. In his book, The School Superintendent: Living with Conflict, Arthur Blumberg recognized the primary roles as leader, politician, and teacher (1985). In addition, Theodore J. Kowalski's (1995) study reported skilled politician, effective manager, and scholar as three central roles. Furthermore, Skrla (2000) outlined the superintendency as a field that has evolved from "cleric to master educator to expert manager to chief executive officer for the board of education" (p. 297). Finally, Jane C. Owen (1997), in her dissertation entitled, The Roles of the Superintendent in Creating a Community Climate for Educational Improvement, revealed that superintendents perform three roles when working with the community: political leader, educational leader, and managerial leader. It is the role of "political leader" (p. 163) that was most visible, according to Owen, with three primary acts performed in this role: building coalitions, negotiating agreements, and forcing concessions. This was a period of key transition for the superintendency when the top school official started to take on the characteristics that we recognize today.

The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) weighed in on the discussion in 1993 with their published list of Eight Standards for the Superintendency. John Hoyle directed the Commission on Standards for the Superintendency, which included 100 leaders in education, business, and government. Together they collaborated on the Professional Standards for the Superintendency. The purpose of those standards was to impact the work of practicing superintendents, university courses, superintendent certification, and the selection and evaluation of the superintendent (Hoyle, 1993). The eight standards developed by Hoyle and his colleagues are as follows:

- Standard 1: Leadership and District Culture. Demonstrate executive leadership by developing a collective district vision; shape school culture and climate; provide purpose and direction for individuals and groups; demonstrate an understanding of international issues affecting education; formulate strategic plans, goals, and change efforts with staff and community; set priorities in the context of community, student and staff needs; serve as an articulate spokesperson for the welfare of all students in a multicultural context.
- Standard 2: Policy and governance. Develop procedures for working with the board of education that define mutual expressions, working relationships, and strategies for formulating district policy for external and internal programs; adjust local policy to state and federal requirements and constitutional provisions, standards, and regulatory applications; recognize and apply standards involving civil and criminal liabilities.

- Standard 3: Communications and Community Relations. Articulate district purpose and priorities to the community and mass media; request and respond to community feedback; and demonstrate consensus building and conflict mediation. Identify, track, and deal with issues. Formulate and carry out plans for internal and external communications. Exhibit an understanding of school districts as political systems by applying communication skills to strengthen community support; align constituencies in support of district priorities; build coalitions to gain financial and programmatic support; formulate democratic strategies for referenda; relate political initiatives to the welfare of children.
- Standard 4: Organizational Management. Exhibit an understanding of the school district as a system by defining processes for gathering, analyzing, and using data for decision making; manage the data flow; frame and solve problems; frame and develop priorities and formulate solutions; assist others to form reasoned opinions; reach logical conclusions and make quality decisions to meet internal and external customer expectations; plan and schedule personal and organization work; establish procedures to regulate activities and projects; delegate and empower at appropriate organizational levels; secure and allocate human and material resources; develop and manage the district budget; maintain accurate fiscal records.
- Standard 5: Curriculum Planning and Development. Design curriculum and a strategic plan that enhance teaching and learning in multiple contexts; provide planning and future methods to anticipate occupational trends and their

educational implications; identify taxonomies of instructional objectives and validate procedures for curricular units, using theories of cognitive development; align sequence curriculum; use valid and reliable performance indicators and test procedures to measure performance outcomes; and describe the proper use of computers and other learning and information technologies.

- Standard 6: Instructional Management. Exhibit knowledge of instructional management by implementing a system that includes research findings on learning and instructional strategies, instructional time, advanced electronic technologies, and resources to maximize student outcomes; describe and apply research and best practice on integrating curriculum and resources for multicultural sensitivity and assessment strategies, instructional time, advanced electronic technologies, and resources to maximize student outcomes; describe and apply research and best practice on integrating curriculum and resources for multicultural sensitivity and assessment strategies to help students achieve at high levels.
- Standard 7: Human Resources Management. Develop a staff evaluation and development system to improve the performance of all staff members; select appropriate models for supervision based on adult motivation research; identify alternative employee benefits packages; and describe and apply the legal requirements for personnel selection, development, retention, and dismissal.
- Standard 8: Values and Ethics of Leadership. Understand and model appropriate
 value systems, ethics, and moral leadership; know the role of education in a

democratic society; exhibit multicultural and ethnic understanding and related behavior; adapt educational programming to the needs of diverse constituencies; balance complex community demands in the best interest of the student; scan and monitor the environment for opportunities for staff and students; respond in an ethical and skillful way to the electronic and printed news media; and coordinate social agencies and human services to help each student grow and develop as caring, informed citizen (Hoyle, 1993).

Each of these individual standards included anywhere from 5-17 indicators which lists what an effective superintendent should know and be able to implement.

President Ronald Reagan's National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) issued a seminal report titled *A Nation at Risk* that highlighted a general perception of gravitation toward mediocrity in our public schools systems. Serious reform was needed and superintendents, as leaders of their districts, would need to assume greater responsibilities in matters that had generally not been considered roles of the superintendent. The pressure on schools and their leaders became severe, which led to increased political interest in schools. States began to adopt standard and assessment measures to assure minimum, yet rigorous, levels of achievement.

Educators across the nation started to focus more on "setting higher standards; strengthening the curriculum in core subjects; increasing homework, time for learning, and time in school; more rigorous grading, testing, homework, and discipline; increasing productivity and excellence; and providing more choices regarding education" (Carter &

Cunningham, 1997, p. 28). These rapidly increasing, some would say insurmountable, expectations would start to lead to a shortage of qualified candidates in the profession.

Dissatisfaction with progress in both equity and excellence compelled the federal government to step in and to pass the landmark legislation known as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2002. NCLB set new rules for accountability and teacher preparation and effectiveness. This changed the relationship between the states and the federal government. Washington D.C. was now setting the rules and mandates requiring all states to comply. With the reauthorization of NCLB on the horizon, greater educational leadership from the superintendent will be required in the future (Houston, 2015).

The Growing Accountability for Schools to Increase Student Achievement

The primary role of schools has evolved from sorting students into worker or manager roles to leaving no child behind and expecting all students to achieve common rigorous standards with or without accommodations. The genesis of the accountability movement originated with the 1954 Supreme Court of the United States case of Brown v. Board of Education. This was the first example where policy makers started to become concerned about, and get involved in, matters of student learning for all learners. Since this case, it would no longer be acceptable to have major achievement gaps between different student demographics. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 is the guiding law that outlines expectations for the education of America's children and holds states and schools accountable for minimum standards. It is in the last few decades, since A Nation at Risk report (1983), that public

schools have come under more intense scrutiny and accountability. The George W.

Bush Institute issued a report (2015) that articulated the new normal for schools with regard to accountability:

School districts and campuses would be held responsible by policymakers and taxpayers if they did not provide a decent education for every student. This idea came to be know as school accountability, and it was built around three principles: Creating rigorous academic standards, measuring student progress against those standards, and attaching some consequence to the results. (p. 2)

The 2002 reauthorization of the ESEA, The No Child Left Behind Act, is generally viewed as escalating the rigor expected in the teaching and learning environment to heights heretofore unseen. And while a 2005 *Education Week* survey of superintendents nationwide revealed that there was widespread support for an increased role from superintendents in providing direction on instruction for teachers, they did not see NCLB as the sole driver of greater instructional leadership from the district. Superintendents believe that even without the mandates of NCLB, district leaders would need to assume a larger role in guiding instruction (Belden, Russonelle, & Stewart, 2005).

The accountability provisions found in NCLB are defined in terms of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and are based on measuring each school's success in educating all of its students. Table 1 below shows a complicated series of graduating expectations for identified sub group demographics, which include gender, limited English proficiency, intellectual disability, socio-economic stratus, and ethnicity. The primary measure is

progress toward the academic content and achievement standards assessed on individual state created assessments. Schools and states are held accountable for improvements on an annual basis by public reporting (as well as individualized reporting to parents), and ultimately through consequences if adequate results are not achieved.

Table 1
Stages of Intervention for School Improvement Under the No Child Left Behind Act

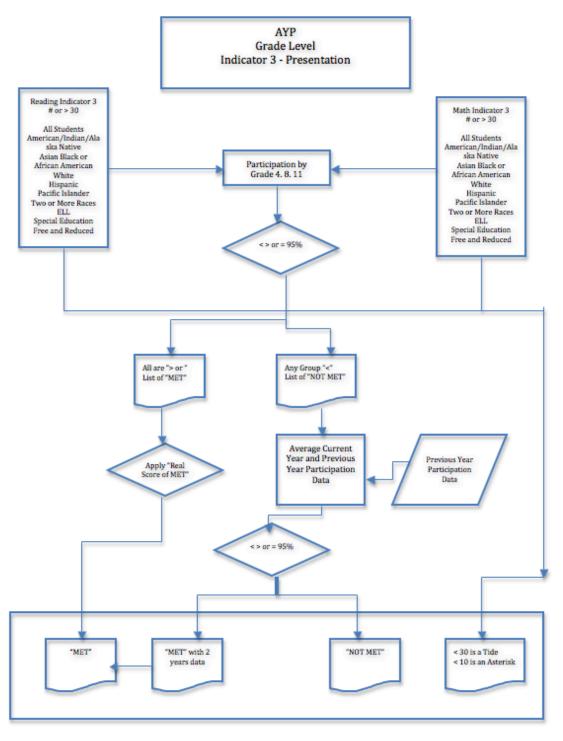
Stages of Ir	ntervention for School I	mprovement Under the	e No Child Left Behind	Act of 2001
If school misses "adequate yearly progress" (AYP) for two consecutive	Identified for Improvement, Year 1	Identified for Improvement, Year 2	Corrective Action	Restructuring
years	All interventions must occur simultaneously: *Offer parents school choice *Develop improvement plan *Notify parents *Allocate 10% of federal Title 1 funds for professional development *Receive technical assistance from districts and states If school misses AYP for an additional year	Additional intervention: *Offer supplemental educational services (tutoring, remediation, or other academic instruction) given by a state-approved provider If school misses AYP for an additional year	Additional interventions (one or more of the following): *Implement research-based curriculum or instructional program *Decrease school's management authority *Extend school day or school year *Restructure school's organization *Replace staff relevant to school's low performance *Appoint an outside expert If school misses AYP for an additional year	Additional interventions; Phase 1Develop restructuring plan Phase 2(one or more of the following): *Reopen school as a charter school *Replace all or most staff *Contract with another entity *Yield to state takeover of school *Conduct other major governance restructuring

Calculating AYP is a dizzying labyrinth of parallelograms, arrows that point in all directions, and less-than/greater-than signs that professional educators find bewildering.

