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Leadership Characteristics and Practices of American Association of School Administrators (AASA) Superintendents of the Year and Finalists

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LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS AND PRACTICES OF AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS (AASA) SUPERINTENDENTS OF THE YEAR AND FINALISTS

By

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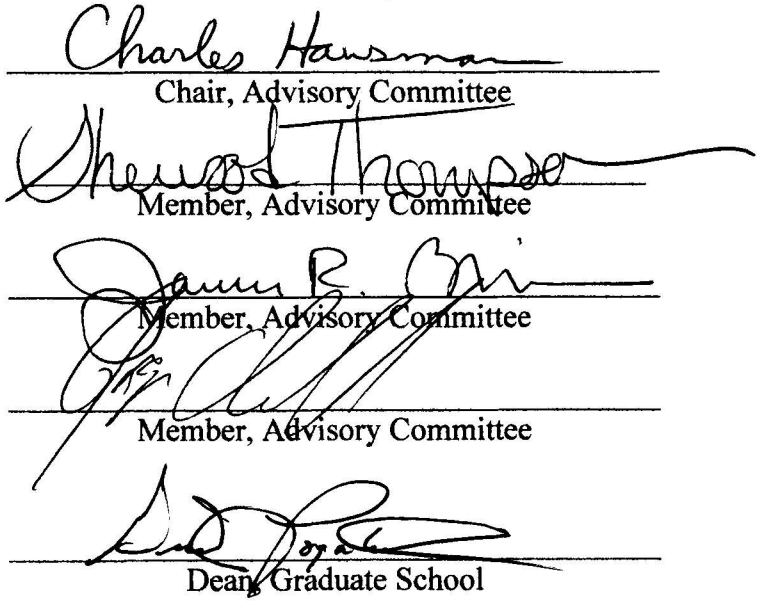

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DEDICATION

"Don't try to fix the students, fix ourselves first. The good teacher makes the poor student good and the good student superior. When our students fail, we, as teachers, too, have failed." Marva Collins

This dissertation is dedicated to all the students we serve who deserve the best educators.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

"*If there is no struggle, there is no progress*." Fredrick Douglass

I would like to give thanks to God for giving me the grace, wisdom, and endurance during this entire process. I would like to thank my Chair, Dr. Charles Hausman, for his guidance and patience. I would also like to thank the other committee members, Dr. Sherwood Thompson, Dr. James Bliss, and Dr. Roger Cleveland, for their comments and assistance over the past two years - each extended me considerable time and maintained high expectations throughout the process. I would like to express my thanks to my family whose unwavering support has always been a source of strength for me. In good times and in bad, we are always a family and though we are far apart in miles, each of you is never far from my mind and heart. I would like to thank my mother, Mrs. Jeanette Crawford, for always being there and for her love, support, and voice of reasoning. Throughout this process numerous friends and colleagues have encouraged and cheered me on with their reassurance and confidence in my abilities. Each one of you played an essential part in my success with this endeavor. Thank you.

My appreciation and deep gratitude to the staff of the American Association of School Administrators, especially Ms. Paula Dearden, for her assistance and support in acquiring the contact information for the Superintendents of the Year and Finalists.

Thank you to the AASA Superintendents of the Year and Finalists, for their interests in this study, their words of encouragement and feedback have allowed me to understand and appreciate their deep commitment to the children in our country. Their recognition of excellence in education is warranted.

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ABSTRACT

Houston (2007) concluded, "To preserve the possibilities for our children requires leadership, and that leadership is also a critical condition for success. While the educational journey takes place in the classroom and school, the trip is planned, the fuel is acquired, and the steering is done in the superintendent's office" (p. 432). The purpose of this study was to determine the key characteristics and practices needed by school district superintendents to meet the demands of this position in the twenty-first century. The key characteristics were identified by exemplary superintendents who had been recognized for their effectiveness. 55% of the population of AASA Superintendents of the Year and Finalists were surveyed to identify effective superintendents based on their leadership characteristics and practices. The identified superintendents were asked to participate in the study using a questionnaire which included 11 demographic questions, 35 Leadership Characteristics created by the researcher, and the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) by Kouzes and Posner. The data for this research were obtained electronically by using SurveyMonkey.

This descriptive study of the key characteristics and practices of effective superintendent indicates that an effective school superintendent for the 21st century must be centered on having integrity, clear communication, effective board relations, problem-solving abilities, professional credibility, and vision. This study suggested quantitatively that leadership practices "enabling others to act" and "modeling the way" were imperative to the success of the superintendent. It also suggests the importance of combining leadership characteristics and practices for successful leadership and a need for continued research on these characteristics and practices. The findings of this study may be useful to

educational leaders, individuals aspiring to the superintendency, as well as higher education institutions offering training and coursework leading to certification.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Superintendents of public school districts in the United States occupy positions of tremendous authority, importance, and influence (Sharp & Walter, 2004). In total, the nation's approximately 14,000 superintendents are responsible for the educational outcomes of nearly 55 million P-12 students (Kirp, 2013). The superintendency is a position that attracts criticisms, and it is a foregone conclusion, that exposure to criticism accompanies the job. Goodman and Zimmerman (2000) stated that the superintendency is a position that faces greater challenges than ever before. In addition, the superintendency is a position that includes increasing demands and pressures backed by little security, greater public attention, and fewer position perks than similar jobs in the private sector (Byrd, Drew, & Johnson 2005). Paul Houston, Former Executive Director of the American Association of School Administrators stated, "The job is impossible, the expectations are inappropriate, the training is inadequate, and the pipeline is inverted" (Lashway, 2003, p. 2).

The role of the superintendent becomes even more complex and more challenging with all the new changes in standards and state and national educational mandates such as No Child Left Behind. The job description of superintendents is not as clear cut and predictable as it was in past years (Glass & Franceschini, 2006). School boards are restricting the flexibility of the superintendent's decision making power. It is the expectations that all schools are to improve the quality of instruction and, in some cases, make dramatic improvements in teacher effectiveness because of past poor performance; hence, the role of the superintendent has become that of an organizational change agent

(Levine, 2005). Finding successful leadership during a time of instability, promoting continuous improvement and school reform becomes imperative if schools are going to improve and student's achievement is going to reach higher performance. More specifically, the superintendent is head of his/her district and in that capacity the superintendent is responsible for finding what works and fixing what is broken (Glass & Franceschini, 2007). Successful superintendents are in high demand in today's school climate of improvement. The superintendent is responsible for ensuring that the school district meets the expectations of all educational stakeholders, while creating an environment in schools where students thrive.

Today's superintendents are in very different roles than their predecessors were in a decade ago according to the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) (2000). Current conditions that surround their jobs include the persistent pressure from community groups, the never-ending struggle to acquire financial resources to meet educational goals, eliminating the minority-majority achievement gap, and state and federal standards and accountability mandates that add stress and complexity to the job (Glass & Franceschini, 2006). In a rapidly changing educational reform environment, superintendents are expected to engage in program evaluation, school improvement, create community collaborations and partnerships, and build morale in a time of transition (Levine, 2005).

Public school districts, now more than ever, are challenged to ensure that all students succeed—high stake testing is one assessment instrument that is used to ensure this success. Holding school districts leadership accountable for increasing student achievement is the central theme of No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001). Among the

requirements of NCLB is that all states must establish high standards and by 2014, all students must demonstrate proficiency in the established state objectives by passing local assessments and/or the state high stake tests. Schools that do not make adequate growth each year must provide supplemental services, take corrective actions, and, if still not meeting standards after five years, may need to submit to state control over the school operations (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

The superintendent as the formal leader of a school district is instrumental to the success or failure of the district schools. Glass and Franceschini (2007) stated that district superintendents are the key educational leaders and are charged with leading schools out of crisis. They play a pivotal role in the success of each school as well as the overall success of the district as a whole. If continuous improvement in student learning is the primary goal of public schools, then educational leaders must find the best means to provide leadership toward improved student achievement. With this great responsibility, one may ask, "What are the key characteristics and practices that these leaders must demonstrate?"

This study attempts to answer the above question and to add to the literature by indicating what makes an effective district superintendent by revealing superintendents' own perspectives on responsibilities and practices for which they are held accountable. The role of the superintendent has changed from executive leadership to instructional leadership with knowledge of evidence based quality learning outcomes. Knowing how to improve learning, teaching, and student performance, while also generating community support and building strong leadership capacity are important characteristics of a superintendent's job (Bjork, 2001).

The report **A Nation at Risk** by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE) (1983) placed education at the forefront of the U.S. national agenda for change over the last twenty-five years. During this period, the leadership of public schools, particularly the superintendent, has remained central to the resolving the "crisis" of education. Throughout the United States, major kinds of education stakeholders (such as political leaders, community members, parents, teachers, and students) have agreed that the condition of education in the United States is at a crisis level. Major areas include funding, testing and accountability, personnel shortages, competition in the global market, and ethical misconduct. Significant reforms have been attempted in the last thirty years.

In a twenty-fifth anniversary response to A Nation at Risk, the U.S. Department of Education stated, If we were "at risk" in 1983, we are at even greater risk now (NCEE, 2008). The rising demands of the global economy, together with demographic shifts in regional populations, require that society educate more students to higher levels of college and career readiness than ever before. Yet, our education system is not keeping pace with these growing demands (NCEE, 2008, p.6). The current national mantra to raise standards, embrace accountability, and demonstrate results raises the achievement bar for everyone in the school system across the United States. Students, teachers, principals, and superintendents of each school system face problems that contribute to the failure of the public education system (Kowalski & Brunner, 2005). The superintendent is in the crossfire of these challenges—they are constantly being asked to do more and they are always under the scrutiny of external stakeholders.

Owen and Ovando (2000) called the superintendency "the most misunderstood position in educational hierarchy" (p. 1). The public education system is a complex organization that is often subject to the desires of politics. Currently, school district leaders are expected to address the needs of students, parents, communities, and federal mandates while simultaneously meeting the public's expectations about effective management of a school system. The public expect the superintendent to be: instructional leader, fiscal manager, human resource expert, construction manager, or politician.

Schools today are responsible for educating a more diverse student body than at any time in our nation's history. Our school systems must also prepare students to compete in a global marketplace during a time of transition for the national economy, as the country moves further away from a manufacturing economy and toward a service and digital economy. Petersen and Short (2001) argued that the reinvention and transformation of American public schools is "one of the greatest challenges to education in the 21st century" (p. 533). As chief executive officer of the local school district, the responsibility for achieving these crucial goals rests with the public school superintendent (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Kowalski, 2006; Kowalski & Brunner, 2005)—this is a daunting task at best. The United States public school system has more than three million teachers; two million of them are slated to retire during this decade; and there are over 100,000 public schools and nearly 55.5 million school children (Kirp, 2013)

As the 2013 recipient of the AASA Education Award, I realized the importance of exemplary leadership in the superintendency. As a condition for receiving the award I was invited to attend the National Conference on Education. During the conference, it became quite evident that school improvement will depend on excellent leadership. This

opportunity revealed that excellence in the superintendency remains under analyzed. My participation as a recipient of an AASA award gave me the rare opportunity to participate in the program and meet that year's annual superintendent of the year. This interaction revealed that exemplary qualities are needed to be investigated to determine how other school leaders can acquire these successful leadership traits. I am convinced that if the qualifications and standards of the AASA superintendent of the year were better understood, the national conversation on school superintendents could be improved. This exposure gave me a burning desire to further my investigation into the successful characteristics and traits of nationally recognized superintendents.

Statement of Problem

Research indicates a major emphasis on the superintendent as the key player in the implementation of reform. Paulu (1988) added, "If you look at progress, it comes down to the leadership of the superintendent" (n.p.). Buck (1991) also contended that "whatever the future holds for education in America in the 21st Century, the superintendency is the position that will make it happen" (p. 311). Leadership is inextricably tied to the success of any school district. To meet the high demands of leading a successful school system, successful superintendents need to lead the charge. Current research has shown specific leadership responsibilities and practices that positively impact student achievement (Marzano & Waters, 2006).

The challenges facing public school administrators are daunting (Thomas & Bainbridge, 2002). Public schools in particular face continued budget shortfalls and constraints. Schools and administrators are being asked to do more with less (Selingod, 2001). The best and the brightest teachers are being drawn away to higher paying school

systems in other states. At the same time, governmental accountability in the name of educational reform has greatly increased. Concerns over changing community, higher turnover in the office (CASE, 2003; Cooper, Fusarelli, & Carella, 2000; Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000), school board politics, and federal and state mandates have school systems looking for the ideal candidate during a time when the pool of qualified, available candidates is shrinking (Cooper et al., 2000; Glass et al., 2000).

Despite these challenges, superintendents can be successful in the position and many have been recognized for their leadership. What makes these individuals different from others? Who are these individuals and what can they share with the educational field concerning being successful in the superintendency? These ae a few pivotal questions that need to be investigated.

The main goal of this study was to evaluate characteristics and practices that school superintendents attribute to a successful foundation of a school district leader for the 21st Century. It is important that further research on leadership characteristics and practices be conducted as it applies to AASA public school superintendents, particularly those identified as unusually effective. This study is just one attempt at finding answers to the question: What makes for a successful nationally recognized superintendent?

Ideally the research and resulting findings from this study will aid aspiring superintendents or professors of education to build a framework of study that addresses techniques that develops more effective preparation for the field of school district leadership. There is an urgent need, therefore, to study superintendents with respect to their professional characteristics and practices. The researcher will examine these findings that contribute to exemplary practice in the superintendency, to see to what

extent, if any, these practices are employed by highly effective AASA superintendents of the year and finalists. As more research data on leadership in education becomes available, it is essential that educators review the findings and implement them to meet the goals and objectives that positively impact education reform. Research continues to be conducted on the leadership characteristics and practices that are pertinent to successful superintendent leadership. This activity is necessary in order to find ways to increase student achievement and school district performance.

Purpose of Study

The problem in education is a problem of leadership (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996), and school superintendents must address a variety of issues to provide good school leadership. The purpose of this study is to uncover and describe successful superintendents' perspectives on the leadership practices and characteristics caused them to have success in the stipulated areas of this research. This researcher expects to clarify the national conversation about leadership practices that are most important for school superintendents. It strives to detail effective leadership characteristics recommended for school leadership and identifies leadership practices used by school leaders.

A critical aspect of this study has been to examine the professional attributes and practices most commonly used by AASA superintendents of the year and finalists. What are the essential elements of a successful school district leader in today's complex educational environment? Secondary, I intend to gather and evaluate information from superintendents of the year and finalists about what makes a successful superintendent. This examination will provide critical information on the quality of leadership that is required for successful school superintendents as identified by the AASA organization

and superintendent of the year program. To ensure quality education, it is the expectation that each school district must be managed and led by an effective school superintendent who has the expertise, responsibility, and position to manage the district's future. The American Association of School Administrators' Commission on Standards for the Superintendency stated:

> To a great extent, the quality of America's schools depends on the effectiveness of school superintendents. These executives of our nation's schools have complex leadership responsibilities, and those who hold the position must be among the brightest and best our society has to offer. Their vision and performance must focus on creating schools that will inspire our children to become successful, caring Americans, capable of becoming contributing citizens of the world (as cited in Hoyle, Björk, Collier, & Glass, 2005, p. 13).

To be a successful school superintendent, one must have an understanding of what it means to be an effective school leader and have knowledge of how to put that understanding into practice (Kowalski, 2006). This requires continuous preparation and study, sound decision-making, a wide range of expertise, an understanding of cultural and political implications, good communication skills, and being competent to carry out various administrative duties. To practice good leadership in the superintendent's office, one must oversee personnel, finance, academics, and community relations; as well as establish the school's direction, develop people, and must help others commit to agreed-upon ideals (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Sergiovanni, 2007; Wilmore, 2008). In addition, schools are pressured to perform better so students can become skilled and knowledgeable employees (Marzano et al., 2005). This responsibility rests on the shoulders of the district superintendent.

If superintendents were surveyed about what they believe are the necessary ingredients to being an effective school leader, one might speculate and wonder whether

they would mention some of the attributes cited in the previous paragraph, or would they list other important practices not mentioned earlier, or if would they mention some of each. With that in mind, this study will take a quantitative approach to determining the leadership characteristics and recommended leadership practices reported by AASA school superintendents of the year and finalists. This study will include a careful examination of the literature regarding leadership, school leadership characteristics and an examination of the results of a questionnaire of AASA superintendents of the year and finalists. The review of literature includes desirable practices for superintendents as school leaders (according to the consensus of the literature on school leadership). School leadership research frequently emphasizes the ideas of constructing and implementing an ongoing vision, building trust, having ongoing training, setting and reaching organizational goals, keeping the organization focused, building relationships, establishing collaboration, monitoring instruction, innovating, and providing motivation (Hemmen, Edmonson, & Slate, 2009; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001), of which were analyzed.

As the superintendent's role has evolved, the characteristics of those who effectively hold this position have also changed dramatically and evolve to include more professional capital. There is a plethora of characteristics defined in the research literature describing successful superintendents (Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005; Björk & Kowalski, 2005). Despite the extensive research on successful superintendents, it is important to note that there is no single comprehensive list of characteristics that form a standard for every superintendent. Given the above observation, there is a serious need to add to the research on this topic those factors that contribute to successful school

leadership by drawing upon the knowledge of AASA superintendents of the year and finalists—their backgrounds and experiences matters. In an effort to identify the key characteristics of an AASA superintendent of the year and finalists, this study attempts to identify those common leadership characteristics and practices these superintendents consider to be the most important factors that prove to be helpful within the superintendency.

This quantitative research data will have a tremendous impact on changing district leadership by providing information that could inform school boards in their decision making roles as they seek to hire new superintendents in the future. This study will be timely and have great utility on the issue of school improvement and student academic achievement.

A secondary purpose of this study is to contribute to the leadership knowledge base by identifying the most commonly selected characteristics of AASA superintendents of the year and finalists. The leadership knowledge base is the professional capital that will further enhance the profession, and the research findings gathered from the survey respondents, both current and past national and state superintendents of the year and finalists, will have the potential to inform future superintendents, current superintendents, school boards, and support educational associations. This study is designed to explore and determine the relationship of the leadership qualities that supports effective management of school districts. Aspiring and practicing superintendents will have a model from which to base their practices on in order to face today's demands on their leadership. The outcome of the data findings is designed to enhance school district leaders' knowledge of successful leadership traits and practices.