They also tend to mask, rather than reveal student performance differences (Williams,

2010). See Figure A below for an AYP calculation sample.

AYP Grade Level Summary of Decisions



In defining what counts as adequate yearly progress, states identify the regular incremental improvement required from year-to-year to result in all students reaching proficient status (as defined by the state) within 12 years by the 2013-2014 school year. Each state's definition of AYP should be available on the state education department's web site and in print documents that the state has available for the public. Assessment results that are entered into calculations of AYP for every school must be publicly reported, and schools that repeatedly do not make adequate progress must be identified as in need of improvement. There are many additional details about calculating AYP, such as the number of students needed to ensure reliable determinations of a school or district's performance, and the percent of students participating in assessments. The results of state assessments for students with disabilities must be included in the determination of AYP along with the results of all other students, but they also must be considered separately. Every group of students must make AYP if the school as a whole is to make its AYP target. It is this separate consideration that holds the promise that no child – not even the child with disabilities – is left behind in reaching proficiency in reading and math (National Center on Educational Outcomes, 2003).

Accountability and high-stakes assessments are requiring a new type of superintendent who is focused on understanding critical classroom practices that promote higher student achievement (Cooper, Fusarelli, & Carella, 2000; Glasspool,

2006). The role of the superintendent in this new era has taken on a marked elevation in political focus. Brown, Swenson, and Hertz (2010) wrote,

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

Yet, it is this same climate that creates a vicious cycle of sorts for the superintendent. Although more and more accountability is being placed on school districts and the superintendent to lead a school district in academic achievement and act as an instructional leader, external forces continue to demand that superintendents focus their time away from the classroom on bureaucratic management (Cuban, 1998; Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000; Hodges, 2005; Howley & Pendarvis, 2002).

The Influence of Superintendent Gender on Student Achievement

Research going back decades "shows that leadership is one of the major factors contributing to successful school improvement" (Ng, 2005, p. 330). Leadership is leadership, it knows not whether the provider is male or female. Studies have been

completed examining instructional leadership and student achievement (Bulach, Lunenburg & McCallon, 1995; Cudeiro, 2005), but few studies have been completed in the heated accountability environment ushered in by the NCLB mandates in 2002 (O'Donnell & White, 2005). Fullan (2005) further empowered the significance of leadership in education by asserting that if educators are to be successful in this "assessment-driven environment and continue to meet the developmental needs of their students" (p. 56) leaders will be the solution for success. With student achievement as the hallmark of district success, there must be a clear correlation between leadership and student achievement (Bulach et al., 1995). We need the most thorough research to uncover any variable that can be linked to leadership and student achievement.

When assessing the variable of leadership in schools and what males and females tend to prioritize, several studies have provided some insight into the style of leadership that tends to distinguish males from females. Historically, research and writing on leadership focused mainly on men due to the assumption that "leadership is a male activity" (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 315). In recent years, however, there has been a dramatic shift in the role of women and their accomplishments.

Within the leadership domain, "teaching and learning are more often the major focus for female administrators than for male ones; and building community is more often an essential part of the woman administrator's style than it is for the man" (Shakeshaft, Nowell, & Perry, 1992). Supervising teachers is a foundational leadership skill for administrators. It is the indirect variable that can lead to the greatest effect on

student achievement. Shakeshaft, Nowell, and Perry (1991) asserted that even when trained in the same manner and in the same delivery of supervision, men and women possess "expectations and behaviors based on gender" (p. 28). Shakeshaft et al. (1991) argued that we need to understand the role of gender in "all aspects of school administration, especially supervision" (p. 138).

As mentioned previously, leadership is an often-researched topic. Past research has attempted to link gender to overall leadership styles such as participative and democratic leadership (Gilbertson, 1981; Gross & Trask, 1976; Pitner, 1981), transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & Van Engen, 2003), contingent reward (Northouse, 2012), and servant leadership (Fridell, Belcher, & Messner, 2009). The findings of several studies suggest females are more democratic and team oriented than males, who tend to manage more autocratically and are results oriented (Eagly & Johnston, 1990; Helgesen, 1990; Ion & Folch, 2009; Northouse, 2012).

Researchers have found female administrators tend to display a more personalized leadership style by communicating with teachers more openly, visiting classrooms more routinely, and being more involved in the workings of schools (Charters & Jovick, 1981; Eckman, 2004; Shakeshaft, 1987). Female administrators interact directly with teachers more often than their male counterparts and seem to take a more personal interest in the teachers' personal lives (Lee, Smith, & Cioci, 1993). As a result, some studies argue that female principals focus more on instructional leadership issues by supporting instructional risk taking in classrooms and provide more

instructional support to teachers (Guramatunhu-Mudiwa & Bolt, 2012; Shakeshaft, 2006).

When studying gender and teacher supervision, many studies approach the issue through the lens of teachers (Brimblecombe, Ormston, & Shaw, 1996; Guramatunhu-Mudiwa & Bolt, 2012). Lee et al. (1993) found that female teachers feel more empowered when working with female administrators while male teachers feel less powerful when working with female administrators. Male teachers viewed female administrators oversight as "intrusions into their domain" (p. 170). However, Nogay & Beebe (2008) found what seems to be a contradiction, reporting that male teachers perceived female administrators as more effective in supervising and evaluating instruction than male administrators. Ballou and Podgursky (1995) reported teachers tend to rate administrators of their own sex as more effective.

Donmoyer, Imber, and Scheurich (1995) found disparity in female and in male administrators:

Women are more likely than men to encourage the empowerment of their teachers, establish instructional priorities, be attentive to the social and emotional development of the students, focus on student relationships, be attentive to the feelings of teachers, include more so-called facts in the evaluation, look for teachers' personal effects on the lives of children, place emphasis on the technical skills of teaching, make comments on the content and quality of the educational program to provide information gathered from other sources, involve the teacher in decision-making, issue directives for

improvement, provide immediate feedback on performance, and emphasize curricular programs. (p. 146)

Men were more likely to be concerned with the hierarchical structure and conflict avoidance (Donmoyer et al., 1995; Shakeshaft et al., 1992), and they possess a need for less emotion and more aggressive behaviors with more strict control over subordinates. This is corroborated by Wilson (2004) who found that "male assertiveness and control continue to be in higher demand" (p. 21). This assertiveness, which is essentially ambition, is used by men to assume more power. Male leaders identify more specifically with the position of leadership and they tend to communicate less frequently with those they lead. Wilson further concluded that women possess more relational skills, are more skilled at listening, and are better able to alleviate aggressive behaviors.

Female leaders possess a participatory style of leadership and engage in more activities with teachers and students. Women are more involved in and have a breadth of knowledge of teaching abilities and methods (Shakeshaft, 1989). The collaborative nature of female leaders helps within the negotiating factor, listening, and team building with enthusiasm and passion (Helgesen, 1995). It is this collaborative nature that supports the team-building relationship that benefits school improvement. Brunner (1997) postulated that collaborative leadership is necessary as a tool to recognize the abilities and value contributions of team members. Furthermore, Helgesen (1995) reported that women leaders displayed a genuine concern and connection with others at a deeper level of understanding:

Lars Bjork (2000), in his study on Women in the Superintendency found,

Common attributes of women leaders identified in studies conducted over the
past 30 years confirm the notion that women approach school leadership

differently than men do and that their characteristics tend to correspond to
emerging demands for school reform. For example, they tend to be caring and
child centered; they have an understanding of child development and student
achievement; and they are experts at instruction and knowledge about learning,
teaching, and curriculum. Women are also perceived as being more likely to be
facilitative and collaborative in their working relationships, and they tend to use
democratic leadership styles and power, which contribute to achieving high
levels of job satisfaction among staff. (p. 10)

Women conceive power as closely tied to the importance they place on relationships. Power and influence are used to help others strengthen relationships, while relationships are damaged when power is used to control. It is power through relationships that Brunner (2000) identified as a female characteristic in *Principles of power: Women Superintendents and the Riddle of the Heart.* "Women superintendents enact this relational leadership by using decision-making strategies that allow them to really hear the input from others (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 8). Relational leadership creates political influence because women view themselves in relationships with those they lead instead of being in control of those they lead. Relationships build capacity that can be harnessed for change (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). Particularly, since the student achievement accountability measures of No Child Left Behind have

been in effect, the strength of curriculum and teaching pedagogy has "served female educational leaders well" (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 20).

The Influence of Superintendent Tenure on Student Achievement

It is generally accepted in the learned community that an exhaustive quantity of research related to the superintendent's role in student achievement does not exist.

Land (2002) concluded that few studies of superintendent leadership have measured student achievement directly as an outcome variable. The handful of research findings varies on whether superintendent turnover has any correlation on measurable student achievement. Most observers of the daily operation of American schools, however, would agree that the superintendent is central in the operation and administration of these institutions. This observation is based primarily on theory and expectation rather than on clear empirical evidence (Kellner, 2012). Bjork found, in *The Transformative Role of Superintendents: Creating a Community of Learners* that, outside the community of educational researchers, few regard the superintendent as the instructional leader of the school system (2000).

The fact that relatively few empirical analyses on the topic have been conducted does not mean that it goes unrecognized that the superintendent can and should play an instructional leadership role. It is this lack of research on superintendent instructional leadership that necessitates additional investigations and further exploration due to the complicated role that superintendents play in leading district efforts for school improvement and student achievement (Alsbury & Whitaker, 2007). As Thomas (2001) asserted, greater emphasis must be placed on the role that district

superintendents play as instructional leaders, if the important changes required to maximize student achievement are to occur. Furthermore, Sherman (2008) suggested that it is public school superintendents that must serve as the primary catalyst within the organization if district wide student achievement outcomes are to be improved and achievement gaps closed. Thus, it is through superintendents' active leadership that the likelihood of successful educational reforms increases. More evidence exists that superintendents should be instructional leaders than evidence that superintendents are instructional leaders.

One way that superintendents shape instructional leadership performance in their districts is through their self-efficacy—that is, their intrinsic beliefs regarding their capacity to influence district goals and student performance. The ability of district superintendents to maintain these perceptions of self, regarding their capacity to achieve a goal, serves as a primary variable for successful school improvement efforts (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008). One's perception of his or her own ability is a critical contributor to academic achievement and can directly influence school district outcomes. It is the level of this perception that ultimately motivates an individual to focus on specific instructional leadership pursuits (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2004).

Self-efficacy certainly is increased when a superintendent actually possesses the knowledge and skills necessary to successfully lead school improvement efforts. It is certainly plausible that a superintendent may not have this skill-set or the desire to attain it. In this situation, one would expect that their self-efficacy would be limited. It is a central problem of school improvement and improving student performance when

there is a failure of the superintendent to know what to do in these areas (Elmore, 2003). Accordingly, the ability of superintendents to acknowledge and to accept instructional leadership responsibilities, and acquire the skills to lead these efforts, ultimately influences the success or failure of a school district. This may be the critical factor for improving equitable academic achievement for all students (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008).

Leadership humility is aligned with self-efficacy and has recently been recognized as a practice that produces organizational results and provides competitive advantages (Marcum & Smith, 2007). Morris, Brotheridge, and Urbanski (2005) indicated that humble leaders are self-aware, and self-awareness facilitates the state of being open to new ideas, which promotes an all in approach to school reform as opposed to a top down approach. Humble persons also learn from their mistakes and are not ashamed to admit when they are wrong. School improvement can sometimes be a trial and error process so acknowledging a wrong decision, staying positive, and shifting attention, resources, and efforts is likely going to be part of the process (Vera & Rodriguez-Lopez, 2004).

Moreover, active perceived involvement by superintendents in directing curriculum and instruction activities was reported as a significant component of highly effective schools (Bjork & Kowalski, 2005). Engaged instructional leadership from the superintendent has the potential to select and to direct practices that enhance the likelihood of positive impacts on student achievement (Waters & Marzano, 2006). Several additional studies, most notably the 2005 contribution by Fusarelli and Fusarelli,

suggest that superintendents as instructional leaders maintain the best position in the school district to support and to lead instructional improvement that guides the organization toward real, sustainable improvement on achievement goals for students. Clearly, given their position, superintendents as instructional leaders can influence organizational behaviors and practices and promote relationships that support instructional and achievement improvements (Grogan & Sherman, 2005). So it is, therefore, clear that superintendent instructional leadership is widely acknowledged to be integrally necessary to the success of school improvement efforts and to the success or failure of a district's goals, yet superintendents have historically shunned instructional leadership responsibilities (Bjork, 1993). Indeed, in today's convoluted world of high-stakes testing and accountability, increased demands for superintendent leadership in proven teaching and learning practices are necessary (Skrla, Scheurich, & Johnson, 2000).

Throughout the 21st century, scholars and policy makers have typically identified the building principal as the primary instructional leader (Thomas, 2001). In addition, for many superintendents, the role of instructional leader has been relegated to principals even when the superintendent ranks curriculum and instruction as top district priorities (Bredson & Kose, 2007). Some recent studies, however, seem to indicate that superintendents exercise an indirect, yet important influence on instructional effectiveness (Peterson & Barnett, 2005).

A widely regarded study on the topic is from Waters and Marzano's work with Mid-continent Research on Education and Leadership (McREL) in 2006. The Waters and

Marzano working paper titled, *School District Leadership that Works: The Effect of Superintendent Leadership on Student Achievement*, examines in detail the superintendent's role and his or her impact on district-wide student achievement. Indeed, to excel in the superintendency in today's student performance accountability mandates, and to be considered a successful leader, the superintendent must provide leadership that is focused on student achievement. It is no longer only about busses, budgets, and boilers. It is about a college and career-ready student body. More succinctly put by Brown and Hunter (1986), schools are about the cognitive and academic development of their students.

The role of the superintendent has evolved over the decades from that of a scholar, to a businessman (CEO), to a politician, and more recently to an instructional leader. While superintendents wear many hats, it is the instructional leader hat that has taken on increased significance since the accountability age was ushered in by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act mandates from 2002. No longer is the superintendent viewed as a general overseer. NCLB initiated a change in superintendents' school leadership by elevating their role as instructional leader over traditional district operations manager (Petersen & Young, 2004). Now the superintendent is expected to be involved with the many characteristics related to being the leader of a complex system, and newly included among those expectations is that of instructional leader.

The increased complexity of school systems demands that successful superintendents be lifelong learners (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002). As schools are centers of learning, the leader of the school district often serves as the leader of learning. It has

been a great irony for quite some time that the leader of learning in a school system has not been viewed as a leader of instruction and learning for the student body. As late as the start of this century, Bjork found that few stakeholders regarded the superintendent as the instructional leader of the school system (2000). This idiosyncratic paradox is now eroding. Superintendents apparently understand this shifting primary responsibility as well. In the latest AASA national study of superintendents (Kowalski et al., 2011), superintendents rated instructional leadership as one of their top three priorities.

Canadian educational researcher Michael Fullan has provided numerous studies on leadership in education. Fullan (2005) asserted that strong leadership at the district level adds strength to an education system. Conversely, poor leadership hinders school success. While Fullan acknowledged that site-based management does provide greater empowerment, more control over funding, and a higher level of accountability acceptance, he concluded that there is one main core reason why district-level leadership matters. Schools systems are complicated and the processes that help a district function change with lateral sharing and capacity development (Fullan, 2005). Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) agreed that district leadership is linked to successful school reform.

Authentic reform takes time. A great challenge facing school districts is to retain an effective superintendent long enough for them to recognize the broken parts of the system, build a coalition of leaders, establish non-negotiable goals, and guide the team through the improvement process. This challenge is met only if they maintain a

collective focus over an extended period of time on those few issues that really matter (DuFour, Eaker, & DeFour, 2008). As difficult as change is, it is far more challenging for that change to become the new normal for a school. If strong leadership does not stick around long enough for the new normal to become part of the fabric of the school culture, initiatives designed to sustain increased student achievement could give way to the old, easy way of doing business. It is just natural for teachers, especially veterans, to resist change and want to do things their way, unless a strong leader who has established their commitment to the district for the long haul earns their trust and guides them.

There are a variety of reasons, both voluntary and involuntary, that superintendents do not provide lengthy service for school districts. With the most recent data from Pascopella (2011) indicating the national average tenure for superintendents at 3.6 years, efforts are being made to identify why tenure is abbreviated compared with similar managerial positions (p. 1). One theory is the Dissatisfaction Theory articulated by Lutz and Lannaccone (1986). This is considered the most common reason that superintendents resign and thus truncate possible momentum toward improved school improvement and student achievement.

Superintendents are likely going to experience a honeymoon of sorts when they are hired. They are likely chosen by a unanimous vote of the board. That will be the board that they work with and for until the next election. It is after the first school board membership election during their tenure where superintendent-school board relationships have the potential to become cantankerous.

"All it takes is one passionate issue to bring a superintendent's tenure to a close" (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006, p. 145). Dana and Bourisaw (2006) cautioned that today's school superintendents are targets for criticism both from the school personnel and the community:

The experience of having one's tenure interrupted by conflict and controversy is familiar for superintendents. Although substantive research on the dismissal of women and men superintendents has not been broadly pursued, women superintendents tend to be more vulnerable than men because of the barriers posed by their gender. (p. 76)

Some public dissatisfaction with superintendent leadership is going to occur.

With the variety of difficult decisions to be made in a complex and political environment, someone will always be disappointed with the superintendent. It is this dissatisfaction that could inspire someone to run for the board or to influence someone to run with an agenda for change. If elected, new board members often introduce antagonist viewpoints toward the superintendent and commonly press for the replacement of the superintendent (Alsbury, 2003). This dissatisfaction theory leads to premature superintendent turnover and may cause discontinuity in organizational goals, policy, and procedures, and negatively affect the entire organization (Grady & Bryant, 1989). Olson (1995) agreed that rapid turnover of top school officials could impede the attainment of positive school reform.