Public school superintendents have an incredible scope of authority and responsibility (Chapman, 1997). New challenges in public education will make the job of public school superintendent even more challenging and, in fact, require a new leadership that meets these new challenges (Norton, M., Webb, L., Dlugosh, L., & Sybouts, W., 1996; Sergiovanni, 2005). As accountability measures become increasingly quantitative and punitive, a new leadership that is focused on empowerment and shared leadership, sustainability, and moral purpose will emerge (Fullan, 2005; Starrat, 2004). The culture, climate, and vision of a school district, regardless of the number of stakeholders involved, hinge on the actions and beliefs of a single individual, the superintendent (Starrat, 2004). Superintendents are in an incredible position to lead in ways that no other leader can, as an educational leader (DiPaola & Stronge, 2003). Therefore, this study will address the following problems confronting the superintendency, especially those that the AASA recognized superintendents confronted.

Research Questions

The goal of this study is to identify the attributes and practices considered necessary by school district superintendent of the AASA superintendents of the year and finalists to meet the demands of leadership in their complex educational environment. I will be investigating the leadership attributes and practices of AASA superintendents of the year and finalists. The following research questions are intended to guide my study and to serve an outline of the knowledgebase on this topic by addressing the perspective, practices, and characteristics of AASA superintendents of the year and finalists.

1. How highly do AASA superintendents of the year and finalists rate various leadership characteristics as attributed to an effective superintendent?

2. How frequently do AASA superintendents of the year and finalists claim to have implemented the same leadership characteristics?
3. How much success does AASA superintendents of the year and finalists claim to have experienced with these leadership characteristics?
4. What professional leadership practices are perceived by AASA superintendents of the year and finalists to be crucial for superintendent effectiveness?

Significance of Study

For the superintendent, what he or she achieves or does not achieve, the way he or she performs, and the way he or she is perceived as a leader, overwhelmingly impacts the organization indelibly (Bacharach, 1981; Fullan, 2001; Prestine, 1991; Sergiovanni, 1996; Starrat, 2004). With education being a national concern over the past decade, with vocal critics, communities look for a strong superintendent to lead their school systems. Communities look for a strong superintendent who can obtain high student test scores, keep the schools safe, lead educational reform, maintain small class sizes, solve problems, maintain a fiscally secure budget, manage personnel, excel in human relations, and dedicate his/her life to the position. School boards are charged with finding this individual. As Larry Cuban (1988, p. 147) observes, "One only has to read the brochures sent out by school boards advertising superintendent vacancies to see that only heroes need to apply."

Since 1983 the most intense, comprehensive and sustained effort to improve education in the United States history has occurred (Bjork, Keedy &Gurley, 2003). The scope, complexity and rigor of change initiatives promoted by national commissions and the Federal Government during this period have increased the demands on

superintendents (Brunner, Grogan & Bjork, 2002). National attention to superintendent turnover and shortened tenure has created concern in education. This concern pertaining to the length of superintendent tenure is reflected most notably in cities and large urban areas where mean tenure is reported as 2.75 years (GCS, 2003). The possibility of decreased tenure for superintendents is disconcerting considering that the ultimate success of a school division begins with the leadership and vision of this most visible individual.

This study is significant because of its importance in determining the factors that contributed to the success of AASA superintendents of the year and finalists. I will be investigating the particular leadership attributes and practices that can be as promising practices. These promising practices can also be identified and incorporated into training programs for future superintendents. The practices of the AASA exemplary superintendents can be used as models for other superintendents, especially aspiring superintendents. Ideally, this could help with the rising concern of not having good superintendent candidates for school districts. Oftentimes, educators and researchers have a sense of what set AASA superintendents apart from other superintendents, however, this study will list the actual traits that successful superintendents identify as their significant characteristics.

A set of common characteristics necessary for a successful superintendent can be derived from a compilation of research-based key characteristics identified by recognized exemplary superintendents. There are several reasons why a study of the characteristics and practices of AASA superintendents and finalists warrants close investigation. First, the recognition of the context in which they work and its significance to their professional

practices. Second, my research is designed to expand the knowledge base on preferred superintendent qualities as reported by the sample of superintendents that are surveyed. These findings may be relevant to aspiring superintendents, school board members, and institutions that provide training of superintendents. Third, the findings may provide aspiring superintendents, school board members, and members of search committees with empirical data for use when seeking to fill a superintendency vacancy. Fourth, the study will contribute to the literature and add new findings that will support existing studies that discuss key leadership characteristics and practices of superintendents. Fifth, the research may provide valuable insight to universities leadership programs, professional associations and educational organizations, and assist AASA in planning the professional and personal development opportunities needed to prepare aspiring and support current superintendents.

Limitations of the Study

There are a number of limitations the reader should be aware of while reviewing this study. The following identifies four limitations.

- The leaders included in this study were previous or current AASA superintendents of the year or finalists. This limited sample resulted in a relatively fixed number of participants thus limiting the variability of the population's demographics such as gender, ethnicity, and age. The sample was also limited in the areas of length of time in service, education level, etc.
- Part of the questionnaire was developed by the researcher and relied on participants to provide honest responses, so another limitation is that responses may have been biased due to the self-report nature of the study.

- The perceptions of the leadership practices and behaviors are limited by the responses the respondents are willing to disclose on the questionnaire.
- Participation in this study was limited to the superintendents that responded to the questionnaire instrument.

Assumptions

The following assumptions were required to conduct this research project:

1. The questions asked of the identified AASA superintendents of the year and finalists provided accurate data to answer the research questions. The literature was reviewed to compile a list of previously identified characteristics and practices deemed essential for effective leadership.

2. The participants are capable of identifying practices and characteristics viewed important and relevant for success in a superintendent's position.

3. Participants adequately understood the role of the superintendent. Covertly, the study assumes that all superintendents' practice with a core set of responsibilities. This assumption implies that there is no meaningful difference in superintendent roles across districts. It is highly unlikely that this conjecture is true. However, there is no evidence in the literature that implies differences in superintendents' roles and responsibilities across districts affect others' perceptions of essential practices and characteristics. Therefore, there is no reason to believe that this assumption had a significant effect on the outcomes of this study.

4. Participants adequately understood the role of a superintendent.

5. Because the superintendent is the primary leader in a school district, it was assumed that this position is necessary in a school district.

6. In addition, it was assumed that all respondents to the questionnaire answered truthfully and to the best of their knowledge and understanding of the questions.

7. It was assumed that all participants of the questionnaire were familiar with current educational trends in leadership at least to the extent that they attempted to employ those leadership qualities and characteristics they believed were the most effective as a superintendent.

8. It was assumed this study would generate findings to supplement the existing body of knowledge on school leadership, worthy of further discussion.

Definition of Terms

To provide consistency and facilitate understanding of this study, the following terms were selected for definition:

The acronym **AASA** is the American Association of School Administrators. The American Association of School Administrators is a national education organization that supports and promotes administrators throughout the United States.

AASA Superintendent of the Year: The AASA National Superintendent of the Year Program pays tribute to the talent and vision of the men and women who lead our nation's public schools. This program is sponsored by ARAMARK Education, VALIC and AASA. Any superintendent, chancellor or top leader of a school system in the United States who plans to continue in the profession may be nominated. This program is designed to recognize the outstanding leadership of active, front-line superintendents. It is not recognition of service at retirement or a program to reward current state or national leaders. School board members, parents, colleagues, community members and other superintendents may nominate a superintendent. Superintendents may nominate

themselves. American Association of School Administrators criteria for Superintendent of the Year. (2014, September 29). Retrieved from www.aasa.org.

Leadership characteristics: Leadership practices as well as ethical attributes and qualities. For the purpose of this study, a characteristic is a quality or feature of a person that is typical or serves to distinguish a person, groups, or an item from others.

Community: A community is made up of at least the following: parents, home owners, renters, senior citizens, small businesses, large (corporate businesses), the news media, the arts community, civic organizations, service clubs, youth sport leagues, ethnic organizations, religious groups, political parties, labor unions, and other special interests groups (Spillane & Regnier, 1998).

Exemplary superintendent: An exemplary superintendent has been identified based upon his/her recognition or nomination for the American Association of School Administrators Superintendent of the Year Award (National Award).

Leadership: Leadership seeks to guide, focus, and advance the objectives of the group or the organization. It mobilizes individuals to reach the goals held by both leaders and followers (Burns, 1978).

Leadership practices: This study used the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) developed by Kouzes and Posner (1997) to measure the leadership behaviors of selected superintendents. This instrument identifies the five fundamental practices of leadership: (1) challenge the process; (2) inspire a shared vision; (3) enable others to act; (4) model the way; and (5) encourage the heart. The term "leadership practices" is used throughout this study to refer to specific actions that are taken to achieve objectives.

Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI): The LPI questionnaire was developed to measure the five leadership behaviors described by Kouzes and Posner (1997). Validation studies conducted over a ten-year period consistently confirm the reliability and validity of the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI).

School board: The term, school board, refers to the governing unit in a district that serves in partnership with the superintendent managing the business of the district.

School leadership: Often used to describe leadership by school administrators, including principals, assistant principals, superintendents, and assistant superintendents. However, in this study school leadership refers primarily to the office of the school superintendent.

Successful superintendent: In this study, this refers to a superintendent identified as a superintendent of the year or finalist as designated by AASA. The superintendent of the year program honors the contributions and leadership of public school superintendents. Successful superintendents in this study were defined as proactive and purposeful superintendents who have demonstrated the ability to get things done and move the school district forward in a coherent and positive direction.

Superintendent: The person designated by the board of trustees as the chief executive officer of the school district in state. The term school superintendent and superintendent of schools are used synonymously in this study.

Organization of the Study

This study consists of five chapters. Chapter one includes the introduction, purpose of the study, the statement of the problem, the importance of the study,

assumptions, limitations, organization of the study, and provides definitions of terms found throughout the study.

Chapter two is a review of the literature. More specifically, the literature review describes the current and historical state of the superintendency, the history of school leadership, and the research supporting each key characteristic and practices on the listing questionnaire. Chapter two contains a review of literature on leadership, specifically essential skills necessary for success among leaders in the school superintendency. Chapter two of the study reviews and analyzes the research and literature in the areas of leadership theories and practices and effective leadership of the superintendent.

Chapter three describes the research methodology applied to the research data, including the research design, population and sample, instrument used, and methods of statistical analysis. This research is designed to show that a list of common characteristics and practices of a successful superintendent can be developed from previously recognized successful superintendents.

Chapter four provides the results of the data collection. The data from the study were collected from current and past recipients of the AASA superintendents of the year and finalists. Chapter four describes the analysis of the findings as they relate to each research question. The quantitative data are presented in order to summarize the findings.

Chapter five concludes the study by providing a summary of the study and its processes, and implications. Furthermore, this chapter provides the study's conclusions as well as recommendations for further study and practice.

Summary

Public schools in the United States have been crucial to the tremendous growth and prosperity the nation has enjoyed for much of its history. Public schools have educated nearly 90 percent of America's workforce, including doctors, engineers, scientists, and teachers (Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000). At the center of this has been the local school district. For "more than two centuries, the American public education system has thrived on local experimentation and avoided excessive centralization of power" (Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000, p. 2). At the apex of the local district sits the school superintendent.

The school superintendency is a position of tremendous importance and influence (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Fusarelli, Cooper, & Carella, 2003; Glass, 2001a; Glass, 2001b; Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000; Houston, 1998; Kowalski, 2006; Orr, 2006; Sharp & Walter, 2004) as superintendents are responsible for more than 55 million students in nearly 15,000 public school districts across the nation (US Department of Education, 2009). It is equally complex; Goodman and Zimmerman (2000) argue that, "The complexities of modern-day education, together with today's political realities, economic constraints, and social problems, make the job of the superintendent one of the most challenging of all chief executive undertakings" (p. 10). The results of effective leadership practices of exemplary superintendents may provide educators with a set of recommended leadership behaviors needed to lead US schools in the 21st Century.

This study is designed to demonstrate specific superintendent leadership characteristics and practices that can assist aspiring and practicing superintendents. By providing district leadership, superintendents set the tone, model leadership behavior, and

institute leadership characteristics and practices that contribute to high student academic achievement and prepare children for successful citizenship (Lashway, 2002a).

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The responsibility that superintendents must accept as the leaders of a school district often presents vexing educational problems and insurmountable social challenges which affect the schools and their outcomes. It is asserted that the nation's economic survival and hopes for the future - ride in large measure on the shoulders of our schools, and thus among other things on the leadership of school superintendents (Bredeson, 1996). As the chief executive officers of school districts, superintendents are ultimately responsible and accountable to students, faculty, staff, parents, and community stakeholders. Superintendents are the key element in the stability of our schools and superintendent's tenure is essential to sustained educational reform (Laub, 2011).

To be a successful school superintendent, one must have an understanding of what it means to be an effective school leader and put that understanding into practice. This requires continuous preparation and study, sound decision-making, a wide range of expertise, an understanding of cultural and political implications, good communication skills, and being competent to carry out various administrative duties (Wilmore, 2008). To practice good leadership in the superintendent's office, one must oversee personnel, finance, academics, and community relations; as well as establish the school's direction, develop people, and must help others commit to agreed-upon ideals (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Sergiovanni, 2007; Wilmore, 2008). In addition, schools are pressured to perform better so students can become skilled and knowledgeable employees (Marzano et al., 2005).

The researcher examined the history of leadership and of the role leadership plays in the superintendency. A historical perspective of leadership theory will be investigated in order to establish the framework for examining the factors related to successful leadership traits of superintendents. A synopsis of the development and interactions of the superintendency profession will be discussed and examined. An extensive literature review will determine critical characteristics and practices of effective superintendent leadership. A brief description of American Association of School Administrators (AASA) and a description of the Superintendents of the Year Program will be discussed.

Definition of Leadership

The literature includes many perspectives on leadership as well as varying definitions. Evans (1996) quoted Bennis and Nanus,

> Though most of us feel we know a good leader when we meet one, the essence of leadership remains unclear. Is it a matter of skill or charisma? Of science or art? Of politics or principle? Are its methods universally applicable or situation specific? Are leaders born or made? Despite thousands of empirical studies yielding hundreds of definitions of leadership, there is still no consensus about it. (p. 146)

Tead (1933) defined leadership as "the process of influencing others to willingly follow" (p. 149). Hersey and Blanchard (1988) defined it as "the process of influencing the activities of an individual or group in efforts toward goal achievement in a given situation" (p. 16). Cohen (1990) stated that "Leadership is the art of influencing others to their maximum performance to accomplish any task, objective, or project" (p. 9). Begley (2001) defined leadership in terms of practices. Glasman and Glasman (1997) noted leadership definitions into three categories: practice bases, theory based, and historically founded. Fitzwater (2000, p. 1) defined leadership as "releasing the energies of others."

In defining leadership, Katz (1955) identified three basic administrative skills that leaders possess: technical skill, human skill, and conceptual skill. Technical skills consisted of the knowledge and expertise required to perform specific tasks (Katz, 1985). Human skills were the ability to work with people effectively within the organization in order to achieve common goals. Conceptual skills are the skills of ideas making and vision (Katz, 1985).

Leadership definitions based on practice focus on "getting others to follow, developing a role structure and goal direction, or simply initiating changes" (Glasman & Glasman, 1997, p. 9). Chemers (1997, p. 1) defined leadership based on practice as "a process of social influence in which one person is able to enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task." According to Smith and Piele (1997) definitions of leadership involve three components: leaders, followers, and task accomplishment. Both authors believed that leadership is influencing others to accomplish goals.

Kouzes and Posner (2002a) identified five leadership practices that they contended can be taught, learned, and practiced. Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, Owen-Jacobs, and Fleishman (2000) believed there are five essential components of an effective leader: (a) competencies, (b) individual attributes; (c) leadership outcomes; (d) career experiences, and (e) environmental influences. Schwahn and Spady (1998) stated five performance domains to be learned and practiced: (a) authentic leadership, (b) visionary leadership, (c) cultural leadership, (d) quality leadership, and (e) service leadership.

Although leadership has hundreds of definitions and not a new concept, the various definitions of leadership are complex in nature. Bennis (1989) suggested that

leadership is much like beauty, most people know what it is but few can define it. The concept of leadership remains misunderstood and there is difficulty in distinguishing between leaders and leadership (Karnes & Bean, 1996; Hays, 1999).

History of Leadership Research

Throughout history, many attempts have been made to define educational leadership in the terms of theories (English, 1994; Gunter, 2001; Hoy & Miskel, 1982; Snowden & Gorton, 1998). Beginning with the writings of Aristotle and into the 1950s, leadership practices were based in the "trait theories" (Hoy & Miskel, 1982; Taylor, 1994). Included in the trait theory era are the "great man theory" as proposed by Caryle in 1847 and Weber's "charismatic leadership theory" I 1947 (Campbell, R. F., Fleming, T., Newell, L. J., & Bennion, J. W., 1987; Leithwood & Duke, 1999). "Great man theory" postulates that leaders are born, and only those men who are endowed with "heroic" qualities could ever emerge as leaders (Campbell et al., 1987; Leithwood & Duke, 1999). "Charismatic leadership theory" identifies a leader on the basis of his inherent charisma (Campbell et al., 1987; Leithwood & Duke, 1999).

Researchers have examined leadership skills from a variety of perspectives. Early analyses of leadership, from the 1950s to the 1990s differentiated between leader and follower characteristics. Researchers found that no single trait or combination of traits fully explained leaders' abilities (Bass, 1981). Researchers then began to examine the influence of the situation on leaders' skills and behaviors. Subsequent leadership studies attempted to distinguish effective from non-effective leaders (Hersey & Blanchard, 1992; Yukl, 1998). These studies attempted to determine which leadership behaviors were exemplified by effective leaders. Researchers used the contingency model in examining

the connection between personal traits, situational variables, and leadership effectiveness in order to understand what contributed to making leaders effective (Keith & Girling, 1991; Leithwood & Duke, 1999).

Leadership studies of the 1970s and 1980s once again focused on the individual characteristics of leaders which influence their effectiveness and the success of their organizations. For instance, Gardner (1990) revealed common leadership attributes including: eager to accept responsibilities, skilled at dealing with people, capacity to motivate, win and hold trust, sets priorities, is resolute and steady, and understands the needs of followers. Bennis (1989) stated three ingredients of leadership as passion, curiosity, and daring. He defined passion as the leader loving what he does and loving doing it. Leaders wonder about everything, wants to learn as much as he or she can, and is willing to take risks, experiment, and try new things. Failure and errors are embraced as opportunities to learn.