A primary responsibility of school superintendents has always been "to maintain strategically significant working relationships among stakeholders. The relationship at

the heart of the district's policy level leadership, and most critical to the effectiveness of the district, has been the relationship between the superintendent and the school board" (Houston & Eadie, 2002, p. iii). It is the status of the relationship between the school board and the superintendent that has been more likely to influence turnover in the superintendent position than any other factor. School board members who practice power in a dominating or oppressive manner can overtly or covertly exert influence over school activities in ways that make the decision-making process and relationship between board members and superintendents difficult at best (Mountford, 2004). More often than not, when superintendents have been removed from office involuntarily, their removal has been due to poor relations with the school board (Metzger, 1997).

Despite these data, according to national surveys, the relationship between boards and their superintendents appears to be healthy. A 2011 survey on the state of the superintendent by Kowalski et al. found that 72% of superintendents reported evaluations from their boards as excellent or above average. Furthermore, 87% of board members who participated in the National School Board's Association's study of more than 700 school districts reported the relationship superintendents had with their board members was the most important factor in evaluating their superintendents (Land, 2002).

Complex school systems are not entirely unlike complex business corporations.

Chris Whittle authored a 2005 book titled *Crash Course*. In this book, he contrasts CEO stability with superintendent stability in large urban school districts (see Tables 2 and 3).

The corporations Whittle identified are generally recognized as top-tier successful corporations. As indicated in the tables on the following pages, the stability of the chief executive officers at General Electric, Federal Express, Microsoft, and Dell is 10 to 20 times as long as the tenure of the superintendents at Kansas City, Washington D.C. and New York City Public Schools. Whittle (2005) declared that the corporate success is due in large part to their CEO stability and that if school districts were able to emulate this longevity with their superintendent (CEO), they would likely experience greater student achievement. The McREL (2006) findings support Whittle's conclusions.

Table 2

CEO Stability in Selected Corporations

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

Table 3
Superintendent Stability in Selected Urban Districts

City	Number of Superintendents in the past 20 years	Average Tenure (years)
Kansas City	14	1.4
Washington D.C.	9	2.2
New York City	8	2.5

How superintendents are trained must undergo a transformation as the importance of understanding effective practices in curriculum, instruction, and assessment are now primary responsibilities. While it is not a complex task to learn about these teaching and learning concepts, it is very difficult to stay focused on them because this is where the busses, budgets, and boilers become a distraction.

Most Nebraska schools, a full 85%, have student populations under 1,000 (Nebraska Department of Education State of the Schools Report, 2015).

Superintendents in these districts likely have multiple responsibilities that distract them from focusing on curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Furthermore, 60% of Nebraska's school districts have a student population of fewer than 300 students. These schools with fewer enrollment are more likely to have superintendents who also have principal duties which includes an increased array of responsibilities including stopping everything during their day to help manage students who may be struggling with managing themselves. It is virtually impossible for a superintendent to stay focused for

any length of time on the complex work of student achievement and school improvement when students are essentially in control of his or her daily schedule. In addition, an overwhelming number of school districts in Nebraska would be presumed to have higher frequencies of turnover as many leaders start their careers to obtain experience and then move to larger districts with higher pay and prestige (Alsbury, 2008).

Alsbury (2008) asserted that culture and personal changes alone could dramatically influence student achievement in small school districts. Again, this is of particular significance to Nebraska where there is typically a single principal and only one or two teachers for an entire grade level. This can result in dramatic instructional alterations with relatively few personnel changes. Alsbury (2008) also noted that superintendents in these small districts are often housed in the school buildings where the teaching and learning is taking place. From this vantage point, they can have daily intimate contact and oversight with building leaders, teachers, and students. Given the characteristics of Nebraska's rural dominated school district landscape, the superintendent's influence is magnified with increased potential.

Smith and Andrews (1989) articulated the characteristics of an instructional leader as specific dimensions: resource provider, instructional resource, communicator, and visible presence. A resource provider makes available materials, facilities, and personnel through the budget process. Through his or her active day-to-day leadership, instructional programs and activities are modeled through desired attitudes and behaviors. He or she is an active professional development participant and consistently

gives priority to teaching and instruction concerns. Goals are clear and articulated fluidly as the primary district communicator. Finally, a visible presence is achieved through frequent visits to classrooms, community involvement, and easy accessibility to faculty and staff (Marzano et al., 2005).

When compared with the study of the effectiveness of other certified school faculty members, such as teachers and principals, on student achievement, it appears that there is a limited foundation of research on the relationship between superintendent leadership and student achievement. In 2006, Mid-continent Research for Education and Leadership (McREL) completed the largest examination of this topic up to and since this time. This synthesis of quantitative studies included 2,817 school districts and the achievement scores of over 3.4 million students. The pure focus on this massive meta-analysis of effective school leaders was on the effective professional practice of the superintendent as it relates to student performance. This study generated four major conclusions: (1) district-level leadership matters, (2) effective superintendents focus their efforts on creating goal-oriented districts, (3) superintendent tenure is positively correlated with student achievement, and (4) defined, or building-level, autonomy (Waters & Marzano, 2006).

The finding from the McREL (2006) study that is most useful to this study was the conclusion that superintendent tenure is positively correlated with student achievement. This is a landmark discovery that needs further investigation. Knowing that student achievement is the chief goal of a school district, and confirmed by the No Child Left Behind mandates of 2002, school boards across the nation are seeking ways to retain

their effective superintendents. McREL (2006) found two studies that corroborate the positive correlation between superintendent tenure and student achievement. Furthermore, these positive effects start to become evident in as early as two years. Leadership stability is affirmed in these studies.

Waters and Marzano (2006) identified five statistically significant (p <.05) district leadership responsibilities that are related to student achievement: (1) collaborative goal-setting, (2) non-negotiable goals for achievement and instructions, (3) board alignment with and support of district goals, (4) monitoring achievement and instruction goals, and (5) use of resources to support the goals for instruction and achievement. A skilled superintendent who possesses most or all of the leadership qualities described above would be one that a school board should strive to retain.

Collaborative goal setting involves all relevant stakeholders, particularly the teachers. The goals are likely going to center on student achievement. The classroom teacher is the primary variable that affects student achievement, either positively or negatively (Tucker & Stronge, 2005). A top-down approach for goal setting is never going to be effective. It must be an all-in approach. One must not mistake collaborative as a term that means that all stakeholders agree on the goals. What it does insinuate is that all involved support the attainment of these goals. This is similar to the United State Supreme Court. Although their decisions could be split by a 5-4 vote, the decision by majority vote is the one decision of the court. They speak as one court.

Student achievement and classroom instruction are the non-negotiable goals.

All staff in every building should strive towards action plans that are designed to support

attainment of district and school level goals. These classroom-level goals do not mean that each teacher must adopt a single instructional model. A framework design for instruction is necessary, however, to include a common language of instruction and "consistent use of research-based instructional strategies" (Waters & Marzano, 2006, p. 12) in each school. Included in this expectation is that the building principal support the goals both explicitly, meaning building-level leadership parallels district-level leadership, and implicitly, embracing the goals publicly for the teaching staff to recognize.

The school board, while often recognized as completely irrelevant and as distant from the classroom as any school official could be, must also embrace and align themselves as an organization with the district goals. They ensure that no other major initiatives distract attention from their focus on district goals. Moon and Galvin (2007) corroborated Waters and Marzano's (2006) findings that boards that align themselves with, and support the non-negotiable goals of achievement and instruction, lead districts with higher levels of student achievement.

Effective superintendents continually monitor achievement and instruction of the district goals. This is the fourth of five leadership responsibilities that produce gains in student achievement identified in the McREL (2006) study. Without this leadership of monitoring and supervision, district goals become little more than "pithy refrains that are spoken at district and school events and highlighted in written reports" (Waters & Marzano, 2006, p. 12). Every school district subscribes to some mission and/or vision statement that the district spent valuable time and resources to craft.

The final leadership responsibility is in focusing the necessary district resources of time, money, personnel, and materials on the non-negotiable goals. The difficult decisions that an effective leader must make is in dropping initiatives that are soaking up resources that are not in sync with these district initiatives and goals. There will likely be pushback from those that benefit from the status quo, but effective leaders make the right decisions, not necessarily the popular ones.

The Influence of Superintendent Education on Student Achievement

It is reasonable for someone to conclude that the level of education should be commensurate with the level of performance in a field. Education could fall into this argument. Training level and skill level should increase together. Whether one agrees or not, the compensation model for education is based in part on level of education. While there is negligible research on the topic of teacher education and level of student achievement, Greenwald, Hedges, and Laine (1996) concluded in their meta-analysis published in the *Review of Educational Research*:

School resources are systematically related to student achievement and that these relations are large enough to be educationally important (and) resource variables that attempt to describe the quality of teachers (teacher ability, teacher education, and teacher experience) show very strong relations with student achievement. (p. 361)

A more recent study by Goldhaber (2002) found differing conclusions. Less than three percent of the contribution teachers made to student achievement were associated with teacher experience or degree attained. Goldhaber went on to postulate,

Teachers' education (degree) and experience levels are probably the most widely studied teacher attributes, both because they are easy to measure and because they are, in the vast majority of school systems, the sole determinants of teachers' salaries. However, there appears to be only weak evidence that these characteristics consistently and positively influence student learning. (p. 53)

As mentioned earlier in this study, the superintendent may be far removed from having a direct influence on student achievement. The teacher, followed by the building principal, has the greatest impact on student learning. The superintendent is the highest paid certified member of a school district's staff and usually, the staff member with the most education. This researcher was not able to find any study that sought to identify a correlation between the education level of the superintendent, those with a doctorate and those without, and the level of student achievement in those school districts.

Summary

Chapter 2 contains a thorough examination of the published literature relevant to the purpose of the study. Each of the five sections is addressed in the following order: (a) the historic role of the superintendent, (b) the growing accountability for schools to increase student achievement, (c) the influence of superintendent gender on student achievement, (d) the influence of superintendent leadership and tenure on student achievement, and (e) the education level of the superintendent and the relationship to student achievement.

This review is particularly extensive with its findings on leadership. In 2006,
Timothy Waters and Robert Marzano produced the most extensive study to date with
regard to superintendent leadership as it relates to student achievement. Section (d)
provides a detailed overview of this research and the literature directly related to it.
This chapter provides all of the required information necessary to address each of the
research questions that will be examined in the succeeding chapter.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

This is a non-experimental study designed to identify a possible correlation between superintendent tenure and student achievement in statewide criterion-reference reading tests in Nebraska public schools. While there are numerous variables that affect student achievement, schools can control only some of them. Research is clear that the most significant independent variable that influences student achievement that is within control of the school system is the classroom teacher (Tucker & Stronge, 2005). The building principal is also, although significantly less, influential. The superintendent is the least influential of all district certified staff (Chingos, Whitehurst, & Lindquist, 2014). While recognizing this general premise, this study was designed to see if sustained superintendent leadership, six or more years, in Nebraska Public Schools correlates to student achievement levels beyond that of school districts with high rates of turnover in the position of superintendent.

This quantitative study used ex post facto data from the Nebraska Department of Education State of the Schools Reports from the 2009-2010 to 2014-2015 school years. The NeSA-Reading scale scores were quantified and cross-referenced among districts based on length of superintendent leadership for empirical evidence of a correlation between student achievement in that district and the length of tenure of the superintendent serving that district. Furthermore, the gender and education level of the superintendent were considered for possible correlation with student achievement.

One of the reasons that superintendents are least effective is because their tenure is the shortest of certified staff. Pascopella (2011) asserted that one of the key elements in running a successful district is stability. It is difficult, even counterproductive, to establish influence and create reforms that can really make a difference when a district has a new leader on average in Nebraska every 5.17 years. While that is the mean in Nebraska, many of the 246 school districts are successful at retaining their superintendent for longer periods of time. It is those school districts in Nebraska, 98 out of 246 of them, that had the same superintendent during the entire six year history of the NeSA-Reading test in Nebraska. The purpose of this study was to determine if there is an observable difference in student achievement in Nebraska school districts on the NeSA-Reading assessment with regard to tenure, gender, and education level of the superintendent.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

- 1. What is the difference in reading achievement scores for eighth-grade students in Nebraska based on superintendent tenure?
- 2. What is the difference in reading achievement score growth in Nebraska based on superintendent tenure?
- 3. What is the difference in reading achievement scores in Nebraska based on superintendent gender?
- 4. What is the difference in reading achievement scores in Nebraska based on superintendent education level; doctorate vs. non-doctorate?

Review of Selected Literature

The review of literature related to superintendent instructional leadership and tenure on student achievement on NeSA-Reading in Nebraska consisted of computer research using EBSCOhost databases. Specifically, Academic Research Premier, Education Research Complete, Primary Research, Professional Development Collection, Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), WorldCat, and EBSCO MegaFILE were utilized to further review the literature. This study of research also included the use of the University of South Dakota's online library as well as the Nebraska Association of School Boards (NASB) and Nebraska Council of School Administrators (NCSA) websites. Databases utilized in the study were ProQuest, Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), National Education Association (NEA), National Center for Educational Statistics, and the Nebraska Department of Education. University of South Dakota School of Education Librarian Stephen Johnson was also instrumental in supporting the research and literature acquisition.

Population

The population of the study were the 239 superintendents in Nebraska at the start of the 2014-2015 school year. The main sample was the 93 superintendents, leading 98 of the 246 school districts, who have served their district consecutively since the 2009-2010 school year. For the past 39 years, Dr. James Ossian (2014), retired Nebraska superintendent and current faculty member at Wayne State College of Nebraska, has maintained statistics on tenure and gender of Nebraska's superintendents. The sample size of this study for research questions one and two is

based solely on the number of years the superintendent has served their current district. Research question three used the sample of the 26 female superintendents in Nebraska leading school districts beginning the 2014-2015 school year. Finally, there are 36 superintendents with doctoral degrees that are the sample population for research question number four. See Appendix D for a list of all of the school districts in Nebraska and the tenure of their superintendent. Those school districts with the same superintendent since the 2009 - 2010 school year or before are in bold print and are the primary focus of research questions one and two. School districts led by female superintendents, the focus of research question three are identified with an asterisk. Finally, those districts led by superintendents who have earned a doctoral degree, Ph.D. or Ed.D., are capitalized.

Data Collection

The data for this study were gathered from the Nebraska Department of Education State of the Schools Report for 2014-2015. There is no formal instrument needed since these are ex post facto data. The data were filtered as the collection from the Nebraska Department of Education provides data on a large variety of demographics. The researcher drilled down to the average scale score for all students in the grade 8 benchmark for each of the 246 school districts.

The data required for this study was obtained through the public website of the Nebraska Department of Education. With the direction of John Moon, NeSA Project Manager, the researcher downloaded the data file to his personal computer and then conducted the filtering and analysis.

Data Analysis

The data obtained through the Nebraska Department of Education State of the Schools Report was a massive 42,000 KB download. The data were filtered by district, year, by demographic, and by grade level. The researcher then separated the data based on district superintendent tenure. Each district was listed in chronological order starting with the longest serving superintendent and ending with those districts with superintendents in their first year of service with that school district in the 2014-2015 school year. Their eighth-grade scale scores on the NeSA-Reading test were identified in the last cell next to district name. These interval data allowed the researcher to calculate the variance and the standard deviation that each district's NeSA-Reading scale score deviates from the state mean.

Each research question was analyzed using a t-test for independent samples:

- Scale scores were listed chronologically by district based on superintendent tenure. The researcher then observed the means of eighth-grade student scale scores in each district and compared those scores of each district superintendent with longer (>5) and shorter (<6) tenure.
- 2. The researcher observed for student growth in NeSA-R from 2010-2015, using the data from just those two years, and compared the average scale score growth rate for the students from the 98 districts served by long-term, six or more years, superintendents to the average scale score growth rate of the students in the 146 districts with multiple superintendents between 2010 and 2015.

- 3. The researcher observed for differences in average scale scores for eighthgrade students on the NeSA-R test in 2015 between school districts led by female superintendents and the state average scale score.
- 4. The researcher observed for differences in average scale scores for eighth-grade students on the NeSA-R test in 2015 between school districts led by superintendents who have earned a doctoral degree and the state average scale score.

CHAPTER 4

Findings

The purpose of this study was to determine if there is an observable difference in student achievement in Nebraska school districts on the NeSA-Reading assessment with regard to tenure, gender, and education level of the superintendent. The focus of research question one was to examine the 2015 achievement scores of students in each school district and compare those in school districts with superintendents who have served 5 years or less with those that have served their district for 6 years or more.

Chapter 4 begins with a brief review of the study and then outlines the results of the data analysis guided by the following research questions:

- 1. What is the difference in reading achievement scores for eighth-grade students in Nebraska based on superintendent tenure?
- 2. What is the difference in reading achievement score growth in Nebraska based on superintendent tenure?
- 3. What is the difference in reading achievement scores in Nebraska based on superintendent gender?
- 4. What is the difference in reading achievement scores in Nebraska based on superintendent education level; doctorate vs. non-doctorate?

Population

The population for the first research question were all 239 superintendents in Nebraska; the 146 with tenure five years or less and the 93 with tenure six years or

more at the beginning of the 2014-2015 school year. Also analyzed were the student growth scores on the NeSA-R from 2010-2015 for the students in the 98 school districts with superintendent tenure of 6 plus years. These data was also used for research question two. The population for research question three was all 239 superintendents beginning in 2014-2015, twenty-six female and two hundred thirteen males. The data was examined for differences in achievement based on gender of superintendent. Finally, research question four was a study of the assessment scores in reading in the spring of 2015 of school districts based on education level of the superintendent. The population of this analysis was the 56 superintendents in Nebraska with doctoral degrees and the 183 with specialist degrees.

This study utilized a non-experimental, inferential, ex post facto research design.

All of the data used for this study were data that was publicly available on the Nebraska

Department of Education website. Reading scale scores from 2010 and 2015 were the
only data used for comparison. In addition, data from Dr. James Ossian on Nebraska
superintendents was critical to the success of this study.

Findings

Findings are presented for each research question guiding this study. These findings are presented in tabular form with narrative descriptions of salient findings.

For each research question, depending on the superintendent sample used, there were some school district's data that were not included in the distribution because the district data had been masked because fewer than 10 students participated in the statewide assessment.

What is the difference in reading achievement scores for eighth-grade students in Nebraska based on tenure?

Table 6 indicates that 217 Nebraska public school district's 2015 NeSA-R data were analyzed to check for a difference in eighth grade scale scores based on tenure of the superintendent. Of those 217 school districts, 91 were led by superintendents who had been in their current position for six years or more and 126 had been superintendent of their district five years or less.