Personality Traits of Leaders

Initial investigation of leadership considered leaders as individuals endowed with certain personality traits (i.e. intelligence, birth, order, socioeconomic status, and child-rearing practices) which constituted their abilities to lead (Bass, 1960; Bird, 1940; Stogdill, 1948, 1974). Among the first approaches used to study leadership was an examination of leadership by traits. This research sought to determine what qualities and characteristics made an individual a great leader. This perspective believed that great leaders were born, not made, and that only selected individuals were born to leadership greatness; individuals who lacked certain traits could never become a great leader (Bass 1990; Northouse, 2004). The trait based research is often criticized for containing lists of

traits that are subjective and for failing to establish a clear connection between the traits of leaders and the outcomes they produce (Northouse, 2004). Also, Bass (1990) argued that individuals do not become a leader because of the combination of traits that they possess. Instead, leaders gain status as they work with a group to complete a task.

Stogdill (1974) identified six categories of personal factors associated with leadership: capacity, achievement, responsibility, participation, status, and situation but concluded that such a narrow characterization of leadership traits was insufficient. The attempts to isolate specific individual traits lead to the conclusion that no single characteristics can distinguish leaders from non-leaders.

These trait theories are bawd on the assumption that leaders have specific characteristics, physical, psychological, or combinations thereof that explain their behaviors as leaders (Hoy & Miskel. 1982; Taylor, 1994). The identification of leadership traits may have been related to any number of characteristics such as personality, physical appearance, social background, intelligence, and abilities (Taylor, 1994). Researchers attempted to identify these traits in leaders and then ascribed specific qualities to the leader as a result of having these traits (Hoy & Miskel, 1982). Ultimately, the emergence of these traits was to distinguish the leaders from the followers (Hoy & Miskel, 1982; Taylor, 1994). Several reviews of trait theory research establish that the findings on trait theory were generally inconclusive and confusing (Bass, 1991). The other major failing to trait theories was the lack of consideration of how leader interact with followers.

The leadership literature of the 1970s and 1980s, with its focus on effective leaders revisited personal traits as determinants of leadership abilities. It primarily

contributed to understanding the impact of personal characteristics and individual behaviors of effective leaders and their role in making organizations successful. The studies differentiated between leaders and managers and introduced a new leadership characteristic–vision–and explored its importance. Along with having vision, effective leaders are said to facilitate the development of a shared vision and value the human resources of their organization. In addition to these insights on leadership, a new theory emerged - transformational leadership.

Leadership Behaviors

Other attempts to examine leadership have yielded information about the types of behaviors leaders exhibited in order to determine what makes effective leaders effective. The acknowledgement of a relationship between leaders and followers by educational leadership researchers and theorists led to the development of behavioral theories (Keith & Girling, 1991; Leithwood & Duke, 1999). Behavioral theory was focused on what leaders do to entice followers to proceed (Taylor, 1994). To accomplish this, behavioral theorists identified the determinants of leadership and then developed training programs to change managers into leaders. The prominent theories in this era were (a) theory X and theory Y by McGregor, 1960; (b) path-goal theory by House, 1971; (c) contingency theory by Fiedler, 1967; and (d) situational leadership theory by Hersey & Blanchard, 1976 (Campbell et al.,1987; Hoy & Miskel, 1982; Keith & Girling, 1991; Taylor, 1994).

Theory X and theory Y demonstrated the extremes at each end of the leader-follower continuum. Theory X people were considered lazy and extrinsically motivated thus incapable of self-discipline; consequently, the manager's role was to use economic gain and security to motivate them to work. Theory Y assumed people are intrinsically

motivated to work, display responsibility, and share the common interest in the success of the organization. Theory Y managers use inherent qualities of their followers to share authority, develop participative decision-making activities, and successfully complete their tasks (Campbell et al., 1987; English, 1994; Hoy & Miskel, 1982; Keith & Girling, 1991; Taylor, 1994). The emphasis on task orientation versus relationship orientation was typical of behaviorist theories of leadership.

Gates, Blanchard, and Hersey (1976) defined task-oriented and relationship oriented leadership behavior in the following manner:

> Task behavior is the extent to which a leader engages in one-way communication by explaining what each subordinate is to do as well as when, where, and how tasks are to be accomplished. Relationship behavior is the extent to which a leader engages in two-way communication by providing socio-emotional support, "psychological strokes," and facilitating behavior (p. 349).

House's path-goal theory combines task orientation with relationship orientation to represent the leader's role in meeting the goals of the organization. This theory used the idea of showing followers the rewards available through accomplishing a goal and then illustrating the behaviors (path) needed to reach that goal. Leaders using this theory used different styles to lead their followers to the established objective at the end of the path (Hoy & Miskel, 1982; Keith & Girling, 1991; Taylor, 1994). This interaction between the group and the individual leader is carried over into Fiedler's contingency theory.

House (1971) stated that leaders must change their leadership style based upon the needs of subordinates. House's (1971) Path-Goal Theory included the interaction of leadership behaviors with situation characteristics in determining the leaders' effectiveness. House identified four leadership behaviors: directive, achievement-

oriented, supportive, and participative, and two situational variables (subordinates' personal characteristics and environmental demands such as the organization's rules and procedures) that most strongly contributed to leaders' effectiveness. Path-goal theory suggests that subordinates will be motivated to work if they believe their efforts will reap positive benefits. The leader adopts a leadership style that best motivates the subordinates (House, 1971). Examination of leadership style seeks to determine how these interactions, task and relationship, facilitate achieving goals and establishing a comfort level within and among subordinates (Blake & Mouton, 1982; Northouse, 2004; Stogdill, 1974).

Other research efforts to identify leadership characteristics focused on the fit between personality characteristics, leaders' behaviors, and situational variables. The contingency attempts to "specify the conditions or situational variable that moderate the relationship between leader traits or behaviors and performance criteria" (Hoy & Miskel, 1987, p. 274). Fiedler (1967) concluded that leadership styles indicate leaders' motivational system and that leadership behaviors are leaders' specific actions. Fiedler's contingency model furthered the understanding of leadership but did not completely clarify what combination of personality characteristics, leaders' behaviors, and situational variables are most effective.

The Contingency Perspective of Leadership

The contingency perspective of leadership, introduced by Fiedler (1967) argued that for leaders to be effective their style must match the environment in which they lead. This theory recognized that situation's impacts upon the ability of a leader to lead, that there is no one best style of leadership, and that leaders cannot be all things to all people

in every situation. Contingency theory argued that the best leadership style is the one that best matches the demands of the given situational variables (Chemer & Skrzypek, 1972; Fiedler & Chemers, 1984).

Contingency theory was based on the concept that a leader's behavior at any one time is contingent on the current situation. The leader's behavior can be classified into two specific styles: those that focused on tasks, and those that focused on relationships. The determination of the leadership style employed is nay given situation is contingent on the fit between the leader's personality characteristics and the followers' skills and aptitudes (English, 1994; Hoy & Miskel, 1982; Keith & Girling, 1991). The effectiveness of either leadership style is dependent on with meeting the followers' needs or on accomplishing the organization's tasks. The success of the leader is dependent on the influence which the leader wields over the followers and the extent to which the followers are willing to act upon the leaders' directions. The underlying theme of contingency theory is the idea that "different types of situations require different types of leadership," yet it does not take into account the changing abilities or motivations of the follower (Hoy & Miskel, 1992, p. 238).

The contingency theory stresses the importance of human relation skills and the ability to use different types of management skills for different situations. Hanson (1996, p. 135) included ten basic assumptions about the organization and individual for the contingency theory. For instance, he believed that different approaches may be appropriate in subparts of the same organization, managers never know what is going on around them, and the basic functions of administration is co-alignment of people, of institutional actions and of the organizational design and structure. He calls these theories

of leadership transactional theories because they are designed to establish negotiated arrangements to satisfy the population.

Similar to the contingency explanation of leadership is the notion of organizational leadership or shared leadership. Barnes and Kriger (1986) contend that leadership is not found in one individual's traits or skills but is a characteristic of the entire organization, in which "leader roles overlapped, complemented each other, and shifted from time to time and from person to person (p.16). Slater and Doig (1988) refute the assumption that leadership is a possession of one individual and state that such a supposition ignores the "possibility that leadership may also be exercised by a team of individuals" (p. 296). As the theoretical unit of analysis shifts from that of the behaviors of the leaders within an organization to the interaction between the leaders, followers, and the organization, educational leadership theories move away from behaviorism and into process theories (English, 1994; Kenney, Blascovich, & Shaver, 1994). Current research indicates that process theories are really a blending of the trait and behavioral theories of bygone eras to promote a social change process within organizations (English, 1994; Kenney, R. A., Blascovich, J., & Shaver, P. R., 1994; Yukl, 2002).

Situation Theory

Situation theory assumes that leaders can and should change styles as the followers' abilities and willingness to complete their tasks matures (Gates, P. E., Blanchard, K. H., & Hersey, P., 1976; Snowden & Gorton, 1998; Taylor, 1994). In contrast to contingency theory, which is based on the leader adjusting to the situation, situational leadership theory suggest that the leader adjusts to the needs of the followers at any particular time. Situational leadership theory inherently assumes that as followers

progressively mature in their abilities to complete the assigned tasks, the leaders' level of task oriented behaviors will incrementally decrease. The situation approach to leadership supported the contention that effective leaders are able to address both the tasks and human aspects of their organizations. The situational leadership approach contains an underlying assumption that different situations require different types of leadership.

Henley (1973) noted that the situation approach maintains that leadership is determined not so much by the characters of the individuals as by the requirements of social situation. Attempts were made to identify specific characteristics of a situation that affected leaders' performance. Hoy and Miskel (1987) identified four areas of situational leadership: structural properties of the organization, organizational climate, role characteristics and subordinate characteristics (p. 273). However, situational leadership proved to be insufficient because the theories could not predict which leadership skills would be more effective in certain situations.

Process Theories

The focus of process theories is the interplay leaders use to involve all members of the organization in achieving the common goals of the organization (Kenney et al., 1994). This influence of the leaders in relationship to the perceptual processes of the followers, determines the power of the leader within the organization (Yukl, 2002). The key idea of process theories is that there must be a match between leader behavior, leader traits and characteristics, follower characteristics, and the situation at hand within the organization (Macke, Devos & Smith, 2000, Yukl, 2002). Process theories emphasize the how and the way people choose certain behaviors in order to meet their personal goals.

Transformational Leadership

Burns (1978) introduced the concept of transformational leadership, describing it as not a set of specific behaviors but rather a process by which "leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation" (p. 20). He stated that transformational leaders are individuals that appeal to higher ideals and moral values such as justice and equality and can be found at various levels of an organization. Burns (1978, p. 4) described a transformational leader as one who "looks for potential motives in followers, seeks to satisfy higher needs, and engages the full person of the follower." Transformational leaders have the following characteristics: ability to deal with change, ability to take risks, belief in people, motivation by values, believe in life-long learning, ability to deal with complexity, uncertainty, and ambiguity, and ability to be visionary (Tichy & Urtich, 1984, Tichy & Devanna, 1986). Bass (1985) asserted transformational leaders motivate followers by appealing to strong emotions regardless of the ultimate effects on the followers and do not necessary attend to positive moral values.

Burns (1978) contrasted transformational leaders from transactional leaders which he described as leaders who motivated by appealing to followers' self-interest. Transactional leaders were those individuals who modeled very traditional reward/punishment exchanges between themselves and their subordinates. The merit evaluation system is an example of this transactional role. The leader awards a merit rating to the subordinates, based upon the work each has completed. In contrast, transformational leaders interact with subordinates; identify the needs of the followers as well as what motivates them; and then work with followers to help them to achieve

optimal performance in the organization (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Burns, 1978; Northouse, 2004).

Other researchers have described transformational leadership as going beyond individual needs, focusing on a common purpose, addressing intrinsic rewards and higher psychological needs such as self-actualization, and developing commitment with and in the followers (AASA, 1986; Bass, 1985, Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Coleman & La Rogue, 1990; Kirby, Paradise, & King, 1992; Leithwood, 1992; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990; Leithwood & Steinback, 1991; Sergiovanni, 1989; 1990). The transformational leader is charismatic and visionary. The leader's primary objective is to transform by motivating and inspiring subordinates to achieve goals beyond their expectations (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). Schwahn and Spady (1988) contended that visionary leaders are forward looking and continually striving to paint a picture for their subordinates of what the future of an organization could be.

Sergiovanni (1992) stated that much of the research on leadership has focused "on issues of style and levels of decision-making, assessing the consequences of their variations for followers' satisfaction, individual compliance and performance, and organizational effectiveness" (p.2). Leadership has been studied, for instance, from the perspectives of the traits leaders possess, the skills they can contribute, their style, as well as from a situational approach, team approach, and a transformational approach.

Five Practices of Effective Leadership

According to Kouzes and Posner (1995) in their case analysis and survey questionnaires investigated the process of leadership and discovered that there are five fundamental practices of effective leadership. The five practices form a part of the

foundation of this study as many other studies have used the inventory to measure leadership. The practices by Kouzes and Posner are measured in the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI). Extensive data on over 3,000 cases and 100,000 surveys over fifteen years was gathered by the authors. The inventory has been used in studies of school leadership of principals and superintendents (Cavaliere, 1995; MacLean, 1999, Burleson, 1998). Below is a brief summary of the five leadership practices.

Leaders Challenge the Process

The first leadership practice is to take risks and seek opportunities for growth in order to improve the organization by challenging the process (Kouzes & Posner, 1995). Leaders are the change agents that look for opportunities to change, innovate, grow and improve by experimenting, taking risks, and learning from mistakes. Kouzes and Posner (1995) believed that part of challenging the process includes arousing intrinsic motivation, and that intrinsic motivation has to be present if people are to do their best. The leaders are faced with creating opportunities where people make meaningful contributions using their hearts and minds. Kouzes and Posner (1995) believed all successful leaders seek and accept challenges. "Leadership is an active, not a passive process. Those who lead others go greatness seek challenges" (p. 11). Leaders challenge the process by taking risks, initiate and experiment in order to find new and better ways of doing things in order to improve the current situation. In order to challenge followers to change, leaders must inspire a shared vision.

Leaders Inspire a Shared Vision

The second of the five practices is inspiring a shared vision. "All new ventures begin with possibility thinking, not probability thinking (Kouzes & Posner, 1995). Bennis

(1985) stated that leaders come in all shapes and sizes, but one essential quality is guiding vision. The leaders has a clear idea of what he or she wants to do and the strength to persist in the face of difficulties, setbacks, or failures. Visions are ideals or expressions of optimism and hope. Cringan (1997) found that schools require leaders with visions. Butt (1993) found that superintendents were able to create, articulate, inspire, implement, and renew district vision practiced: (1) Form symbiotic relationships; (2) provide clear, concise, and frequent communication of district ideas, focus or vision; (3) contribute to the stakeholders' sense of worthiness; (4) act with advocacy and passion for positions; and (5) are more interested in actions than the documentation of actions (p. 183 -184). Leaders breathe life into the shared vision, get people to see the desired future, and give followers the power to act upon the shared vision.

Leaders Enable Others to Act

Enabling others to act is the third practice. Leaders make each person feel capable and powerful by fostering collaboration and promoting cooperative goals and building trust (Kouzes & Posner, 1995). Leaders encourage collaboration among followers, and they build a team spirit that enables others to act. Leaders strengthened people by giving their own power away, providing followers with choice, developing competence, assigning critical tasks, and offering visible support. For example, Kouzes and Posner (1995) discussed research regarding high-trust groups where members obtain clarity about the group's basic problems and goals and searched more for alternative courses of action. The high-trust groups led to greater levels of mutual influence on outcomes, satisfaction with the groups, motivation to implement decisions, and closeness of a management team. According to Lezotte, 1999, p. 57, "People must feel free and

sovereign before they're going to feel empowered." By setting a positive example, leaders strengthen their followers as leaders skillfully develop cooperative goals, seek integrative solutions, and build trusting relationships (Kouzes & Posner, 1995).

Leaders Model the Way

The fourth practice is for the leader to model the way by creating standards of excellence and behaving in ways that are consistent with shared values (Kouzes & Posner, 1995). People expect their leaders to stand for something, and they expect them to have the courage of their convictions" (Kouzes & Posner, 1995, p. 211). Leaders establish values about how people should be treated, and they are a role model for others. Leaders do not ask other to do anything that they would not be willing to do themselves. By being "modelers of learning" (Butt, 1993, p. 182), leaders build credibility and are able to obtain and keep others committed. People follow effective leaders not because they are afraid of them but because they share the vision of the leader (Lezotte, 1999). Leaders model the way by recognizing others for their contributions. Recognition and praise cause followers to give it to others.

Leaders Encourage the Heart

The concluding practice is encouraging the heart. Leaders recognize the contributions of others, and frequently celebrate team accomplishments. Butt (1993) revealed that superintendents give credit to others in the organization for their accomplishments. "People value being appreciated for their contributions; recognition does not have to be elaborate, just genuine" (Kouzes & Posner, 1995, p. 269). People feel appreciated and internal drives of others are motivated and stimulated when rewards are linked to performance and contributions recognized. In recognizing individuals, Kouzes

& Posner (1995) stated that the leader must: build self-confidence through high expectations; connect performance and rewards, use a variety of rewards, and be positive and hopeful. The authors stated that recognition and celebration should be linked to clarity of the vision and values. The leader should celebrate others by: cheering about key values; making ceremonies public, being personally involved, and creating social support rituals. By honoring people and sharing with them success, leaders reinforce the team spirit necessary for extraordinary achievements (Kouzes & Posner, 1995).

History of the Superintendency

The role of the school superintendent has been an evolving one. The appointment of the first school superintendent was in Buffalo, New York, in 1837 (Callahan, 1962). Other large cities such as Louisville, Providence, and St. Louis soon followed Buffalo with the appointment of general superintendents. The number of general or city superintendents increased dramatically in the late 1800s as city school districts experienced exploding school populations caused by rapid industrialization.

Education of the masses as well as the firm establishment of secondary education necessitated a superintendent of schools (Callahan, 1962). Callahan, for example, described the 1865 through early 1900s superintendent as a scholar and educator. Cuban (1988) used the term "teacher of teachers" (p. 120). The superintendent was influential within the community almost to the point of being larger than life. Cuban (1988) further stated, "Themes of authority, control, instruction, curricular planning, and efficient management resonated in speeches and reports [of superintendents] in the waning decades of the 19th century" (p. 115).

By 1870, more than thirty cities had superintendents, predominately in larger cities. It was not uncommon for school boards to control the business operation and delegate the educational operation to the superintendents. Early superintendents were reporters and managers, but not leaders (Konnert & Augenstein, 1990).

With the Kalamazoo Michigan court case in 1874 where the Supreme Court established the right for schools to tax property owners, this provided for consolidated school systems across the nation in which a single person, rather than township trustees, was to be in charge in each school. Also, the development and growth of the superintendency was the result of invention of the motor vehicle which allowed for mass transportation of students in large groups to be assembled for educational programs of various needs.