The data reveal that the 91 school districts led by longer-tenured superintendents showed a higher scale score (M = 117.96, SD = 14.17) than the 126 districts led by shorter-tenured superintendents (M = 115.94, SD = 13.32). The difference in scale score for eighth-grade students on the 2015 NeSA-R based on superintendent tenure is minimal (M = 2.02).

An independent-samples t test was run to determine if there was a difference in assessment scores based on tenure. School districts led by longer-tenured superintendents showed a slightly higher scale score (M = 117.96, SD = 14.17), with a range of 64 to 148, than school districts led by shorter-tenured superintendents (M = 115.94, SD = 13.37), with a range of 59 to 157. However, the researcher found that there was not a statistically significant difference in 2015 eighth-grade NeSA-R scale scores between school districts based on tenure of the superintendent, t(215) = 1.089, p = .285.

Table 4

Difference in Reading Achievement Based on Superintendent Tenure

Tenure	N	%	M	Range	t	р
>5 years	91	41.9	117.96	64-148		
<6 years	126	58.1	115.94	59-157		
Total	217	100			1.089	.285

What is the difference in reading achievement score growth in Nebraska based on tenure?

Table 7 below indicates that 217 out of 239 Nebraska superintendents were sampled for this research question, which is to say, 217 of 246 school district's 2010 and 2015 NeSA-R data were analyzed to check for growth over a six-year period on the NeSA-R scale scores in those districts based on tenure of the superintendent. There are seven school districts in Nebraska that share a superintendent. Twenty-nine school district's data were masked due to having 10 or fewer students take the NeSA-R test in either 2010 or 2015. Of those 217 school districts, 91 were led by superintendents who had been in their current position for six years or more and 126 had been superintendent of their district five years or less.

The data reveal that the 91 school districts led by longer-tenured superintendents showed a higher scale score growth over 6 years (M = 17.30, SD = 12.32), with a range of -29 to 141, than the 126 districts led by shorter-tenured superintendents (M = 15.35, SD = 13.12), with a range of -24 to 46. The difference in

scale score growth from 2010 to 2015 on the 2015 NeSA-R based on superintendent tenure was minimal (M = 1.95).

An independent-samples t-test was run to determine if there was a statistically significant difference in scale score growth from 2010 to 2015 based on length of tenure of the superintendent. School districts led by longer-tenured superintendents showed a slightly higher scale score growth (M = 17.30, SD = 12.32) than school districts led by shorter-tenured superintendents (M = 15.35, SD = 13.12). However, the researcher found that there was not a statistically significant difference in scale score growth from 2010-2015 on the NeSA-R based on tenure of the superintendent, t(215) = 1.108, p = .270.

Table 5

Difference in Reading Achievement Growth Based on Superintendent Tenure

Tenure	N	%	М	Range	t	р	
>5 years	91	41.9	17.30	(-)29-41			
<6 years	126	58.1	15.35	(-)24-46			
Total	217	100			1.108	.270	

What is the difference in reading achievement scores in Nebraska based on superintendent gender?

Table 8 below indicates that 226 out of 239 Nebraska superintendents were sampled for this research question, which is to say, 226 of 246 school district's 2015

NeSA-R data were analyzed to check for a difference in eighth-grade scale scores based

on gender of the superintendent. Eighteen school district's data were masked due to having 10 or fewer students take the NeSA-R test in 2015. Of those 228 school districts, 202 were led by males and 24 were led by females.

The data reveal that the 202 school districts led by males showed a lower scale score (M = 116.81, SD = 14.255), with a range of 59 to 157, than that of female-led school districts (M = 117.42, SD = 11.372), with a range of 87 to 141.

An independent-samples t test was run to determine if there was a difference in scale scores based on gender. Male-led school districts showed a slightly lower scale score (M = 116.81, SD = 14.25) than female-led school districts (M = 117.42, SD = 11.37). Furthermore, the researcher found that there was not a statistically significant difference in 2015 eighth-grade NeSA-R scale scores between school districts based on gender of the superintendent, t(224) = -.202, p = .840.

Table 6

Difference in Reading Achievement Based on Superintendent Gender

Gender	N	%	М	Range	t	p
Male	202	89.4	116.81	59-157		
Female	24	10.6	117.42	87-141		
Total	226	100			202	.840

What is the difference in reading achievement scores in Nebraska based on superintendent education level; doctorate vs. non-doctorate?

Table 9 below indicates that 226 out of 239 Nebraska superintendents were sampled for this research question, which is to say, 226 of 246 school districts 2015 NeSA-R data were analyzed to check for a difference in eighth-grade scale scores in those districts based on education level, doctorate vs. non-doctorate, of the superintendent. Twenty school district's data were masked due to having 10 or fewer students take the NeSA-R test in 2015. Of those 226 school districts, 53 were led by superintendents who held a doctoral degree and 173 were led by superintendents with an education specialist degree.

The data reveal that the 53 school districts led by superintendents with a doctoral degree showed a higher scale score (M = 119.11, SD = 11.76) than that of non-doctoral degree superintendent-led school districts (M = 116.19, SD = 14.52).

An independent-samples t test was run to determine if there was a difference in scale scores based on superintendent education level. School districts led by superintendents with doctoral degrees showed a higher scale score (M = 119.11, SD = 11.762), with a range of 101 to 148, than non-doctorate-led school districts (M = 116.19, SD = 14.528), with a range of 59 to 157. However, the researcher found that there was not a statistically significant difference in 2015 eighth-grade NeSA-R scale scores between school districts based on education level of the superintendent, t(224) = 1.336, p = .183.

Table 7

Difference in Reading Achievement Based on Superintendent Education Level

Education	N	%	М	Range	t	p
Doctorate	53	23.5	119.11	101-148		
Non-Doctorate	173	76.5	116.19	59-157		
Total	226	100			1.336	.183

Summary

Chapter 4 presented the quantitative data that investigated the differences between student achievement scores on the NeSA-Reading assessment in Nebraska from 2010-2015 in school districts based on superintendent tenure. The 2015 scale scores for eighth-grade students who attend school districts that were led by the same superintendent for the previous six years were analyzed for differences between those districts with multiple superintendents during the same six-year period. Also, the average growth over the six-year history of the NeSA-R test was analyzed for difference among those same school districts. Also examined were those same achievement scores and differences in school districts based on gender and education level of the superintendent. The purpose of this study was to observe for any significant difference in achievement based on those main variables of tenure, gender, and education level of the superintendent. The researcher did not find a statistically significant difference in

any of the studies to conclude that tenure, gender, or education level is a variable that could improve student achievement on NeSA-R scores in Nebraska.

In Chapter 5, the research draws conclusions from the data and identifies the implications of the study for school district leaders, particularly boards of education. In addition, Chapter 5 states the recommendations derived from the conclusions of the study.

CHAPTER 5

Summary, Conclusions, Discussions, and Recommendations

Chapter 5 provides a summary of the study and research findings. Conclusions were drawn about each of the four research questions based on data from Chapter 4.

This chapter includes a summary of the study, conclusions, discussions, and recommendations for practice and further research.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine if there is an observable difference in student achievement in Nebraska school districts on the NeSA-Reading assessment with regard to tenure, gender, and education level of the superintendent. Student achievement scale scores from the 2014-2015 school year were analyzed by school district to observe for a statistically significant difference from school district to school district based on the length the superintendent has served, the gender of the superintendent, and the education level of the superintendent.

This study provides statistical data for the reader to draw conclusions about the existence and the strength of any correlation between superintendent demographics and student achievement in Nebraska on the state reading assessment (NeSA-R).

Boards of education, as the hiring agents for school districts, could be influenced by their hiring decisions based on the conclusions of this study.

Research Questions. Four research questions guided this study.

- 1. What is the difference in reading achievement scores for eighth-grade students in Nebraska based on superintendent tenure?
- 2. What is the difference in reading achievement score growth in Nebraska based on superintendent tenure?
- 3. What is the difference in reading achievement scores in Nebraska based on superintendent gender?
- 4. What is the difference in reading achievement scores in Nebraska based on superintendent education level; doctorate vs. non-doctorate?

Review of the Related Literature. The role and responsibilities of school district superintendents, as we know them today, have evolved since 1837 when the first school superintendents were named to the Buffalo, New York and Louisville, Kentucky school systems. Initially, superintendents were overseers of the basic accounting of the expenditures and the activities of the school. Their role evolved from business executive, to politician, to public relations liaison, to negotiator, and to civic leader. With the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 1965, superintendents were forced to begin to pay attention to the instruction and learning of all students. The reauthorization of ESEA in 2002 as the No Child Left Behind Act only heightened the responsibility to ensure that all students are learning based on a rigorous set of standards. Today, that role is unchanged and superintendents are expected, above all, to be instructional leaders.

Greater oversight and accountability at the federal level was born from the landmark Supreme Court case of Brown versus Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas in 1954. As a result of this case, President Johnson signed the aforementioned ESEA into law in 1965. This became the first formal attempt by the federal government to establish non-negotiable expectations for public schools. The publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 kept public education in the spotlight. Punitive measures were introduced as a consequence for underperforming schools in 2002 with NCLB. High levels of accountability are here to stay. The question is whether the federal government will trust the state government to monitor their own schools' performance. The recent reauthorization again of the 1965 ESEA has relaxed the federal oversight and the punitive measures. A higher degree of local and state supervision is now the current climate for public school accountability.

Leadership, at any level, has for centuries been viewed as male activity. The field of education has not been immune to this phenomenon. However, recent decades have seen a dramatic paradigm shift in the perception of women as leaders in society.

Significant research exists to indicate that females possess the leadership skills more directly related to student achievement. While men are still viewed as more domineering and ambitious, women are greater collaborators, consensus builders, and supervisors than their male counterparts. Furthermore, women place a greater emphasis on relationships which, according to Marzano and Waters, is foundational in effective teaching and learning (2002). The statistics in Nebraska back up the perception that women can indeed successfully lead public school districts. The number

of female superintendents has increased from eight at the start of the 2000-2001 school year to 26 in 2014-2015.

While an abundance of research does not exist on the length of service of the superintendent and their school's student achievement, it is reasonable hypothesis to embrace that the longer a superintendent serves a school district, the better it is for the stability of the district. A logical factor influencing student achievement would be district stability. Consequently, it is likely better for a school district to retain their effective superintendent for longer rather than shorter tenures.

Some research exists to corroborate that engaged instructional leadership from the superintendent has the potential to select and to direct practices that enhance the likelihood of positive impacts on student achievement (Waters & Marzano, 2006).

Several additional studies, most notably the 2005 contribution by Fusarelli and Fusarelli, suggest that superintendents as instructional leaders maintain the best position in the school district to support and to lead instructional improvement that guides the organization toward real, sustainable improvement on achievement goals for students.

Clearly, given their position, superintendents as instructional leaders can influence organizational behaviors and practices and promote relationships that support instructional and achievement improvements (Grogan & Sherman, 2005).

Virtually no research exists on the education level of the superintendent with relation to student achievement. The most significant variable to student achievement, an effective classroom teacher, has seen more attention from researchers. Goldhaber (2002) concluded that less than three percent of the contribution teachers made to

student achievement were associated with teacher experience or degree attained.

Goldhaber went on to say that while teachers' education (degree) and experience levels are probably the most widely studied teacher attributes, both because they are easy to measure and because they are, in the vast majority of school systems, the sole determinants of teachers' salaries. However, there appears to be only weak evidence that these characteristics consistently and positively influence student learning (p. 53).

Coincidentally, in the state of Nebraska, a state aid allowance to schools for teachers with a master's level education was allowed to expire without renewal by the legislature. This could be an indication that the state recognizes that a higher degree is not necessarily correlated with improved student achievement and thus not worth incentivizing. The research, or lack thereof, is clear that a superintendent with a doctoral degree does not provide an advantage to that school district in terms of student achievement.

Methodology and procedures. The population of this study included all of the 239 superintendents serving the 246 school districts in Nebraska at the beginning of the 2014-2015 school year. The data from these school districts provided the analysis for research questions one and two. For research question three, a sample was drawn from the 239 superintendents. The achievement scores from the school districts served by the 26 female superintendents in Nebraska were examined. Finally, research question four required the sample of superintendents that had earned a doctoral degree and this included the reading assessment data from 56 school districts. Some school district's data were masked and could not be included in the study due to extreme small numbers

of student scores. To guarantee anonymity, the Nebraska Department of Education does not make publicly available the data from schools that have total student participation numbers below 10. This quantitative study used ex post facto data obtained from the Nebraska Department of Education State of the Schools Report for 2014-2015.

The researcher used means, a two-tailed t statistic, and p values to determine the significance of any difference.

Findings. Based on the statistical analysis, the following research findings emerged for each research question:

- 1. While the mean scores show a slight raw score difference in reading achievement based on tenure (M = 2.02), there is no statistically significant difference between the two scores.
- While the mean scores show a slight raw score difference in growth based on tenure (M = 1.95), there is no statistically significant difference between the two scores.
- 3. While the mean scores show a slight raw score difference in reading achievement based on gender (M = 0.61), there is no statistically significant difference between the two scores.
- 4. While the mean scores show a slight raw score difference in reading achievement based on education level (M = 2.92), there is no statistically significant difference between the two scores.

Conclusions

The data analysis and findings of the study within the limitations and delimitations present the following conclusions:

- With regard to research question 1 and 2, school boards need not consider
 longevity of leadership when hiring/retaining a superintendent if they are
 considering variables that positively impact student achievement.
 Superintendent longevity does not positively impact student achievement.
- 2. With regard to research question 3, school boards need not consider gender of superintendent when hiring/retaining a superintendent if they are considering variables that positively impact student achievement. Superintendent gender does not positively impact student achievement.
- 3. With regard to research question 4, school boards need not consider education level of superintendent when hiring/retaining a superintendent if they are considering variables that positively impact student achievement.
 Superintendent education level does not positively impact student achievement.

Discussion

Do superintendents matter when it comes to student achievement? This study began with this question. Of course superintendents matter. School districts would not make them the highest paid employee in the district if they thought they did not make a difference. It is up to each school district to determine what areas they expect their superintendent to matter in and it is only been until recently, in the last generation or

two, that mattering in the area of student achievement has become a facet of the consideration.

The assumption that effective leaders are likely to be retained for longer tenures and thus have a positive impact on the success of the school, i.e. student achievement, is flawed. Quite the contrary, superintendents who are viewed as effective leaders may actually be the ones that have brief tenures as they are recruited away or personally aspire to bigger and better positions in the field. Similarly, less effective superintendents may have longer tenures because they cannot get a different position, yet they are at best effective enough to be retained by their district. This could be particularly true in any one of a majority of Nebraska's rural school districts that might not be such a desirable position to aspire to.

This study looked at three superintendent variables: length of tenure, gender, and education level. Because these variables are objective in nature, they were simple to quantify. Would the results have been different had other variables been considered? A different NeSA content area such as math or science might have resulted in different findings. Maybe an entirely different assessment would reveal statistically significant results. Studies in other states might point to different findings. These are questions for further research and a future attempt to add to the body of knowledge and discussion about superintendent leadership and if it is connected to student achievement.

The largest and most complex study ever conducted on district-level leadership and its influence on student achievement was a meta-analysis conducted by McREL that

combined studies from over 30 years that looked at superintendent leadership and if, indeed, he/she matters. The study was articulated by Waters and Marzano in their 2006 working paper titled *School District Leadership That Works: The Effect of Superintendent Leadership on Student Achievement*. This meta-analysis included 27 studies, 2,718 school districts, and 3.4 million students. The findings of the Waters and Marzano study included two revelations that are pertinent to this study: superintendent leadership matters and superintendent tenure is positively correlated to student achievement. While this study was not able to corroborate those findings, further research using a greater variety of leadership variables could result in statistically significant results.

Effective leadership will likely continue to be a primary topic for researchers. It is perplexing to this researcher that an abundance of data does not exist on the influence of effective leadership in public schools. Without question, the superintendent is considered to be the leader of a public school. I would expect that with the high levels of accountability for student achievement having been placed on school districts in the past generation, more studies would commence on what leadership approaches would best serve this purpose.

The role of the superintendent as we recognize it today has evolved into a position that the most skilled, energetic, and socially connected person would find demanding. Effective teaching (and learning), when done well, is an immensely complicated process and the most difficult job in the world. That has been particularly true when the goal was to leave no child behind while mastering rigorous standards.

Today's superintendents, unlike their predecessors, cannot escape the burden of

student achievement accountability. It is those leaders that embrace the challenge of meeting the goal of a college and career ready student body that exemplifies the quintessential nature of what true effective leadership is all about.

School board members need to hire a superintendent who skillfully fulfills key leadership responsibilities, and not ones based on gender, education level, or a presumption that they might stay for an extended period of time. Leadership characteristics such as establishing district goals for achievement and instruction is a much more meaningful variable. When focused on effective classroom, school, and district practices, appropriate achievement and instructional goals, and effective leadership responsibilities, it is clear that school district leadership matters. Positive energy, focused empowerment, allocation of resources, and targeted appraisal practices are the leadership characteristics that matter. Under these conditions and exercising these leadership qualities, rather than be part of the blob, superintendents can be part of the solution (Waters & Marzano, 2006).

Recommendations

The following recommendations for practice and further study will help future researchers add to the body of knowledge regarding the purpose of this study, which was to determine if there is an observable difference in student achievement in Nebraska school districts on the NeSA-Reading assessment with regard to tenure, gender, and education level of the superintendent.

Recommendations for practice. The following recommendations for practice emerged based on the results of this study.

- The superintendent's roles and responsibilities need clarification with increased training and support in the area of instructional leadership.
- School districts need to work with local and state public school support agencies
 to develop superintendent appraisal instruments to help identify leadership
 strengths and areas to grow.
- Boards of Education need continuous training on how to help novice superintendents grow in knowledge and skills most pertinent to effective leadership and governance.

Recommendations for further study. The following recommendations for further research emerged from the results of the study.

- Effective leadership needs to continue as a primary source of study. Although
 very broad, researchers need to continue to study the specific variables that
 affect student achievement.
- Student achievement is the primary goal of public schools across the nation, yet
 this study was limited to 239 superintendents in Nebraska. Similar research on
 superintendent variables and their affect on student achievement needs to be
 undertaken in other states.

- 3. This study focused on Nebraska students in the eighth grade in the 2014-2015 school year. A similar study could be conducted on other grade levels in Nebraska using the same data source to check for similar or different results.
- 4. This study only analyzed achievement scores in reading using the NeSA-Reading assessment. Difference results might have been found if achievement scores in math (NeSA-Math) were used.
- 5. Further research should be considered using a different standardized assessment such as ACT.
- 6. Variables that cannot be controlled, such as mobility rate, SPED population, and socioeconomic rates should be considered when analyzing school district student achievement.
- A mixed method study including qualitative surveys and interviews would add some subjective data about leadership effectiveness to be considered.
- 8. Additional administrative professionals, such as Instructional Coaches or Curriculum Directors may have an effect on student achievement, particularly in larger districts that employ such positions. Superintendents in these districts might be more detached from instructional leadership.