Also during the 19th century, public education, school boards, and the roles of superintendents and principals were in their infancy. Many early superintendents not only administered their districts but also were evangelists for public education across the nation. Their lectures, writings, and biographies all tell the story of hard political struggles to obtain funds and support for a free public education for all children (Callahan, 1962).

In approximately 1910 the role of the superintendent shifted from that of scholar and educator to business manager. A rapidly changing economy and an industrial framework transformed the superintendent from scholar and educator to chief executive officer. With this transformation came added emphasis in responsibilities—including the management of resources as well as curriculum and more specialized services (Callahan, 1962). Yet Cuban (1988) asserted, "Schoolman's passionate embrace of scientific

expertise was as much an attempt to shield their occupational vulnerability from a rude firing as it was sincere belief in scientific rationality" (p. 120).

In 1930, the job responsibilities of the superintendent shifted once again. From 1930 until the early 1950s, democracy and the democratic school were emphasized. The superintendent, in turn, became a negotiator and statesman, cultivating community relations in order to gain the moral and financial support of the community. According to Cuban (1988) a lack of job security as well as the desire to achieve personal and professional goals created this shift. Sputnik, the space race, and other advances, once again, influenced education and the role of the superintendent during the 1950s. A role of educational realist would emerge as American schools were charged with producing the scientists and mathematicians that would sustain America's prominence as a world power.

The 1960s and 1970s saw superintendents facing civil unrest which brought new challenges to the superintendency as the citizens and school boards struggled with the power of the superintendency. Social unrest was a catalyst for state politics to become directly involve in the operations of schools. As a result, legislative mandates began to take autonomy away from the local schools. Disenchantment with the superintendent grew and challenges to the superintendent's traditional role as an expert grew (Candoli, I. C., Cullen, K., & Stufflebean, D. L., 1997). Also, in 1972, collective bargaining legislation was passed which established teacher associations that had the power to negotiate rights for teachers. Collective bargaining had a dramatic effect on the superintendency and this removed power from the superintendent and provided more power to teachers.

The social unrest of the 1960s and 1970s also influenced the role of the superintendent. The composition of local school boards shifted from being comprised of predominantly businessmen and professionals to including blue-collar workers, homemakers, and other diverse groups. Often the new constituents ran for the board because of a special interest and they were intent upon changing the system in order to address that interest (Chapman, 1997). Cries for reform would continue to feed the demand for schools to conform to a business model. In Education and The Cult of Efficiency Callahan (1962) provided an example of the pervasiveness of the business model as taken from an article that appeared in Fortune in October 1958, entitled "The Low Productivity of the Education Industry." The author's primary recommendation was that schools could improve their productivity by hiring efficiency experts.

Faced with the criticisms of the public, student unrest, disgruntled unions, and competing special interest groups, superintendents became increasing vulnerable (Chapman, 1997). In the 1970s, according to Cuban (1976b) superintendents not only managed schools that were thorough and efficient, but also they were forced into the political arena. Callahan's (1962) vulnerability thesis contended that politics and special interest groups significantly influenced the tenure of superintendents.

Further, the dissatisfaction theory of Lutz and Iannaccone (1986) argued that turnover within the board of education resulted in superintendent vulnerability. As the members of the school board who selected and appointed a superintendent change, the values of the board may also shift. As a result, the level of satisfaction with the superintendent may be altered. Lutz and Iannaccone (1986) contended that frequent changes within a board often resulted in a change in superintendent. With the emphasis

on school reform in the 1980s the superintendent's role became increasingly similar to corporate leadership—including political strategizing. Burlingame (1988) echoed the findings of Dexheimer as his study painted a portrait of power and the superintendency.

By the late 1980s the job of the superintendent focused less on curriculum and instruction and more on involvement in school reform efforts (Burnham, 1989; Cuban, 1976b; Grogan, 2000; Murphy & Hallinger, 1986). The superintendent became a change agent. However, superintendents were sometimes criticized and labeled by some groups as being the individuals responsible for blocking any efforts to change (Chapman, 1997). With a second wave for reform, the late 1990s and early 2000s have brought more challenges and change. The superintendent must be an educational leader whose vision will foster school reform. It is the political savvy of superintendents, according to Cuban (1998), which is used to achieve educational goals. This role of balancing politics and education continues to be a major responsibility of the 21st century superintendent according to the current literature (Cooper et al., 2000; Hewitt, 2002; Lashway, 2002a).

Charter schools, voucher systems, and political mandates such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) have motivated some districts to hire superintendents from outside of the education ranks (Cuban, 2004, Eisinger & Hula, 2004). Other districts have opted to contract with private providers. A report completed by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute (2003) described how the job has been redefined for today's superintendent. No longer does he or she [superintendent] merely 'run' a 'system.' Doing that job well today means intervening in faltering schools, mediating between school and state, collaborating with business, civic, and municipal leaders, engaging in complex labor relations, making tough decisions about priorities, finding resources, and selecting first-rate leaders for

every school in the system. (p. 18.) The demands placed on superintendents continue to grow with the rate of turnover.

This historical perspective of the superintendent suggests the complexity of the post and the powerful influence that outside forces have had on the practices of superintendents as well as their longevity in districts. The job has been transformed from lead teacher/scholar to hired bureaucrat to educational engineer to visionary educational leader. Even with these transformations the political ramifications of the post and the vulnerability have not diminished. Cuban (1988) warned, "No superintendent who wished to survive in the position could ignore for very long the political dimensions of the job" (p. 120).

Leadership Characteristics of Superintendents

Education researchers have begun to examine school administrators' leadership skills looking for the characteristics that help or impede efforts to improve education for all students. Research into leadership characteristics has included study of individual factors, situational elements, and a combination of factors (Wilmore, 2008). No one characteristic distinguishes effective leaders from ineffective ones. Current research identifies several leadership characteristics: vision, valuing human resources, stressing student-centered schools, communicating and listening, being proactive, and taking risks. As leadership research continues, it is clear that leaders are more than just managers. They possess special characteristics that help change organizations (Conger, 1992; Lindaurer, Petrie, Leonard, Gooden, & Bennett, 2003; Schwahn & Spady 1998; Wheatly, 1992).

There is substantial research on the characteristics and behaviors shared by effective superintendents. Kowalski (2005) stated that "the top executive in a larger organization is typically expected to possess knowledge and skills that are greater than those possessed by his or her subordinates. This individual is granted a great deal of power and authority and access to information not readily available to others" (p. 65). Kowalski (1995) posits that as many as 50 characteristics of superintendents' behavior have been explored by researchers. They can be reduced to two broad categories: situational variables (those relating to context) and personal variables (those relating to the administrator). He referenced the superintendent's ability to make appropriate situational decisions from his professional knowledge base will more likely result in a more successful superintendency.

Jones, Goodwin, and Cunningham (2003) completed a study which investigated 18 district level administrators who had received the Leadership for Learning Award from AASA. The purpose of this study was to examine the specific characteristics and activities perceived by these superintendents as significant in the success of their districts. These selected superintendents were asked to rank order from one to fine those areas of responsibility that they perceived as to be most critical for success. The areas deemed most important were curriculum, finance, professional development, school board relations, and vision (Jones, Goodwin, & Cunningham, 2003).

Kowalski (2005) posited that effective educational leadership must include traditional characteristics of leadership as well as those related to student learning. He stated that effective school superintendents must be a leader of learning and instruction, which requires them to have a working knowledge of instructional supervision student

leaning and curriculum design. Research strongly suggests that superintendents need leadership experiences and strong educational knowledge in order to become effective school system leaders Present perspectives about characteristics that make for a successful leader vary considerably, although there is increasing consensus on the importance of working with individuals to achieve goals, rather than directing. According to Collins (2001), about five levels of leadership as a hierarchy of executive capabilities. Level five, or executive leadership is characterized by leaders with ambition for the institution above personal ambition. Kouzes and Posner (2002) identified credibility as a core characteristic of successful leaders.

In this time of increasing demands for accountability in public schools, it is imperative that leaders be identified who can lead schools into an uncertain future (Sergiovanni, 1992). The demands of public school administration in the 21st century require effective, creative, visionary, inspiring, knowledgeable, principled leaders in order to develop confidence and continuous school improvement (Girard, 2000). The educational leaders of tomorrow will not derive their power from position or rank as much as from knowledge, wisdom, the ability to persuade, and a commitment to fairness and justice (Thomas & Bainbridge, 2002). Scholars identify credibility, articulation, and ability to see the bigger picture as some of the critical leadership characteristics of a successful leader. Seinfeld, 2010 found critical qualities and skills individuals already possessed including vision, commitment, ability to build relationships, a strong work ethic, genuine concern for their work and for other people, and courage.

Bolman and Deal (2003) referred to the importance of leadership qualities such as vision, commitment to core beliefs, the ability to inspire trust and build relationships,

work ethic, and genuine concern for their work and for other people. Each of the superintendents in this study spoke directly to the need to inspire trust and build relationships, especially with the members of the Board of Education.

Several studies examined specific characteristics of superintendents as leaders (King, 2002). King stated that current administrators placed more emphasis on collaboration, fostering professional development, developing leadership capacity in others, using resources creatively, focusing on teaching and learning, as well as using data to make informed decisions. According to Chance, Butler and colleagues (1992) the successful superintendent must have vision as well as a plan to implement that vision, must possess politically savvy, and needs to recognize when to remain in a post and when to leave. Lashway (2002b) also suggested that vision and strong communication skills are vital. Thomas and Moran (1992) advised that superintendents must maintain an active leadership style that involves participative and team management rather than employing a top down business management approach.

In a study of successful and unsuccessful superintendents, Chance (1992) found that superintendents possessing tenure of 12 years or more believed open communication with the school board and community to be an important leadership attribute. Lack of open communication was found to be a primary reason for superintendent change in districts with significant superintendent turnover. Additionally, Chance (1992) notes more successful superintendents are more democratic in their leadership style.

According to Carter and Cunningham (1997), the key to a successful career as a superintendent involves open communication, strong character (i.e. sound judgment, integrity, hard work, core values), and effective decision-making. Superintendents must

be well-informed of the diverse interests involved and maintain a clear understanding of the multiple implications of all decisions. Years ago, the school community and school boards had defined the superintendency by the leader's ability to manage fiscal, physical, and personnel resources; however, recently, the emphasis has shifted to vision, one who communicates strongly, build relationships, and demonstrate political acumen (Glass, 2005). Phillips and Phillips (2007) believed the superintendent must be relationship-centered, demonstrate vision, and interactive through the involvement of stakeholders, the fostering of teamwork, and building of strong relationships.

AASA (2007) believed the effective attributes for superintendent must also demonstrate a keen understanding of teaching and learning and what works for students. Portis and Garcia (2007) emphasized the efficient use of resources, personnel, and data to break down resistance and drive systemic change; empower board and personnel to set goals, measure results, develop accountability, and support planning, evaluation, and resource allocation.

The superintendency must reflect a comprehensive and challenging vision of district leadership, a synthesis of managerial and leadership components, interpersonal skills, and strategic action assessment. According to Marzano, R. J. and Waters, J. T. (2006), the superintendent is not only responsible for managing organizational and environmental capacity and providing results- driven leadership but also for creating a value-driven culture, defining clear instructional focus, and ensuring accountability of results.

The data on leaders indicate that characteristics of superintendents should mirror those of leaders who have changed other organizations. Leaders of educational change

have vision, foster a shared vision (Mazzarella & Grundy, 1989; Sergiovanni, 1990; Chrispeels, 1990; Crowson & Morris, 1990; Harrington-Lucker, 1991; Mahoney, 1990; Papalewis, 1988) and value human resources (Joiner, 1987; Barnes & Kriger, 1986). They are proactive and take risks (Crowson & Morris, 1990; Mahoney, 1990; Schmuck and Schmuck, 1989; Pitner & Ogawa, 1989). In addition, superintendents strongly believe that the purpose of schools is to meet the academic needs of students and are effective communicators and listeners (Mahoney, 1990).

These leaders began with having a vision, developed a shared vision with their co-workers, and valued the organization's personnel. They recognized shifts in the interests or needs of their clientele, anticipated the need to change and challenged the status quo (Pezja, 1985; Schmuck & Schmuck, 1989). Instructional leadership includes characteristics such as high expectations of students and teachers, an emphasis on instruction, provision of professional development, and use of data to evaluate students' progress among others (Heck, Larsen, & Marcoulides, 1990). Effective school leaders are task-and people-oriented Schmuck and Schmuck (1989).

As stated by Carter and Cunningham (1997), the ability to enunciate a clear, shared vision and the ability to inspire others to work toward realizing that vision are key among the desired attributes of a superintendent that makes a difference in their leadership. The leader must be able to make sound decisions and give direction to his or her organization (in this case, the school district) and to articulate that vision to all of its constituents. But in order to choose a direction, a leader must first have developed a mental image of a possible and desirable future state of the organization (Bennis & Nanus, 1997). This is the vision. It is this vision which moves the organization into a

better state of functioning and which makes the leader not just a decision maker, but a change agent.

Seinfeld's (2010) study confirmed many of the characteristics and skills that are essential for the successful superintendent. These included empathy, a strong work ethic, effective communication skills, and the ability to balance, especially their professional and personal lives.

Over the years, opinions as to the responsibilities of the superintendent have varied greatly (Carter &Cunningham, 1997). Many authors and organizations have written about the skills and characteristics necessary in the superintendency. Black and English (1986) discuss the issue of power and politics obtained through persuasion, charisma, or negotiation. Charisma is another characteristic mentioned often in the literature of superintendent attributes. Boal and Bryson (1988) identified two types of charismatic leaders, visionary (inspiring followers toward missions and goals) and crisis-produced (leaders developed through circumstances in which followers are unable to cope). Sergiovanni (1992, p.120) talks about charisma when he states, "The leadership that counts is the kind that touches people differently. It taps their emotions, appeals to their values, and responds to their connections with other people. Barth (1990) calls charisma the ability to inspire others to move toward a goal or endpoint that is neither obvious nor tangible to most people.

Evans (1996) discusses the superintendent as being the authentic leader and having humanistic skills of leadership. This skill involves the need for trust to be established, including honesty, fairness, and competency in the leader. Followers follow authentic leaders who display integrity and savvy. Integrity is a fundamental consistency

between one's values, goals, and actions. Integrity also means that a leader has strong values and strong aspirations for the school. Savvy is describes as a practical competency and qualities that includes craft knowledge, life experience, native intelligence, common sense, intuition, courage, and the capacity to handle things (Evans, 1996, p. 184).

Konnert and Augenstein (1990) have developed a list of 19 superintendent competencies and superintendent task areas. Competencies include: leadership, communicating, decision making, strategic planning, goal setting, motivating, risk taking, change agent, computer literacy, delegating, enabling, empowering, organizational climate, group dynamics resource management, public speaking, law, stress and time management. Task areas include: finance, budgeting, business management, personnel administration, curriculum, instruction, policy development, community relations, state and federal relations, site management, co-curricular activities, strategic planning, transportation, and food management. Konnert and Augenstein (1990) stated a working knowledge of these tasks areas is necessary and the superintendent must continue to learn and inquire about these areas.

Transformational Leadership

Barth (1990) suggested that good leaders will practice transformational leadership. Buck (1989) defines a transformational leader as:

1. A leader who uses leadership that goes beyond merely managing the system to helping the system achieve its next stage of evolution.
2. A leader who shares a vision that becomes the fused purpose of the organization.
3. A leader who communicates this vision in order to provide up-to-date information to different audiences regarding the status of the organization.

This consists of identifying, encouraging, and supporting others to assume positions of leadership. Leithwood and Steinback (1989) state that successful superintendents will be those who find a way of leading by sharing power and by engaging members of the organization and the community in the methods of leadership. Superintendents must focus on creating learning for children that is both individualized and connected to the personal interests and inclusive of the broader social context that will allow children to live together in a complex democracy.

Superintendents were characterized as setting goals and establishing expectations and standards, selecting staff, supervising and evaluating staff, establishing consistency in curriculum and instruction, and monitoring curriculum and instruction. Superintendents were seen as directly involved in the technical core operations of their districts (Glass, 1993). The superintendents were also engaged in culture building, communicating with staff, developing team activities, showing concern, building morale, resolving problems, cutting through the paperwork, securing rapid solutions to pressing problems, linking schools and district offices, promoting closer relationships between district and site administrators, and mandating administrator staff development that focused on curriculum and instruction (Carter, D.S.G., Glass, T., & Hord, S.M., 1993). Carter et al. (1993) concluded that the superintendent's leadership was the most important factor in creating a positive district climate or culture. Superintendents focused on learning, accountability, changing, caring, commitment, and community.

Bennis (1984, p. 17) identified four competencies of transformational leaders:

1. Management of attention; a compelling vision with a clear sense of outcome, goal, and direction.

2. Management of meaning; communicating the vision, making the vision clear, and aligning people to the vision.
3. Management of trust, constancy, and focus.
4. Management of self; knowing one's skills and deploying these effectively.

Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach (1999) summarized seven dimensions of transformational leadership. These are charisma/inspiration/vision, intellectual stimulation, individual stimulation, contingent reward, high performance expectations, goal consensus, and modeling. Johnson (2000) described transformational leadership as a relationship of mutual consent and interdependence is guided by ideas and values rather than favors and obligations.

Leadership Practices of Superintendents

Legisbrief (2008) noted, "High quality leadership is essential for student achievement, education reform" and creating school district performance that is high-achieving/high-performing (para. 1). The effective superintendent utilizes his or her leadership skill(s) in the context to which it is needed. Cuban (1998) defined theses as follows:

> Instructional leaders must bear the ultimate responsibility for improving student achievement. Managerial leaders must keep the district operating efficiently with minimum friction while making the necessary changes. Political leaders negotiate with multiple stakeholders to get approval for resources and programs. (p 56)

Leadership of a superintendent requires the ability to multitask within the plethora of responsibilities. Front and center in public education are the superintendents and their role as observed by Houston (2007).

> To preserve the possibilities for our children requires leadership. And that leadership is also a "critical condition' for success. While the educational journey takes place in the classroom and school, the trip is planned, the fuel is acquired, and the steering is done in the superintendent's office. (p. 432)

Starting to put a link among student achievement, test scores, and superintendent's attributes, Peterson's (1980), as cited in Kirst (2003) data from a state report found superintendents:

a) Visited classrooms often
b) Conducted intensive staff development that supported district goals and was highly visible throughout the district
c) Communicated with school leaders
d) Kept focus on district goals for student achievement
e) Kept fiscal stability
f) Freed to make decisions without fear of board intervention. (p. 9)

According to Leithwood and Riehl (2003), a core set of leadership practices form the basis of successful leadership and is valuable in almost all educational contexts (p. 5). Their basic set of leadership practices included setting direction, developing people, and redesigning the organization.

1. Setting direction involves promoting a shared meaning for all stakeholders relative to the district's mission. This collective vision process entails using and modeling the best learning and teaching techniques. Hoyle, J., Björk, L., Collier, V., & Glass, T. E. (2005) concurred that essential to setting direction successful leaders promote high performance expectations, foster acceptance of group goals, monitor organizational performances, and communicate effectively with diverse stakeholders (p. 4).
2. Hoyle et al. (2005) noted that developing people is done through modeling shared beliefs, offering intellectual stimulation, and providing individual support for

those engaged in the change. Noted as well is the fact that the change emphasizes that leaders are obligated to develop their people because the organization is only as good as its people (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003, p. 3).

3. Developing and redesigning the organization from an effective leader's perspective entails the support of its stakeholders and viewing the organization as a professional learning community (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003, p. 2).

Building on research by previous authors, Leithwood and Riehl (2003) stated that success could occur in any type of organization by following fundamental leadership practices. These basic leadership practices fall into several categories, which may, depending on the researcher, have different names. Hallinger and Heck (1999), as cited in Leithwood and Riehl, 2003) named their categories "purpose, people, structures and social systems" (p. 23), while Conger and Kanungo (1998) named their categories "visioning strategies, efficacy building strategies and context changing strategies" (p. 23). The leadership practices for Leithwood and Riehl were classified into the categories of "setting direction, developing people and redesigning the organization" (Hechinger Institute, 2006, p. 3); research by Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003) fits within these last three headings.

The focus on best practices acknowledges the multifaceted role of the superintendent while prioritizing the instructional focus and school guidance responsibilities that commonly define 21st century district leaders. Standards and principles from AASA (DiPaola & Stronge, 2003) and Marzano, R. J., Waters, J. T. and McNulty, B. A. (2005) in Leadership that Works codified and clarified leadership practices representative of effective superintendents: vision and values, core knowledge

competencies, instructional leadership, community and relationships, communication and collaboration, and management.

Instructional Leadership

The effective superintendent is the primary instructional leader for the district, prioritizing student achievement and effective instructional practices as the foremost goals of the district (DiPaola & Stronge, 2003; Waters & Marzano, 2007). The superintendent hones a clear and collaborative vision of teaching and learning with a synthesis of relevant research and specific needs of the district to drive goals for student achievement and the instructional program (Portis & Garcia, 2007; Waters & Marzano, 2007). The superintendent plans, implements, and evaluate the efficacy of the school or district's instructional and assessment programming, as well as to use that data and other sources of external research to inform district improvement practices (AASA 2006, 2007; Waters & Marzano, 2007).

In the era of accountability, raising student performance is now viewed by most public school superintendents as one of their most daunting tasks (Bryd, Drews, & Johnson, 2006). Previous scholarship reveals that superintendents of academically successful school districts share similar leadership practices and approaches. In particular, Waters and Marzano's (2006) meta-analysis of effective superintendents identified six leadership practices positively linked to improved student achievement. These include:

1. Collaborative goal-setting that includes all the district's relevant stakeholders
2. Establishing non-negotiable goals for student achievement and classroom instructions

3. Aligning board support for the district's non-negotiable goals
4. Continuous monitoring of the district's progress in attaining its non-negotiable goals
5. Effectively utilizing resources to support the accomplishment of district goals
6. Providing defined autonomy to principals within clearly defined operational boundaries

Superintendents are profoundly interested in curriculum and instructional matters, spending hours per week in schools interacting with principals, teachers, and student. Superintendents express a need to visit and be visible at school sites (Murphy, Hallinger, and Peterson, 1985). Superintendents felt it desirable to be on school sites, to perform monitoring activities, and to offer advice and support to principals on a continuing basis.

Castagnola (2005) found that the study of Coleman and LaBoque (1990) "concluded that the superintendent's ability to lead the district was the single most important factor leading to success" (p. 25). According to Elmore (2005) Leithwood asserted that the prime enablers of school-level actions lie with the school districts that are a reflection of the superintendent. In leading the district, a superintendent's prime concern needs to be student academic achievement, which is relative to school district performance (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003, p. 2). To ensure or influence this factor, the superintendents should utilize their mission, vision, and goals to put in place those components relative to the success of the students who can face many challenges. Supporting resources, processes, and other components help to reinforce teaching and learning. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) continued to describe the organization as providing assistance to schools in clarifying their mission and goals, in reframing their cultures and

structures around student learning in collecting and using information about teaching and learning. In articulating state and district policy in ways that connect to the experience and needs of the people in schools, and in creating a stable environment for planning and deliberate action, (p. 193)

Community and Relationships

The superintendent involves stakeholders particularly school personnel and the school board in realizing the district's vision and improve student achievement. The efficacy of outcomes and initiatives is determined by coalitions, collaborations, and motivation, so the superintendent must build trust, focus attention to process, and employ political savvy to ensure buy-in (Goens, 2009; Phillips & Phillips, 2007). By discerning community value and expectations, they establish early-on and consistently nurture relationships with key stakeholders (AASA, 2009).

Superintendents involve key constituents in the goal setting process, shares and publicizes relevant school data, mobilizes parents and community members, builds local- or state-level coalitions, and communicates timely and relevant information to personnel (AASA, 2006; Waters, Marzano & McNulty, 2006). The superintendent recognizes the effect of shared leadership, one in which teams and ongoing collaborations help define and commit to a common vision, to a culture of respect and openness, and to methods for decision making that ensure every child gets the best possible education (Blankstein, 2004; Weast, 2008). Also, the superintendent will develop their own constituency among business and civic groups, thereby enlisting the support of the wider community (Portis & Garcia, 2007).

Communication and Collaboration

The superintendent is the voice of the district, communicating with clarity and great frequency so that the mission of the district is understood and supported (AASA, 2006; AASA, 2007; Waters & Marzano, 2007). The district performance is communicated to the school and external community and the superintendent provides feedback to everyone he or she collaborates. By communicating timely and relevant information (i.e. student achievement data) to all stakeholders, the superintendent builds trust, provides actionable guidance on personnel and programs he/she supervises, and demonstrates responsiveness to situations that arise (McCullough, 2009).

The success of the vision is directly related to how well it is communicated in a variety of ways to all stakeholders (Yukl, 2006). Waters, J. T., Marzano, R. J. and McNulty, B. (2004) wrote school leaders must be involved as an advocate for the school to all stakeholders. Patterson (2000) added, "New superintendents must build strong relationships with multiple constituencies to lay a solid foundation for district success" (p. 64). In addition to communicating the vision, leadership requires clear communication to clarify roles, tasks, goals, expectations, and objectives.

According to Bolman and Deal (2003) in order to gain the support of others "you need to cultivate relationships" (p. 210). Healthy relationships are established when leaders express confidence in others, encourage others, inspire others, and make emotional connections through face-to-face interaction (Marzano, R. J., Waters, J. T., & McNulty, B. A., 2005; Yukl, 2006). For the school superintendent to be successful, it is crucial to build good relationships with school board members and with various constituencies in the school and community (Patterson, 2000). According to Baldoni

(2007) leaders make progress by inspiring others through relationships and are generally viewed as more effective if they build good relationships. Leaders must utilize alliances, networks, and coalitions, and "learn how to manage relations with both allies and opponents" (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 204).

The school superintendent collaborates with others in the community and within the school district. To help achieve educational objectives, school superintendents must build partnerships with key individuals within the community. Research has demonstrated that building a good working relationship between the school and community resources has a positive impact on student learning (Wilmore, 2006). Shared leadership allows others to be involved and have an influence over the leader's decisions (Yukl, 2006). School leaders can work to develop collaborative efforts by being receptive, building relationships, encouraging participation, and building consensus (Donaldson, 2008).

Kowalski (2005) stated that the current role of the superintendent is that of communicator. This study confirmed his findings. Knowledge of curriculum and instruction were seen as important to the participants, but not as critical as skilled communication with all constituents, especially the Board of Education. All recognized the importance of collaborative leadership.

Management

The leader is effective in aligning district systems and operations (e.g. budgeting, compliance) and organizational performance to the goals and values of the district (Portia & Garcia, 2007; Waters, Marzano, & McNutty, 2006). The district leader must employ a system-wide, district-centered approach to manage both the millions of taxpayer dollars

invested annually in the district and the demands resulting from federal- and state-level centralization of education policy. Fiscal, regulatory, operational, and personnel responsibilities must be effectively planned and coordinated to support short-term and long-term district needs (Glass, 2005; Waters & Marzano, 2007). To ensure efficient usage of tax dollars and smoothly functioning management base, the district leader must also balance setting clear, non-negotiable goals about how the district is to be operated while providing school leadership teams with the responsibility and authority for determining how to meet those goals (AASA, 2007).

Because the superintendent is accountable for overall district performance educationally, financially, and administratively, the superintendent must be a subject matter expert on many areas of educational leadership and continually update this knowledge as trends and mandates change (Eadie, 2003; Phillips & Phillips, 2007). The superintendent must pay close attention to what data and research say about learning and achievement, and apply new leadership frameworks and practices to ensure improved student achievement (AASA, 2007). The district leader must have significant knowledge of legal issues affecting education; they must keep abreast of changes to mandates, legal requirements, and compensation/retirement systems at the state level (Glass, 2005).

Inspiring Followers

Effective leaders inspire followers to a higher level of commitment to their work and to the organization. If the leader is passionate about what he or she does and communicates optimism, it brings hope and inspiration to others (Bennis, 2003). Superintendents foster relationship that encourage participation, ownership, and commitment (Donaldson, 2001). Marzano et al. (2005) wrote of the importance of the

school leader being optimistic and setting the best emotional tone. The leader inspires others to greater accomplishments, to be the driving force for initiatives, and to communicate a positive attitude about the abilities of the staff to reach objectives. Inspired followers become more dedicated to their work because they are doing it based upon their deeply held feelings about its importance (Sergiovanni, 2007).

Professional Growth

Drucker (2001) wrote, "Every enterprise is a learning and teaching institution. Training and development must be built into it on all levels – training and development that never stops." (p. 11) Leaders must continually improve their respective organizations so that organizational growth can always be a reality (Senge, 2006). Funding must be set aside for professional development that is coordinated, extensive, ongoing, and accessible (Waters & Marzano, 2006). Continuous learning and innovative ideas are crucial for organizational growth, and effective leaders must encourage and facilitate the necessary collective learning efforts (Yukl, 2006).

Ethical Behavior

With the ever increasing number of school districts across the United States that are in the news because of unethical practices of superintendents, the focus is now directed on how superintendents handle the stress of high-stakes testing and quality education without cheating. Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach (2000) stated "…authority and influence are to be derived from defensible conceptions of what is right and good" (p. 10). The superintendent leads the way to establishing a desirable working climate by acting in the best ethical manner.

Ethical leadership involves treating individuals with fairness, dignity and respect and fostering an atmosphere characterized by mutual respect, trust, and cooperation. When the school district is characterized by mutual respect and shared work values, it results in a higher level of collegiality among the staff, which produces increased commitment and improved performance (Sergiovanni, 2007; Wilmore, 2008; Yukl, 2006). Yukl (2006) gave several characteristics of what constitutes ethical leadership, including developing a vision based upon follower input, disclosing important information, uses critical evaluation to come up with better solutions, implements training to gain improvement, and making tough decisions even when it may involve personal risk.

The Profession of the Superintendent

The work portfolio of America's school superintendents is increasingly diverse: they are responsible for student progress and achievement while balancing the diversification of their student and staff populations, the explosion of technology and the digital divide, an expanded set of expectations and involvement from the federal level, the media, and board and community relations, all in the context of an increasingly globalized education systems. Superintendents play a key role in local, state, and federal policy discussions and decisions, the very dialogues that ultimately impact and shape the future of public education. Yukl's (1994) research demonstrates that superintendents, as the district leader, are well-positioned to carry these tasks out, arguing, leadership influences, "The interpretation of events for followers, the choice of objectives for the group or organization, the organization of work activities to accomplish objectives, the motivation of followers to achieve the objectives, the maintenance of cooperative

relationships and teamwork and the enlistment of support and cooperation from people outside the group or organization. (p. 3)

Superintendents rarely fail because they aren't good at preparing budgets or because their decisions about personnel are inadequate. They do fail, however, because they make the wrong political decisions, neglect to deal with a powerful element in the community, or misjudge the extent of their board's support.

The job of superintendent can be divided into these parts: improving educational opportunity, obtaining and developing staff, maintaining effective relations with the community, and providing and maintaining school funds and facilities.

The following role practices have fluctuated depending on prevailing social conditions and all are relevant to modern practice. Thus, the contemporary superintendent is expected to wear five different hats, and she or he is expected to know when to transition among the roles. Consequently the business of school leadership in general and the superintendency specifically, has become increasingly complex (Carter & Cunningham, 1997). Contemporary Superintendents must not only manage curriculum, instruction and related programs, but also must be persuasive communicators and skilled politicians (Glass & Franceschini, 2007).

Superintendent as Teacher-Scholar

The superintendent as a teacher-scholar was dominant from approximately 1865 to 1910. The superintendent was the person who worked full time supervising classroom instruction and assuring uniformity of curriculum (Spring, 1990). Superintendents essentially functioned as lead educators, subordinate to the board members but superior to principals, teachers, and pupils (Kowalski, 2006). Superintendents in large city

districts were recognized as scholars because they frequently authored professional journal articles about philosophy, history, and pedagogy (Cuban, 1988).

It is obvious that the superintendent's focus must move beyond buildings, buses, and bonds to students and instructional improvement. Rarely does one find a high achieving school system with a low performance superintendent in the area of curriculum and instructional involvement (Peterson & Finn, 1988). Students deserve the opportunity to be in a school with a learning environment that affords them the opportunity to experience success, both academically and socially. History and tradition are working against strategies to open communication, to build trust, and to clarify respective roles, according to McCloud and McKenzie (1994), making it difficult for superintendents to exert their role and initiate and implement needed change to give students what they deserve.

Superintendent as Business Manager

As a result of the Industrial Revolution, classical theories, and principals of scientific management, the superintendent as business manager emerged after 1910 and remained dominant for nearly three decades. Some school boards placed more emphasis on a superintendent’s managerial skills than they did on his or her teaching skills. The role of superintendent as business manager produced what Schneider (1994) described as a control core cultural – an authoritative, impersonal, and task-oriented set of values and beliefs.

Superintendent as Statesman

This role evolved as a result of the Great Depression. The collapse of the stock market had eroded much of industrial management’s glitter, and after 1930, citizens

became more reluctant to accept the premise that superintendents should have more power at the expense of local citizen control (Kowalski, 2006; Kowalski, Petersen, & Fusarelli, in press). Concerns about centralization and managerial control gave rise to the superintendent as statesman. This role was anchored in the concept of democratic administration. As a statesman, a superintendent was expected to galvanize support for education (Howlett, 1993). Some authors such as Bjork and Gurley (2005) contend that statesmanship and democratic leadership were acceptable terms for political behavior.

The public school superintendency is a highly political and conflict-ridden position. In order to make persons filling superintendencies more effective more emphasis must be placed on attracting valuable top-level administrators and less on external pressures, which have taken precedence over the critical need for high-quality leadership. These issues have made it difficult to recruit and retain competent administrators, particularly in troubled school systems. It is important that issues such as stability, CEO and board relations, and the politics of the profession become part of the school reform agenda.

Superintendent as Applied Scientist

By the mid-1950s, democratic administration was being disparaged as an overly idealistic and inattentive concept incapable of providing solutions to complex social and economic problems. Critics argued that superintendents embracing this role conceptualization were focused on political philosophy rather than on the emerging social sciences (Bjork & Gurley, 2005). The nation's adjusting to post-World War II demographic changes (i.e. increase in school-age children and the creation of new school districts in newly established suburbs) spawned the superintendent as applied social

scientist (Callahan, 1966).The underlying intent was to develop superintendents who possessed “a greater sensitivity in large social problems through an interdisciplinary approach involving most of the social sciences” (Kellogg Foundation, 1961, p.13). Superintendents as applied scientist were expected to solve education problems endemic in a multicultural, democratic society (Sergiovanni, Burlingame, Coombs, & Boyd, 1999) by relying on empiricism, predictability, and scientific certainty (Cooper & Boyd, 1987).

Superintendent as Communicator

Today, an influence of reform initiatives and the realities of the information-based society in which they are pursued have transformed normative communication behavior for superintendents (Kowalski, 2001, 2005). No longer can superintendents emphasize their power and dominance (Burgoon & Hale, 1984) and issue instructions and commands down a chain of command and only from them to the person or persons below (Luthans, 1981). Specifically, administrators now are expected to initiate and facilitate school improvement by collaborating with school employees, students, parents, and other stakeholders (Bjork, 2001; Murphy, 1994). In order to do this, they have to build and maintain positive relationships with a broad spectrum of stakeholder groups (Kowalski, Petersen, & Fusarelli, 2007). According to Burgoon and Hale (1984) and Grunig (1989), relational communication is consistent, open, two-way, and symmetrical (i.e. intended to benefit all interactants). Further, it is intended to minimize formal authority and actual power differences (Burgoon & Hale, 1984) and to focus on both communicative behavior and mutual perceptions of communicative behavior (Littlejohn, 1992). Burleson (1998) found that "superintendents who communicate the importance of improved student

learning in ways that make this goal meaningful to constituents are more likely to gain their participation and support in reaching the goal" (p. 198).

American Association of School Administrators AASA

According to the AASA website, the School Superintendents Association advocates for the highest quality public education for all students. American Association of School Administrators information. (2014, September 29). Retrieved from www.aasa.org.

The organization develops and supports school system leaders. AASA, the School Superintendents Association, was founded in 1865 and is the professional organization for more than 13,000 educational leaders in the United States and throughout the world. AASA members range from chief executive officers, superintendents and senior level school administrators to cabinet members, professors and aspiring school system leaders. AASA members are the chief education advocates for children. AASA members advance the goals of public education and champion children’s causes in their districts and nationwide. As school system leaders, AASA members set the pace for academic achievement by helping shape policy, overseeing its implementation and representing school districts to the public at large. Through the Educating the Total Child advocacy campaign, AASA members are committed to creating the conditions pertinent for all students to become successful, lifelong learners.