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Appendix A

Snapshot of Superintendent Tenure in Nebraska for 2014-2015

Year at Present School	Total Number In Year	Aggregate Total
Year 1	26	[26]
Year 2	30	[56]
Year 3	35	[91]
Year 4	30	[121]
Year 5	31	[152]
Year 6	17	[169]
Year 7	19	[188]
Year 8	11	[199]
Year 9	7	[206]
Year 10	6	[212]
Year 11	10	[222]
Year 12	1	[223]
Year 13	5	[228]
Year 14	6	[234]
Year 15	2	[236]
Year 16	2	[238]
Year 17	2	[240]
Year 19	3	[243]
Year 22	1	[244]
Year 36	1	[245]

Appendix B

Stages of Intervention for School Improvement Under the No Child Left Behind Act

Stages of In	tervention for School I	mprovement Under the	No Child Left Behind	Act of 2001
Stages of In If school misses "adequate yearly progress" (AYP) for two consecutive years	Identified for Inprovement, Year 1 All interventions must occur simultaneously: *Offer parents school choice *Develop	Identified for Improvement, Year 2 Additional intervention: *Offer supplemental educational services (tutoring,	Additional interventions (one or more of the following): *Implement research-based	Additional interventions; Phase 1Develor pressucturing plate Phase 2(one or more of the
	improvement plan *Notify parents *Allocate 10% of federal Title 1 funds for professional development *Receive technical assistance from districts and states If school misses AYP for an additional year	remediation, or other academic instruction) given by a state-approved provider If school misses AYP for an additional year	curriculum or instructional program *Decrease school's management authority *Extend school day or school year *Restructure school's organization *Replace staff relevant to school's low performance *Appoint an outside expert If school misses AYP for an additional year	following): *Reopen school a a charter school *Replace all or most staff *Contract with another entity *Yield to state takeover of school *Conduct other major governance restructuring

Appendix C

CEO and Superintendent Stability in Selected Corporations and School Districts

CEO Stability in Selected Corporations

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

Superintendent Stability in Selected Urban Districts

City	Number of Superintendents in the past 20 years	Average Tenure (years)
Kansas City	14	1.4
Washington D.C.	9	2.2
New York City	8	2.5

Appendix D

Nebraska Superintendent Sample Populations For Each Research Question

Those school districts with the same superintendent since the 2009 - 2010 school year or before are in bold print. School districts led by female superintendents are identified with an asterisk. Those districts led by superintendents who have earned a doctoral degree, Ph.D. or Ed.D., are capitalized.

17 years

36 years **Crofton**

22 years **BANCROFT-ROSALIE**

19 years **Johnson County Central**

Elmwood-Murdock

Yutan

17 years Battle Creek

Burwell

16 years **GRETNA** 16 years

Callaway

15 years **Stuart** 15 years

Humboldt

14 years **FULLERTON**

Syracuse STANTON GOTHENBURG Pleasanton RAVENNA

13 years **Overton** 13 years

MCCOOL JUNCTION

St. Edward Fairbury Elwood

12 years **Humphrey** 12 years 11 years **Paxton** 11 years

BENNINGTON *VALENTINE

Wausa

Hemmingford
Loup County
*Banner County
South Platte
Potter-Dix
Gibbon

10 years **Lyons-Decatur**

West Boyd Unified Fillmore Central

Ainsworth Milford

Atkinson West Holt

9 years **Thedford**

Thayer Central *Hampton Crete

*Niobrara *O'Neill

*GARDEN COUNTY

8 years **SEWARD** 8 years

Alma Centennial PLATTSMOUTH

Hastings DESHLER Doniphan Adams Central

Bertrand Walthill KEARNEY

7 years Hitchcock County

*BRUNNING-DAVENPORT

Ogallala

NEBRASKA CITY Winnebago

Curtis Medicine Valley

SIOUX COUNTY Raymond Central

Superior Amherst Eutis-Farnam Exeter-Milligan *MINDEN

Creek Valley

Lynch

*Sutton

Gordon-Rushville
Oakland-Craig
McPherson County

6 years **Plainview** 6 years

Elkhorn Pender

Columbus Lakeview

WAVERLY Cross County *Arlington

Wayne

YORK

LITCHFIELD

LEIGH

МССООК

Freeman (Adams)

MEAD

BOONE CENTRAL

Pawnee City

Hay Springs

5 years

Wahoo

5 years

*CEDAR RAPIDS

Minatare

Wilber-Clatonia

Harvard

NORTH BEND

SOUTH SIOUX CITY

Cambridge Sandhills

Osmond

Palmyra-Bennett

Falls City

LINCOLN

Hays Center

FT. CALHOUN

Sutherland

COLUMBUS

*Greeley-Wolbach

*HOMER

Scottsbluff

Osceola

Blue Hill

FRANKLIN

NORRIS

*CHADRON

Bloomfield

North Loup Scotia

Hartington-Coleridge

4 years

Ord

4 years

Leyton

Wakefield

SOUTH CENTRAL UNIFIED

Wymore Southern

Bellevue

Holdrege

Red Cloud

EMERSON-HUBBARD

ASHLAND-GREENWOOD

Lewiston

Johnson-Brock

DORCHESTER

Giltner

Tekamah-Herman

Elkhorn Valley

Aurora

*Neligh-Oakdale

*Scribner-Snyder

Bayard

*Centura

St. Paul

Shelton

Auburn

*Ponca

Louisville

Pierce

Malcolm

GRAND ISLAND

Arnold

Sargent

Ewing

Maywood

3 years **RALSTON**

Heartland

Wisner-Pilger

Omaha Nation

Cody-Kilgore

Silver Lake

Wilcox-Hildreth

Sidney

Madison

Grand Island Northwest

3 years

Wauneta-Palisade

LEXINGTON

WEEPING WATER

Creighton

*CONESTOGA

Shickley

Dundy County

Wheeler County

Loganview

Laurel-Concord-Coleridge

Clarkson

Nebraska Unified #1

OMAHA WESTSIDE

Diller-O'Dell

FRIEND

Allen

Blair

Elgin

Cedar Bluffs

Springfield-Platteview

Arthur County

Chase County

Morrill

Broken Bow

Elm Creek

Axtell Cozad

2 years

2 years

Rock County

PALMER

Arapahoe

*Hershey

*Keya Paha

Sterling

David City

Omaha

Chambers

*Loomis

Gering

SCHUYLER

Randolph

Shelby

Kimball

Anselmo-Merna

Beatrice

Southwest-Bartley

Maxwell

PAPILLION-LAVISTA

Wallace

Tri-County

Crawford

*NORFOLK

Kenesaw

ALLIANCE

Mullen

Stapleton

1 year

Loup City

West Point

Brady

HYANNIS

WOOD RIVER

Meridian

Bridgeport

Santee

High Plaines

Central City

Wynot

Ansley/Arcadia

Twin River

Grant-Perkins County

*Douglas County West

Elba

Newman Grove

NORTH PLATTE

Fremont

Winside

East Butler

MILLARD

Southern Valley

*Mitchell

Howells-Dodge

*Sumner-Eddyville-Miller

Appendix E

Letter Authorizing Use Of School District Assessment Data



www.education.ne.gov 301 Centennial Mail South P.O. Box 94987

Lincoln, NE 68509-4987 fel 402.471.2295 fax 402.471.0117

December 18, 2015

Darron Arlt, Superintendent/Elem. Principal Pawnee City Public Schools 729 E Street PO Box 393 Pawnee City, NE. 68420

To Whom It May Concern:

The data that Darron Arlt is using in his study is available to anyone on the NDE website through the State of the Schools Report data download. The school/district information is available at http://reportcard.education.ne.gov/Default_State.aspx and does not involve any student level data. It is public information.

If you have additional concerns about the use of this school/district level information, please contact me at $\underline{john.moon@nebraska.gov}$.

Thanks,

John Moon, Ph.D.

Assessment Project Manager

NDE Office Services

301 Centennial Mall South

P.O.Box 94987

Lincoln, NE 68509-4987

Phone (402) 471-2495

Appendix F

USD Institutional Review Board Approval



January 22, 2016

The University of South Dakota 414 E. Clark Street Vermillion, SD 57069

PI: Darron Arlt Student PI: None

Project: 2016.002 - The Relationship Between Superintendent Tenure and Student

Achievement in Nebraska as Measured by 2015 NeSA-Reading Scores

Review Level: Not Human Subjects

USD IRB

Date Received: 1/4/2016

The study submission and informed consent for the proposal referenced above has been reviewed via the procedures of the University of South Dakota Institutional Review Board.

Upon review of your application, the IRB determined these activities do not meet the regulatory definition of research and do not fall under the IRB's purview for the following reason(s):

Although the activities described in your application are considered research, you will not be obtaining private identifiable information about any living individual [46.102 (f)]. Private identifiable information is defined as: the identity of the subject is or may readily be ascertained by the investigator or associated with the information. If, in the future you decide to use existing data that includes private identifiable information you must submit an application to the IRB for review. It is best to always submit a study to the IRB and let the IRB determine if the research activity constitutes human subject research.

Please maintain a copy of this letter in your study file for documentation that your study does not meet the regulatory definition of human subject research and did not require IRB approval.

If you would like to discuss this or have further questions, please call our office at (605)677