AASA Superintendent of the Year Program

Now in its 27th year, the AASA National Superintendent of the Year Program pays tribute to the talent and vision of the men and women who lead our nation's public schools. This program is sponsored by ARAMARK Education, VALIC and AASA. The

Superintendent of the Year program honors the contributions and leadership of public school superintendents, who have been selected by their peers. This group of individuals represents highly qualified, successful leadership from rural, urban, and suburban districts, both large and small, who have demonstrated a repeated pattern of success despite the challenges in the position. American Association of School Administrators criteria for Superintendent of the Year. (2014, September 29). Retrieved from www.aasa.org.

Eligibility

Any superintendent, chancellor or top leader of a school system in the United States who plans to continue in the profession may be nominated. This program is designed to recognize the outstanding leadership of active, front-line superintendents. It is not recognition of service at retirement or a program to reward current state or national leaders.

Nomination Procedure

School board members, parents, colleagues, community members and other superintendents may nominate a superintendent. Superintendents may nominate themselves.

Selection Criteria

Each candidate is judged on the following criteria:

- Leadership for Learning – creativity in successfully meeting the needs of students in his or her school system.
- Communication – strength in both personal and organizational communication.

- Professionalism – constant improvement of administrative knowledge and skills, while providing professional development opportunities and motivation to others on the education team.
- Community Involvement – active participation in local community activities and an understanding of regional, national, and international issues.

Selection Process

- To be eligible for National Superintendent of the Year, an applicant must first be selected as a State Superintendent of the Year by the state association of school administrators.
- Each applicant must contact his or her state association to inquire about application procedures, selection process, requirements and deadlines. Timelines vary from state to state.
- A national blue-ribbon panel of judges selects four finalists for AASA National Superintendent of the Year from among the 49 eligible State Superintendents of the Year. The panel's decision will be based on the written applications and the letters of recommendations.
- The blue-ribbon panel interviews the four national finalists in Washington, D.C., to select the AASA National Superintendent of the Year.

Recognition, AASA National Superintendent of the Year

The AASA National Superintendent of the Year is announced at the AASA National Conference on Education in February.

- A $10,000 scholarship is awarded to a student in the high school from which the National Superintendent of the Year graduated, or to a student in a high school from which the National Superintendent of the Year is the current superintendent.

State Superintendents of the Year

- Each State Superintendent of the Year is recognized and honored by his or her state administrator association. The nature of recognition and honors vary from state to state.
- State Superintendents of the Year are honored at the AASA National Conference on Education in February.

Summary

There has been a great interest in the study of school superintendents. As indicated in the literature, there are a number of key leadership concepts revealed that indicate what are critical factors in developing effective leader in an organizations. This synthesis and investigation of the literature also sought to examine the salient literature findings to identified characteristics of superintendents such as being visionary leaders, believing that schools are for learning, valuing human resources, communicating and listening effectively, being proactive, and taking risks - all very common to successful leaders in educational systems.

According to the literature that was gleamed from reading a number of studies and books, it is recommended that to be successful, future school leaders, district, and all other levels of leadership will require very different characteristics than those of leaders in the last decade (Fullan, 2000). The enormity of the role combined with the increasing complexity of schools districts provides many administrative challenges for

superintendents. Understanding the characteristics that influence the effectiveness of a superintendent is a significant step in the process of improving the superintendency and superintendent preparation programs. The review of literature provides several categories to organize one's thinking when addressing the research question of what leadership practices are important to superintendent effectiveness.

Reoccurring practices in the literature are: vision, communication, problem solver, inspiring followers, collaboration and shared leadership, enabling others to act, ethical behavior, political awareness, and building relationships (Morgan, 2000; Waters et al., 2004; Wilmore, 2008; Yukl, 2006). Several sources of scholarly articles have been cited that list desirable leadership qualities for school superintendent. Sources that were commonly listed as desirable characteristics sought for in a superintendent by hiring authorities included an emphasis on student learning, effective communication, establishing a vision, having a strong sense of mission, professional growth, collaboration, working with stakeholders, acting with integrity and fairness, having an ability to motivate people, understanding the political context, handling budgeting issues, allocating resources, and guiding an organization through change. The review of literature helped define the focus into specific practices and informed my design of the instrument that was developed.

This review of literature for this study examines what researchers recommend are the most prominent practices for effective school leadership. Sergiovanni (2007) contends that schools have special circumstances and need special leadership because of their unique political realities, cultural implications, and government requirements. When practices are identified that are likely to result in effective school leadership, then

recommendations can be made about what school leaders can do to help ensure their own success. Lambert (2003) identifies several areas of superintendent leadership, including (a) developing a shared vision of excellence, (b) taking steps to ensure collaborations, (c) having communication that is transparent and multilayered, and (d) educating and engaging board members to understand vision, policy, learning, and management of resources, and securing essential resources. Danielson (2009) wrote school leadership skills include a focus on vision, having a purpose, being persuasive, having an ethical base, and developing an ongoing dialogue with teachers.

The literature indicates what is needed in order to be a successful organizational leader, and for the purpose of this study, an effective district superintendent. Adopting these recommendations will undoubtedly improve the superintendent profession and close the gap between student achievement and school improvement.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

Superintendents are rarely queried about how they view important issues, according to Glass, Bjork, and Brunner (2000), authors of a report commissioned by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA). Based on their study and the researcher's professional experience working in two school districts in two different states, this study aims to gain access to superintendents' thoughts about their leadership practices and the qualities ascribed to effective school leadership.

The role of the public school superintendent in the United States has evolved through four major stages of significant responsibilities, from cleric to master educator to expert manager, and finally, to the chief executive and educational officer (Callahan, 1962; Björk & Kowalski, 2005). With each evolutionary change, the characteristics and practices of those who effectively hold this role have also had to change and evolve into a different culture.

The previous chapter outlined the research on the characteristics and practices of effective leaders; however, my focus on the research has not been fully studied in the context of which characteristics are deemed most important within the superintendency by exemplary superintendents. To develop a set of common characteristics and practices needed by AASA superintendents of the year and finalists, this study attempted to identify the characteristics and practices which exemplary AASA superintendents deemed the most important within the superintendency. These common characteristics and practices were determined using an electronic questionnaire. The purpose of the

study was to identify the leadership practices and characteristics most important and most commonly used by the selected exemplary superintendents.

Chapter III includes the four research questions, research type, and design used to explore the purpose of this study. The population, sample procedures, description of the instrument, data collection procedures, and method of data analysis address the purpose and research questions of this study. Included in the discussion are the identification of the population and identification procedures for population subset groups, instrumentation selected for gathering data for the study, the validity and reliability of the instruments, and data analysis procedures. This chapter summarizes the methodology and procedures applied to the research questions.

Research Questions

The main goal of this study was to identify the key characteristics and practices needed by a school district superintendent to meet the demands of this position in the complex educational environment. The research questions were as follows:

1. How highly do AASA superintendents of the year and finalists rate various leadership characteristics as attributed to an effective superintendent?
2. How frequently do AASA superintendents of the year and finalists claim to have implemented the same leadership characteristics?
3. How much success does AASA superintendents of the year and finalists claim to have experienced with these leadership characteristics?
4. What professional leadership practices are perceived by AASA superintendents of the year and finalists to be crucial for superintendent effectiveness?

Research Design

To address the goals of this study a questionnaire instrument was designed to identify the relative importance of leadership characteristics and practices for the superintendency. The quantitative data was collected from the questionnaire and analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Student Version 21.0. A questionnaire was used to explore the unique perspectives of superintendents as it pertains to the skills perceived necessary to be effective in the role of school district leader. The questionnaire instrument for this study was a questionnaire designed to elicit responses containing descriptive data. Creswell (2009) stated that this would provide descriptive trends, attitudes, and opinions of a population by studying a sample of the population. The questionnaire was administered electronically via SurveyMonkey—an online software that allows users to create their own web-based questionnaire. Demographic information was collected and analyzed as well. Thus, descriptive, comparative, and inferential analyses were made. In the end, this study collected behavioral, attitudinal, and descriptive information—an all-encompassing questionnaire research design.

In designing the survey Fowler's (1998) suggested five principles for making the questionnaire an effective instrument were applied in designing the written questionnaire for this study. Those principles are as follows:

1. The strength of questionnaire research is asking people about their first-hand experiences. In this study, respondents were asked questions about leadership in the superintendent's role.

2. Questions should be asked one at a time. This questionnaire was written so respondents would answer each question before moving on to the next.
3. A questionnaire item should be worded so that all respondents are answering the same question. In the case of this study, the same questionnaire survey was sent to all respondents. Superintendents were given the same questionnaire.
4. All respondents should understand the kind of answer that constitutes an adequate answer to a question. For this study, clear directions on the questionnaire, describing each question in detail, made this possible.
5. Questionnaire instruments should be designed so that the tasks of reading questions, following instructions, and recording answers are as easy as possible for the respondents. For this study, clear directions were provided with the questionnaire.

Theoretical Foundations for Research Design

The research method selected for this study was descriptive. Descriptive research is used to describe facts systematically and characteristics of a given population or area of interest factually and accurately (Isaac & Michael, 1995). A descriptive study determines and reports the way things are described. One common type of descriptive research involves assessing attitudes or opinions toward individuals, organizations, or procedures. Descriptive data are typically collected through a questionnaire survey or an interview (Gay, 1996). Descriptive studies look at what exists—the status quo—and seek to describe it. New groups are not created (Fink, 2003). This type of study often selects specific characteristics and then determines how these characteristics are similar or different within a given group. Simon (2006) stated, “The purpose of this form of

research [descriptive] is to provide a detailed and accurate picture of the phenomenon as a means of generating hypotheses and pinpointing areas of needed improvement" (p. 43). Descriptive research designs, according to Leedy and Ormrod (2001), may be correlational, developmental, observational, or questionnaire. Descriptive research was used to obtain information concerning the current status of the phenomena and to describe "what exists" with respect to variables or conditions in a situation (Frankel & Wallen, 2003).

This study was limited to exemplary superintendents recognized by an expert panel. This sampling was used to acquire more in-depth understanding of the leadership practices of exemplary superintendents (Gay, 1996). The researcher did not educate the respondents about leadership practices or characteristics prior to the administration of the questionnaire. Nor did the researcher include any literature about leadership practices or characteristics and with the electronic questionnaire. Therefore, the respondent answered the questionnaire independently without any manipulation of direct control by the researcher.

When determining the design of a study, the researcher first considered the research questions, then the availability of data, and, finally the steps to be taken in order to interpret the acquired data (Newman & Benz, 1998). According to Leedy and Ormrod (2001), descriptive research focuses on either "…identifying the characteristics of an observed phenomenon or exploring possible correlations among two or more phenomenon" (p. 191). In this study survey research in the form of a questionnaire formed the basis for gathering data. The four research questions that guided the study require analysis of descriptive data.

The primary goal of this study is to generalize sample data to a specific population. As a result, inferences are possible (Babbie, 2001). Babbie stated, "Survey research is probably the best method available to the social researcher who is interested in collecting data for describing a population too large to observe directly" (p. 238). In a study using a questionnaire design the researcher often asks questions of participants, summarizes data using statistics, and then makes inferences based upon the data (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001).

Questionnaire research frequently includes some form of interview and/or a written questionnaire. Traditionally the paper and pencil questionnaire has consisted of an instrument that asks a series of questions to individuals who have agreed to provide written responses. Often questionnaires are mailed or hand delivered. With the advent of technology questionnaires can also be distributed through a variety of means including fax, e-mail, and website. In addition, the actual administration of a questionnaire can take a variety of forms. Questionnaire may be group administered, individually administered, or dropped off at a household (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001; Trochim, 2001).

There are advantages and disadvantages to each of the questionnaire forms as well as the means by which the instrument is distributed. A written questionnaire can be easily sent—whether electronically or by mail—to a large and dispersed sample (Trochim, 2001). Individuals who agree to respond to a written questionnaire may be more truthful in their responses because they remain anonymous (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). Also, participants are able to respond at their convenience. Another significant advantage to the individual questionnaire is that cost can be relatively low depending upon the choice of instrument. However, there are also disadvantages. The researcher using a mailed

questionnaire assumes that the individual receiving it will be able to read and understand the questions. Also, depending upon the format of the instrument, the researcher may assume the individual is able to compose an open-ended question response—which may or may not be accurate. Additionally, the mailed questionnaire provides no opportunity for the researcher to present a verbal explanation of the study, to answer questions the respondent may have, or to probe for a more detailed response that may be desired. Further, the return rate may be low (Trochim, 2001).

Data Collection Procedures

All participants in the study were sent a hard copy cover letter and an electronic cover letter explaining the purpose of the study and its timeline. The hard copy cover letter was sent because the researcher realized that district superintendents receive a large volume of email daily, therefore, the hard copy cover letter was sent to their residential address. Included in the superintendents' correspondent was a cover letter with explanations and instructions (Appendix A). All participants were assured confidentiality. After a waiting period, each participant who did not respond was sent a reminder via email after the initial response deadline. Duplicate copies were sent to those superintendents and who had not responded, but showed a willingness to respond when telephoned.

The initial request to participate in this study was made by correspondence through the United States postal mail and followed by electronic mail. After the superintendents agreed to participate, the data was collected through electronic mail.

Instrumentation

The Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) by Kouzes and Posner (1997) was the survey instrument (Part III of the questionnaire) used in this study for leadership practices. Permission to use the instrument was granted through communication with the LPI company (Appendix B). The LPI was developed by Kouzes and Posner over a ten-year period, through in-depth interviews and completion of questionnaires by managers and their constituents. From these responses the present questionnaire was developed. Kouzes and Posner identified five practices with two basic behaviors for each of the five practices that are present in leadership. The LPI (Kouzes & Posner 1997) is a 30 item questionnaire containing five subscales for each of The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership regarding leadership behaviors. The superintendents were asked to respond to their perceptions on their use of the thirty leadership behaviors. The LPI (Kouzes & Posner 1997) asks three questions for each of the ten behaviors for a total of thirty questions.

The LPI is valid to use with superintendents and principals according to Kouzes and Posner (1995) and Leithwood (1992). Leithwood, in a 1992 study, states that the superintendent role is much like that of the chief executive officer in a business organization.

After reviewing the literature and consulting other relevant surveys focusing on leadership practices, the researcher selected the Leadership Practices Inventory—Self Instrument (LPI) developed by Kouzes and Posner (2003). The instrument has been used with superintendents, principals, and other educational leaders. First, respondents indicated *to what extent* they engaged in the noted actions and behaviors. A ten-point

Likert scale was used to record their answer: 1 = almost never, 2 = rarely, 3 = seldom, 4 = once in a while, 5 = occasionally. 6 = sometimes, 7 = fairly often, 8 = usually, 9 = very frequently, 10 = almost always. A rating scale of 1 to 10 was assigned to the descriptors. For example, the *almost never* response equaled 1and the *almost always* response was a 10. Second, respondents indicated to what *degree of importance* they perceived each of the thirty behaviors.

Kouzes and Posner (2002a) have used the instrument for numerous studies to measure exemplary leadership through five observable and learned practices. In designing the instrument they viewed credibility as the foundation of effective leadership, as they contended that only credible leaders inspire subordinates. Practices of exemplary leaders were identified by Kouzes and Posner which included modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, enabling others to act, and encouraging the heart.

Practices leaders employ to model the way or lead by example include expressing personal values and being a role model for subordinates. Inspiring a shared vision is accomplished, according to Kouzes and Posner (2002a), by having a vision for the future and getting others to share the vision, and working to make it happen. Challenging the process, another practice, is accomplished by searching for opportunities to improve as well as taking risks. Enabling others to act is achieved through collaboration and empowering others. Finally, the practice of encouraging the heart seeks to recognize and celebrate accomplishments (Kouzes & Posner, 1995). This instrument was selected because it has been used in other studies related to superintendent leadership and by

Kouzes and Posner in business as well as educational settings (Boone, 1997; Wesson & Grady, 1994a).

The Leadership Practices Inventory was developed through a triangulation of qualitative and quantitative research methods and studies. 'The instrument which was tested over ten years (1986-1996) consistently confirmed reliability and validity of the results with a variety of organizations, including educational leaders. The LPI showed a strong internal reliability of .80 when scores of each response were compared against one another" (Kouzes and Posner 1997, p. 93). The LPI scales contain six statements for each of the five key leadership practices. When test-retest reliability was considered, the reliability was even stronger. "Over periods as short as one or two days and as long as three to four weeks, scores on the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) show significant test-retest reliability (or consistency) at levels greater than .90 correlation" (p. 93). The LPI was not included due to copyright restrictions.

Employing a descriptive design, the study incorporated an informational data sheet and questionnaire. The questionnaire was used to gather data in order to conduct for the two research questions of the study. Information regarding the leadership practices and characteristics of superintendents was obtained. The researcher believes that a descriptive model best fulfilled the purposes of the study, as the design was driven by the problem statement and research questions. It facilitated the collection of the numeric, descriptive data that were gathered to present “the facts and characteristics of the given population” (Simon, 2006).

For Part II of the complete questionnaire (Appendix C) used in this study, the researcher created questionnaire items to collect data on effective leadership

characteristics. For each of the characteristics, superintendents indicated the importance of the leadership characteristic used as a superintendent: (1 = not important; 2 = fairly important; 3 = neutral; 4 = important; 5 = very important ; 6 = extremely important). Superintendents also indicated the frequency of the leadership characteristic used as a superintendent: (1 = never; 2 = rarely; 3= occasionally; 4 = often; 5 = very often; 6 = always). Finally, superintendents indicated how much success they have had using each leadership characteristic as a superintendent: (1 = none; 2 = very little; 3= moderate; 4 = average; 5 = above average; 6 = a great deal).

In addition to responding to the questionnaire items, all superintendents were asked to complete a demographic and informational section of the questionnaire (Part I). The demographic items on the questionnaire were created by the researcher. Superintendents responded with the following information about themselves: (a) Number of superintendencies held including current position, (b) Total years served as a superintendent., (c) Level of education (master's, certificate, doctorate), (d) If currently working as a superintendent, (e) Total student enrollment in their current or previous district, (f) Whether the community is/was urban, suburban, or rural (g) Gender, (h) Ethnicity, (i) Age, (j) Year selected as finalist for AASA Superintendent of the Year, and (k) Year selected as AASA Superintendent of the Year. The confidentiality of the responses was kept; nowhere on the demographic/ informational data sheet were the names of the participants listed.

Anonymity of Participants

The identity of the superintendents was not made known to each other. All interactions were handled in an anonymous fashion, through use of the questionnaire. The

superintendents were also told that no names would be published in the study. This allowed the participants to share their true opinions and to change their mind at any time. The superintendents were told that their participation would be anonymous. The purpose for the anonymity was to protect their comments and allow them to feel free to respond in their own manner.

Population and Sample

In an effort to collect the most reliable and valid information regarding leadership characteristics, a cross-section of superintendents from the United States was used. Follow-up contact was made to encourage response from those contacts not returning the questionnaire. The population of respondents in this study consisted of 86 superintendents. The actual sampled responses were 47.

Current and recently retired exemplary superintendents were identified as participants in this study. An exemplary superintendent was defined as one who had received the AASA Superintendent of the Year Award or Nomination for the American Association of School Administrator's Superintendent of the Year Award during the school years 1988 - 2014. The selection criteria for these awards are:

A superintendent is considered for these awards through a nomination process in which the superintendent must demonstrate outstanding:

- Leadership for Learning – creativity in successfully meeting the needs of students in his or her school system.
- Communication – strength in both personal and organizational communication.

- Professionalism – constant improvement of administrative knowledge and skills, while providing professional development opportunities and motivation to others on the education team.
- Community Involvement – active participation in local community activities and an understanding of regional, national, and international issues.

When determining appropriate sample size researchers suggested that it should be as large as possible (Jaccard, 1997; Jaccard & Wan, 1996; Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). Leedy advised that when the population is approximately 500 the sample should consist of at least half of the group. Suskie (1996) advised that—allowing for a 5% sampling error and a 100% return rate—a population size of 500 requires a sample size of 217. However, Leedy and Ormrod (2001) also stated, "To some extent the size of an adequate sample depends on how homogeneous the population is… If the population is markedly heterogeneous, a larger sample will be more necessary than if the population is more homogeneous." (p. 221)

For the purpose of this study the population consisted of practicing, exited and, in some instances, recently retired superintendents in public schools drawn from the membership of the American Association of School Administrators. Permission was obtained to use membership contact information from the Executive Director (Appendix D). When the study was conducted there were approximately 86 practicing and retired superintendents who were previous or current members of this professional organization.

Compiling data from available or willing individuals who represented some characteristic under study is considered nonprobability sampling (Creswell, 2002). For this research study, nonprobability sampling was used, which referred to people who

were available or easily assessable and voluntarily participate. Furthermore, Johnson and Christensen (2004) stated that it is especially important to describe the characteristics of people participating in the study (p. 214). Specifically, as participants in public education, these educators were useful in providing their views and perceptions of superintendents' leadership practices. These superintendents as a sample are a subset of the public school population, and even though there would not be a generalization with 100% confidence, there was a fairly confident generalization to the population of districts with a similar demographic makeup.

Validity and Reliability

The validity and reliability of each survey has already been established. Kouzes and Posner's (2002b) conceptual framework for the LPI is drawn from their research. Five practices are identified "modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, enabling others to act, and encouraging the heart" (Kouzes & Posner, 2002b, p. 22). Validation studies have been conducted in both academic and business organizations and these efforts are on-going, as the instrument continues to be refined (Kouzes & Posner, 2002b). Further, the internal reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) for the inventory is between .75 and .87 depending upon the respondent category (Kouzes and Posner, 2002b). Kouzes and Posner (2002b) reported,

> The Leadership Practices Inventory has sound psychometric properties. Internal reliability for the five leadership practices is very good and is consistent over time. The underlying factor structure has been sustained across a variety of studies and settings, and support continues to be generated for the instrument's construct and concurrent validity. (p. 18)

A letter that explained the nature of the study, outlined the protocol, and provided information regarding how to contact the researcher to address any questions or concerns

was mailed. The letter requested an electronic return of the completed survey within three weeks. A secondary contact letter—that was emailed or mailed to those individuals who did not respond to the first survey request—has been included as Appendix E.

Threats to Validity and Reliability

The researcher of this study took several steps to minimize issues that could alter expected results. In creating a valid questionnaire, several steps were followed after feedback was obtained from a peer review. First, to improve readability, thereby supporting reliability, questions for this study were reviewed by committee and sent out to pilot for readability and comprehension. This step provided feedback on the construction of the questions that was useful for refining the wording of the items. Nardi (2006) stated that reliability is about consistency. The wording of ambiguous questions was rephrased. After review and approval of the committee to provide clarity so that accurate data were obtained, a final set of questions was prepared.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data was imported into the statistical program for the social sciences (SPSS, 2004). As described by Leedy and Ormrod (2001), descriptive statistics provide a means to describe the points of central tendency and dispersion. In addition, utilizing inferential statistics allows the researcher to make inferences about populations from the surveyed sample (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). Descriptive and inferential statistics were applied to the questionnaire data to address the research questions.

Ordinal data were analyzed as interval, as each response choice was given a numerical equivalent. According to Jaccard and Wan (1996), many of the measures used in the social sciences are ordinal in character. These data nevertheless can be analyzed

effectively using statistics that assume interval level measures if departures from intervalness are not extreme (p. 2).

For the survey, the numerical equivalent value equated to each of the responses facilitate this level of analysis as the metric qualities, according to Jaccard and Wan (1996), are inherent in the data, not in the scales. As a result, the assignment of numerical equivalents to the Likert-type scales in the survey "approximates interval level characteristics" (Jaccard & Wan, 1996, p. 3). Further, ordinal data were treated as interval because the numeric equivalents assigned to the Likert-like scales in the instrument was equal across the scale. Data values were limited by whole number assignments, but they were continuous and there were no gaps between assigned values. For questions contained in the informational data sheet where the data were nominal level, the percentage for each response was determined and a frequency distribution developed.

Data for Research Questions 1 - 4 were obtained from the questionnaire. Responses to the LPI gathered data for Research Question 4 as well. Key considerations in the analysis process included whether data answered the research questions, whether the information supported any existing research, whether information was contradictory, and whether new questions emerged as a result of the study. Findings are presented in the next chapter.

A frequency distribution and computation of the mean, percentage, and standard deviation were used to answer Research Questions 1 - 4. The central tendency measure of mean and standard deviation was used, as described by Isaac and Michael (1995), to establish the greatest reliability of variation between samples. The mean is the most

frequently used measure of central tendency, particularly when comparing interval data (Gay, 1996) as required in this study.

Data were also collected concerning the demographics of the superintendents surveyed: gender, ethnicity, length of service as a superintendent, size of the school district, and type of school district. The data were organized and analyzed descriptively. The data were reported in distribution frequency tables. The data present a picture of those superintendents surveyed.

Successful survey research and questionnaires should employ the following necessary steps: (a) define research objectives, (b) identify target population and sample, (c) identify variables, (d) design instrument and test, (e) create a cover letter, (f) distribute instrument, (g) follow up with non-respondents, and (h) analyze data (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 1996). Upon executing procedural Steps A-E, clearance and permission was obtained from the dissertation committee and IRB Board. Upon receipt of permission from the IRB (Appendix F), SurveyMonkey disseminated an invitation via emails obtained from AASA.

SurveyMonkey is online software that allows users to create their own web-based survey. This method of conducting a questionnaire was utilized for multiple reasons: (a) it is an efficient tool to customize a questionnaire, (b) it allows subjects easy response, (c) it aids in mass collection, (d) it can reach a large audience, and (e) it is cost-effective. To facilitate responses, a custom URL was embedded in an email invitation to participants. An important factor in supporting a high return rate was being able to take the survey anytime and anywhere; therefore, the subjects were encouraged to respond electronically.

SurveyMonkey uploaded the cover letter and the researcher sent a questionnaire invitation by using the researcher's web mailing list. SurveyMonkey had an infrastructure that ensured security and confidentiality of the questionnaire and responses. There was a follow-up email reminder in two weeks for non-respondents. According to Gall et al. (1996), generally in quantitative research using the largest sample possible makes it more likely that the measured variable will be representative of the targeted population. To obtain the largest response possible, reminders were sent two weeks later and thereafter to non-respondents to obtain sufficient responses. Upon return of the questionnaire, the researcher analyzed responses. Information from spreadsheets was transferred to SPSS. Thus, assessment for data analysis and findings began with disaggregated and analyzed data.

Cronbach's Alphas were run to determine the reliability of the scale variables. The scale variables include (1) Modeling the Way, (2) Inspiring a Shared Vision, (3) Challenging the Process, (4) Enabling Others to Act, and (5) Encouraging the Heart. The reliability of running the individual items as scale variables was established using Cronbach's Alpha. Tables 3.1 – 3.5 show the reliability for the groups.

Table 3.1 Reliability of the Subscales on the LPI: *Modeling*

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.627	6

Table 3.2 Reliability of the Subscales on the LPI: *Inspire*

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.802	6

Table 3.3 Reliability of the Subscales on the LPI: *Challenge*

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.637	6

Table 3.4 Reliability of the Subscales on the LPI: *Enable*

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.566	6

Table 3.5 Reliability of the Subscales on the LPI: *Encourage*

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.849	6

Summary

A questionnaire (with number of variables and a demographic section) was developed and sent to AASA superintendents of the year and finalists asking them about essential characteristics and practices for superintendents' success. The questionnaire responses were used to address the research questions. The questionnaire was administered by email using SurveyMonkey. The responses to the questionnaire were analyzed using quantitative methods. The characteristics and practices perceived important by superintendents were evaluated. The data and findings of this study are found in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

This chapter presents an analysis of the research findings. The first section contains a descriptive summary of the biographical data and personal characteristics of the respondents. Descriptive statistics were used to present these data. Due to the limited number of subjects, this investigator used a one-way frequency distribution analysis. This researcher did not report interpretations and conclusions derived from in-depth statistical analyses which go beyond the scope of the study. The second section contains the analysis of data upon which the research questions were tested. In this section of the chapter, the results related to each research question are reported separately. The results of each survey question appear under the research question to which it pertains. The third section concludes with a summary.

Purpose of the Study

The goal of this study is to identify the attributes and practices considered necessary by school district superintendent of the AASA superintendents of the year and finalists to meet the demands of leadership in their complex educational environment. Data were analyzed with the intention of determining the key characteristics and practices exemplary AASA superintendents believed to be necessary to be an effective superintendent in the twenty-first century. Descriptive analyses provide percentages and tables to organize and summarize the data. A quantitative questionnaire was utilized to gather data for the study. The survey requested that the respondents identify key characteristics and practices which led to their effectiveness as an exemplary superintendent. Also requested on the survey was demographic data such as district size,

employment status, and gender. The data gathered was used to develop an understanding of the relevance of these commonly selected characteristics and practices to the role of the superintendent.

Survey Population

The population for this study included superintendents of the year and finalists for the years 1988 to 2013 as identified by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA). AASA contends that State Superintendents of the Year demonstrate leadership for learning, possess strength in communication, seek improvement in professionalism, are actively involved in the community and knowledgeable of regional, national and international issues. These educational leaders are identified as exemplary for their experience, knowledge and expertise in their position as superintendent. This highly effective peer-selected group of superintendents was surveyed to gain their perceptions related to the research questions of this study.

Survey Data Analysis

Of the 86 recruited participants, 55% (N=47) completed and submitted the survey. The quantitative data needed to address each research question were gathered from the completed surveys. These data were compiled and organized using a computerized spreadsheet.

Research Questions

To accomplish this investigation the researcher developed four research questions. The researcher investigated the leadership attributes and practices of AASA superintendents of the year and finalists. The following research questions were intended to guide the study and to serve as an outline of the knowledgebase on this topic by

addressing the perspective, practices, and characteristics of AASA superintendents of the year and finalists.

1. How highly do AASA superintendents of the year and finalists rate various leadership characteristics as attributed to an effective superintendent?
2. How frequently do AASA superintendents of the year and finalists claim to have implemented the same leadership characteristics?
3. How much success does AASA superintendents of the year and finalists claim to have experienced with these leadership characteristics?
4. What professional leadership practices are perceived by AASA superintendents of the year and finalists to be crucial for superintendent effectiveness?

Data Collection Procedures

In August 2014, an electronic communication went to all the superintendents identified as AASA superintendents of the year and finalists. This communication contained an introductory letter from the researcher and a link to the survey on Survey Monkey, a web based survey administration site. The researcher followed the initial e-mail with a mailing of a letter of introduction and a link to the survey. The mailing occurred in mid-August 2014. In the initial mailing, the study group received information about the purpose of the study, that a non- response after the mailings would indicate they did not want to participate. Two weeks after the initial e-mail message went out, a second electronic communication went to all the superintendents thanking them for their response and encouraging them to return the survey if they had not submitted one. Approximately three weeks after the initial mailing, the survey closed with 47 of the 86 superintendents responding, a 55% rate of return.

Summary of Demographic Information

The biographical data explored the personal and professional characteristics of the AASA superintendents of the year and finalists in regard to gender, race/ethnicity, age, size of district, type of district, years of experience, number of districts as superintendent, highest degree earned and if they were currently serving as a superintendent in a school district. Tables one through eleven reflect superintendents' responses to personal and professional characteristics; these tables correspond to questions one through eleven on the survey. This study consisted of 47 (55 percent) of American Association of School Administrators Superintendents of the Year and Finalists from 1988 to 2013 (Table 4.1 and Table 4.2).

Table 4.1 AASA Superintendents of the Year

AASA Superintendents of the Year

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	1989	1	3.7
	1990	2	7.4
	1991	2	7.4
	1993	1	3.7
	1994	1	3.7
	1995	2	7.4
	1996	1	3.7
	1998	1	3.7
	2000	2	7.4
	2002	1	3.7
	2003	1	3.7
	2004	1	3.7
	2005	1	3.7
	2007	4	14.8
	2009	2	7.4
	2012	2	7.4
	2013	2	7.4
	Total	27	100.0

Table 4.2 AASA Superintendents of the Year Finalists

AASA Superintendents of the Year Finalists

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	1988	1	2.1
	1989	1	2.1
	1990	2	4.3
	1991	2	4.3
	1993	2	4.3
	1994	3	6.4
	1995	2	4.3
	1996	1	2.1
	1998	3	6.4
	1999	1	2.1
	2000	3	6.4
	2001	1	2.1
	2002	3	6.4
	2003	2	4.3
	2004	2	4.3
	2005	3	6.4
	2006	1	2.1
	2007	4	8.5
	2009	3	6.4
	2010	1	2.1
	2011	1	2.1
	2012	3	6.4
	2013	2	4.3

Table 4.3 presents descriptive analysis by gender: of the total respondents, 72.3 percent were male and 27.7 percent were female (Table 4.3).

Table 4.3 Gender of AASA Superintendents of the Year and Finalists

AASA Superintendents of the Year and Finalists
Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	34	72.3	72.3
	Female	13	27.7	100.0

Table 4.4 presents race/ethnicity identified data of superintendents in this study. 85.1 percent of superintendents indicated White as their ethnicity. Only seven of the forty-seven respondents identified themselves in a race other than White. Hispanic/Latino, African American, Asian, and Native American superintendents made up 14.9 percent of the total sample.

Table 4.4 Ethnicity of AASA Superintendents of the Year and Finalists

Ethnicity of AASA Superintendents of the Year and Finalists

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	African American	3	6.4
	Caucasian	40	85.1
	Hispanic/Latino	1	2.1
	Asian	1	2.1
	Native American	2	4.3

Table 4.5 illustrates the data pertaining to age of the superintendents. The largest reporting group for the survey was over 60 years of age (76.6 %). The second largest reporting group was aged 51-60 with 17% of superintendents responding. Combining the two largest reporting groups, 51- 60 and over 60, comprise 93.6% of AASA superintendents of the year and finalists. Only three superintendents were 50 years old or younger.

Table 4.5 Age of AASA Superintendents of the Year and Finalists

Ages of AASA Superintendents of the Year and Finalists

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	41 - 50	3	6.4	6.4
	51 - 60	8	17.0	23.4
	Over 60	36	76.6	100.0

In this study of the AASA superintendents of the year and finalists, the majority of the superintendents (93.6%) reported that they worked in a district with 2,500 – over 15,000 students. Only three superintendents in the survey reported being in a district with an enrollment of fewer than 1000 pupils. Table 4.6 provides information pertaining to district size.

Table 4.6 Student Population of AASA Superintendents of the Year and Finalists

Student Population of AASA Superintendents of the Year and Finalists

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Under 1,000	3	6.4	6.4
	1,000 to 2,500	1	2.1	8.5
	2,500 to 5,000	6	12.8	21.3
	5,000 to 10,000	10	21.3	42.6
	10,000 to 15,000	5	10.6	53.2
	Over 15,000	22	46.8	100.0

The superintendents participating in the survey identified the school district type in which they worked. In responding to this survey, 51% of superintendents reported their district to be suburban. Nearly 32% (31.9%) reported their district urban and 17% indicated rural or small town (Table 4.7).

Table 4.7 Type of School District Served as Superintendent

Type of School District Served as Superintendent

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Rural	8	17.0
	Urban	15	31.9
	Suburban	24	51.1

Table 4.8 shows that 57.4% of superintendents surveyed have 15+ years of service. Those superintendents with 11 to 15 years of service comprise 23.4 % of the respondents. The data reported for "Years as Superintendent" is inclusive of all superintendents, those that are currently working, and the 35 individuals that reported as retired from position of superintendent in a district (Table 4.8).

Table 4.8 Total Years Served as Superintendent

Total Years Served as Superintendent

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 to 5 years	2	4.3	4.3
	6 to 10 years	7	14.9	19.1
	11 to 15 years	11	23.4	42.6
	Over 15 years	27	57.4	100.0

Table 4.9 responds to the question regarding the number of districts served as superintendent. In review of the data for all respondents, 40.4 % are working, or worked in only one district. Three respondents noted that they have worked in over five districts. Twenty-three superintendents (48.9%) have held 2 to 4 positions (Table 10).

Table 4.9 Total Districts Served as Superintendent

Total Districts Served as Superintendent

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	19	40.4	40.4
	2	17	36.2	76.6
	3	5	10.6	87.2
	4	1	2.1	89.4
	5	2	4.3	93.6
	Over 5	3	6.4	100.0

In this study of AASA superintendents of the year and finalists, a majority of superintendents, 91.5% indicated that they earned a doctoral degree, while only 8.5 % indicated that they had received a superintendent's certification, Specialist or Master's. Table 4.10 displays data pertaining to degree.

Table 4.10 Highest Level of Education

Highest Level of Education

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Superintendent Certification	4	8.5
	Doctorate	43	91.5

The last question pertaining to personal and professional characteristics asked if the superintendent was currently working in a district. The majority of the respondents were not currently working as a district superintendent, 74.5%. The remaining 25.5 %, 12 superintendents, were currently working as a superintendent (Table 4.11).

Table 4.11 Currently Working as a Superintendent

Currently Working as a Superintendent

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Yes	12	25.5
	No	35	74.5

Importance of Leadership Characteristics

Research Question One

How highly do AASA superintendents of the year and finalists rate various leadership characteristics as attributed to an effective superintendent?

For Part II of the complete questionnaire used in this study, the researcher created questionnaire item 12 to collect data on 35 effective leadership characteristics. For each of the characteristics, superintendents indicated the importance of the leadership characteristic used as a superintendent: (1 = not important; 2 = fairly important; 3 = neutral; 4 = important; 5 = very important ; 6 = extremely important). Table 4.12 displays the frequencies for the individual items in importance of characteristics scale.

An analysis of these data showed that 45 superintendents most frequently selected the characteristic *Integrity* as extremely important. *Clear Communications* was the second most frequently characteristic selected as extremely important (37 superintendents). *Effective School Board Relations* was selected by 36 of the superintendents as extremely important. Also *Vision* (33 superintendents) and *Inspiring a Shared Vision* (33 superintendents) were in the top five characteristics chosen by superintendents as extremely important (Table 12). The characteristics ranked in the bottom five as extremely important included: Technologically Savvy (5 superintendents);

Empathy (9 superintendents); Holistic Perspective (10 superintendents); Knowledgeable about School Law (11 superintendents); and Spirituality (11 superintendents).

Table 4.12 Importance of Leadership Characteristics

Characteristic	Not Important	Fairly Important	Neutral	Important	Very Important	Extremely Important
Instructional Leader				6	14	27
Politically Astute		1	3	15	28	
Clear Communication				2	8	37
Knowledgeable about School Law	1	2	15	18	11	
Vision				2	12	33
Problem Solver				2	13	32
Knowledgeable about School Finance			1	9	23	14
Civic and Community Relations				9	22	16
Leveraging Team Strengths				12	18	17
Focusing on Professional Development				15	18	14
Effective School Board Relations			3	2	9	36
Empathy				16	19	9
Managing Resources/Instructional	1	1	4	22	19	
The Ability to Persuade				12	23	12
Technologically Savvy	1	2	4	24	11	5
Managing Media Relations			2	9	21	15
Inspiring a Shared Vision	1			3	10	33
Data Competent		1	12	22	12	
Culturally Sensitive				10	14	23
School Safety Awareness	3	2	10	17	15	
Delegator	1			14	16	16
Professional Credibility			2	3	11	31
Integrity			1	1	45	
Strong Beliefs				10	22	15
Holistic Perspective	1		2	12	22	10
Optimism			1	13	16	17
Self-confident			1	12	17	17
Conviction			1	9	18	19
Consistency		1	1	11	16	18
Compassion			1	13	19	14
Humility		1	4	16	12	14
Collaborative				9	17	21
Fearlessness			1	9	9	28
Respect				5	15	27
Spirituality		2	5	19	10	11

The means for superintendents are presented below in Table 4.13. Table 4.13 reveals that most items received mean scores between 4.21 and 5.94. The means indicate a general agreement with all the characteristics as being important. Looking at the mean values, the majority of superintendents ranked the following characteristics in the bottom five: Knowledgeable about School Law (M=4.77, Sd=.937), Empathy (M=4.72,

Sd=.852), Humility (M=4.70, Sd=1.121), Spirituality (M=4.45, Sd=1.212), and Technologically Savvy (M=4.21, Sd= 1.041). The majority of the superintendents ranked the following characteristics in the top five: Integrity (M=5.94, Sd= .323), Clear Communication (M=5.74, Sd= .530), Effective School Board Relations (M=5.72, Sd= .540), Vision (M=5.66, Sd=.562), and Problem Solver (M=5.64, Sd=.568). Table 13 reports descriptive statistics for all individual items in descending order. The means provide one glimpse at the characteristics considered to be essential to effective leadership in the superintendency.

A close look at Table 4.13 provides more discriminating perspectives on those characteristics that were most important and least important for the superintendent. Clear Communication was the characteristic that was ranked in the top three by the highest percentage of the superintendents. Humility was the characteristic that was ranked in the bottom three by the highest percentage of superintendents. Effective School Board Relations was the characteristic also ranked in the top three by the largest percentage of superintendents. Spirituality was the other characteristic ranked in the bottom three by the largest percentage of superintendents. Study of the table does reveal that the item with the largest mean (6 =extremely important, 1 = not important) is Integrity (M= 5.94, Sd= .323). The item ranked as the least essential characteristic by the largest percentage of superintendents was Technologically Savvy (M=4.21, Sd=1.041).

Table 4.13 Mean Importance of Leadership Characteristics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Integrity	47	5.94	.323
Clear Communication	47	5.74	.530
Effective School Board Relations	47	5.72	.540

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Table 4.13 Continued			
Vision	47	5.66	.562
Problem Solver	47	5.64	.568
Inspiring a Shared Vision	47	5.55	.904
Professional Credibility	47	5.51	.804
Politically Astute	47	5.49	.718
Respect	47	5.47	.687
Instructional Leader	47	5.45	.717
Fearlessness	47	5.36	.870
Culturally Sensitive	47	5.28	.800
Collaborative	47	5.26	.765
Managing Resources to Support the Instructional System	47	5.21	.858
Conviction	47	5.17	.816
Civic and Community Relations	47	5.15	.722
Strong Beliefs	47	5.11	.729
Leveraging Team Strengths	47	5.11	.787
Self-confident	47	5.06	.845
Knowledgeable about School Finance	47	5.06	.763
Optimism	47	5.04	.859
Managing Media Relations	47	5.04	.833
Consistency	47	5.04	.955
The Ability to Persuade	47	5.00	.722
Compassion	47	4.98	.821
Focusing on Professional Development	47	4.98	.794
Data Competent	47	4.96	.779
Delegator	47	4.96	.999
School Safety Awareness	47	4.83	1.129
Holistic Perspective	47	4.79	.977
Knowledgeable about School Law	47	4.77	.937
Empathy	47	4.72	.852
Humility	47	4.70	1.121
Spirituality	47	4.45	1.212
Technologically Savvy	47	4.21	1.041

Usage of Leadership Characteristics

Research Question Two

How frequently do AASA superintendents of the year and finalists claim to have implemented the same leadership characteristics?

Superintendents indicated the frequency of the leadership characteristic used as a superintendent: (1 = never; 2 = rarely; 3= occasionally; 4 = often; 5 = very often; 6 = always). Table 4.14 shows the frequencies of the usage for the individual characteristics. As displayed in the table, 38 of the superintendents used the leadership characteristic Integrity almost always whereas only 3 superintendents used Knowledgeable about School Law almost always. Additionally, Problem Solver and Respect (both 22 superintendents), Effective Board Relations (25 superintendents), Professional Credibility (26 superintendents), and Clear Communication (32 superintendents) were in the top five characteristics that superintendents use almost always. Conversely, 4 superintendents almost always used Technologically Savvy characteristic, 6 superintendents almost always used Humility, and 8 superintendents almost always used Focusing on Professional Development, Empathy and The Ability to Persuade leadership characteristics.

Table 4.14 Leadership Characteristics Used

Characteristic	Almost Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Very Often	Almost Always
Instructional Leader			4	12	20	11
Politically Astute			2	6	19	20
Clear Communication				1	14	32
Knowledgeable about School Law			5	19	20	3
Vision			1	9	20	17
Problem Solver				4	21	22
Knowledgeable about School Finance			1	15	22	9
Civic and Community Relations			2	15	18	12
Leveraging Team Strengths			1	13	21	12
Focusing on Professional Development			2	17	20	8
Effective School Board Relations				3	19	25
Empathy			5	18	16	8
Managing Resources/Instructional			2	12	24	9
The Ability to Persuade			5	15	19	8
Technologically Savvy		1	8	20	14	4
Managing Media Relations		2	3	12	21	9
Inspiring a Shared Vision	1		4	6	17	19
Data Competent		2	16	19	10	
Culturally Sensitive			6	11	17	13

Table 4.14 Continued

Characteristic	Almost Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Very Often	Almost Always
School Safety Awareness		3	5	13	17	9
Delegator	1		4	10	22	10
Professional Credibility			4	6	11	26
Integrity			1	2	6	38
Strong Beliefs			2	10	22	13
Holistic Perspective		1	6	13	17	10
Table 4.14 (Continued)						
Optimism			2	12	21	12
Self-confident			1	14	21	11
Conviction			1	12	21	13
Consistency		1	2	11	14	19
Compassion			5	15	21	6
Humility	1		3	15	15	13
Collaborative			1	9	20	17
Fearlessness		1	3	9	16	18
Respect				6	19	22
Spirituality	2	4	10	8	14	9

Table 4.15 displays the descending means of the individual characteristics used by superintendents. From Table 15, Integrity (M= 5.72, Sd= .649) is the most important characteristic used by the superintendents, while Spirituality (M=4.17, Sd=1.419) stands out as the least important characteristics used by the superintendents. The top five characteristics used by superintendents include; Integrity (M=5.72, Sd=.649), Clear Communication (M=5.64, Sd=.605), Effective School Board Relations (M=5.47, Sd=.620), Problem Solver (M=5.38, Sd=.644), and Respect (M=5.34, Sd= .700). The bottom five characteristics used by superintendents include: Empathy (M=4.57, Sd=.903), School Safety Awareness (M=4.51, Sd=1.120), Knowledgeable about School Law (M=4.45, Sd=.775), Technologically Savvy (M=4.26, Sd=.920), and Spiritually (M=4.17, Sd=1.419).

Table 4.15 Mean Use of Leadership Characteristics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Integrity	47	5.72	.649

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Table 4.15 Continued			
Clear Communication	47	5.64	.605
Effective School Board Relations	47	5.47	.620
Problem Solver	47	5.38	.644
Respect	47	5.34	.700
Professional Credibility	47	5.26	.988
Politically Astute	47	5.21	.832
Collaborative	47	5.13	.797
Vision	47	5.13	.797
Consistency	47	5.02	1.011
Inspiring a Shared Vision	47	5.02	1.113
Fearlessness	47	5.00	1.022
Strong Beliefs	47	4.98	.821
Conviction	47	4.98	.794
Leveraging Team Strengths	47	4.94	.791
Optimism	47	4.91	.830
Self-confident	47	4.89	.787
Managing Resources to Support the Instructional System	47	4.85	.780
Civic and Community Relations	47	4.85	.859
Knowledgeable about School Finance	47	4.83	.761
Instructional Leader	47	4.81	.900
Culturally Sensitive	47	4.79	.999
Data Competent	47	4.79	.832
Humility	47	4.74	1.073
Delegator	47	4.74	1.031
Focusing on Professional Development	47	4.72	.800
Managing Media Relations	47	4.68	1.002
The Ability to Persuade	47	4.64	.895
Compassion	47	4.60	.851
Holistic Perspective	47	4.60	1.097
Empathy	47	4.57	.903
School Safety Awareness	47	4.51	1.120
Knowledgeable about School Law	47	4.45	.775
Technologically Savvy	47	4.26	.920
Spirituality	47	4.17	1.419

Success of Leadership Characteristics

Research Question Three

How much success does AASA superintendents of the year and finalists claim to have experienced with these leadership characteristics?

Superintendents indicated how much success they have had using each leadership characteristic as a superintendent: (1 = none; 2 = very little; 3 = moderate; 4 = average; 5 = above average; 6 = a great deal). Table 4.16 displays frequencies for the success using the individual characteristics. As Table 4.16 shows, 45 superintendents stated that they had a great deal of success with Integrity. A high frequency of superintendents felt that that they also had success a great deal with the following leadership characteristics: Professional Credibility (28 superintendents), Problem Solver (27 superintendents), Clear Communication (26 superintendents), and Inspiring a Shared Vision (26 superintendents).

On the contrary, Holistic Perspective characteristic (5 superintendents) was not frequently viewed as successfully used a great deal by the superintendents. As indicated in Table 4.16, the other 4 characteristics in the bottom 5 not used a great deal by superintendents included: Technologically Savvy (6 superintendents), Delegator (8 superintendents), Culturally Sensitive (11 superintendents), and Spirituality (11 superintendents).

Table 4.16 Success in Using Leadership Characteristics

Characteristic	None	Very Little	Moderate	Average	Above Average	A Great Deal
Instructional Leader				5	22	20
Politically Astute		3	1	2	2	21

Table 4.16 (Continued)

Clear Communication			1	3	17	26
Knowledgeable about School Law			1	9	28	9
Vision				4	24	19
Problem Solver				3	17	27
Knowledgeable about School Finance			1	5	26	15
Civic and Community Relations			1	8	20	18
Leveraging Team Strengths			2	5	25	15
Focusing on PD		1	2	11	21	12
Effective School Board Relations				1	3 18	25
Empathy			2	6	24	15
Managing Resources/Instructional			1	6	26	14

Table 4.16 Continued

Characteristic	None	Very Little	Moderate	Average	Above Average	A Great Deal
The Ability to Persuade			1	8	24	14
Technologically Savvy		1	2	18	20	6
Managing Media Relations		1	1	6	24	15
Inspiring a Shared Vision		1	1	1	18	26
Data Competent			2	7	19	19
Culturally Sensitive			1	7	28	11
School Safety Awareness		1	2	9	21	14
Delegator	1		4	7	27	8
Professional Credibility			1	1	17	28
Integrity				1	6	40
Strong Beliefs				3	25	19
Holistic Perspective	1		1	8	32	5
Optimism			1	4	26	16
Self-confident				7	22	18
Conviction			1	5	23	18
Consistency			1	8	22	16
Compassion			1	9	25	12
Humility			1	12	17	17
Collaborative				4	21	22
Fearlessness			1	5	21	20
Respect				7	16	24
Spirituality	2	5	4	8	17	11

Table 4.17 displays the descending means of individual items in the success using leadership characteristics scale. All the individual item means in this scale fall between the levels of (4) average success and (6) a great deal of success, with a mean range from 4.40 to 5.83. The mean of the highest individual item in this scale is Integrity (M = 5.83, Sd= .433). The other top 5 characteristics with success used include: Professional Credibility (M = 5.53, Sd= .654), Problem Solver (M=5.51, Sd= .621), Clear Communication (M=5.45, Sd= .717), and Effective School Board Relations (M= 5.43, SD= .715) and Inspiring a Shared Vision (M=5.43 Sd=.827). Relationally, the lowest mean within this scale was Spirituality (M=4.40, Sd=1.439).

Table 4.17 Mean Success Using Leadership Characteristics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Integrity	47	5.83	.433
Professional Credibility	47	5.53	.654
Problem Solver	47	5.51	.621
Clear Communication	47	5.45	.717
Effective School Board Relations	47	5.43	.715
Inspiring a Shared Vision	47	5.43	.827
Collaborative	47	5.38	.644
Respect	47	5.36	.735
Strong Beliefs	47	5.34	.600
Instructional Leader	47	5.32	.663
Vision	47	5.32	.629
Politically Astute	47	5.30	.805
Fearlessness	47	5.28	.743
Conviction	47	5.23	.729
Self-confident	47	5.23	.698
Optimism	47	5.21	.690
Data Competent	47	5.17	.842
Civic and Community Relations	47	5.17	.789
Knowledgeable about School Finance	47	5.17	.702
Consistency	47	5.13	.769
Managing Resources to Support the Instructional System	47	5.13	.711
Leveraging Team Strengths	47	5.13	.769
Empathy	47	5.11	.787
The Ability to Persuade	47	5.09	.747
Managing Media Relations	47	5.09	.855
Humility	47	5.06	.845
Culturally Sensitive	47	5.04	.690
Compassion	47	5.02	.737
School Safety Awareness	47	4.96	.932
Knowledgeable about School Law	47	4.96	.690
Focusing on Professional Development	47	4.87	.924
Holistic Perspective	47	4.81	.825
Delegator	47	4.77	.983
Technologically Savvy	47	4.60	.851
Spirituality	47	4.40	1.439

Leadership Practices

Research Question Four

What professional leadership practices are perceived by AASA superintendents of the year and finalists to be crucial for superintendent effectiveness?

The Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) consists of 30 statements describing various leadership actions and behaviors. First, respondents indicated *to what extent* they engaged in the noted actions and behaviors. A ten-point Likert scale was used to record their answer: 1 = almost never, 2 = rarely, 3 = seldom, 4 = once in a while, 5 = occasionally. 6 = sometimes, 7 = fairly often, 8 = usually, 9 = very frequently, 10 = almost always. A rating scale of 1 to 10 was assigned to the descriptors. For example, the *almost never* response equaled 1and the *almost always* response was a 10. Second, respondents indicated to what *degree of importance* they perceived each of the thirty behaviors to influence principals to school-based improvement. The LPI (Kouzes & Posner 1997) contained five subscales for each of The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership regarding leadership behaviors. The subscales included: modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, enabling others to act, and encouraging the heart.

The data in this section of the study represent the leadership practices by AASA superintendents of the year and finalists, as indicated in section three of the questionnaire. More specifically, descriptive statistics were used to present summaries of questions in section three of the questionnaire in an attempt to offer evidence relating to the research question.

Of the five leadership practice categories, the most commonly used by

superintendents that were identified by the forty-seven exemplary superintendents came from the category “enabling others to act.” The mean scores from the Likert scale are included here and in Table 4.18. The highest ranking behavior statements in the enabling practice are as follows: “I treat others with dignity and respect" (M = 9.85) and “I develop cooperative relationships among the people I work with" (M = 9.53). According to Kouzes and Posner (1999), "Exemplary leaders enlist the support and assistance of all those who make the project work. Leaders involve, in some way, all those who must live with the results, and they make it possible for others to do good work. They enable others to act" (p. 27).

Table 4.18 Means of LPI Items

Leadership Action and Behavior	Practice	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I treat others with dignity and respect.	Enable	47	9.85	.36
I follow through on the promises and commitments that I make.	Model	47	9.70	.66
I develop cooperative relationships among the people I work with.	Enable	47	9.53	.78
I am clear about my philosophy of leadership.	Model	47	9.51	.88
I set a personal example of what I expect of others.	Model	47	9.40	.85
I praise people for a job well done.	Encourage	47	9.30	1.02
I speak with genuine conviction about the higher meaning and purpose of our work.	Inspire	47	9.28	.99
I paint the "big picture" of what we aspire to accomplish.	Inspire	47	9.21	.86
I publicly recognize people who exemplify commitment to shared values.	Encourage	47	9.19	.99
I make certain that we set achievable goals, make concrete plans, and establish measurable milestones for the projects and programs that we work on.	Challenge	47	9.17	1.48
Enable		47	9.12	.51
I give the members of the team lots of appreciation and support for their contributions.	Encourage	47	9.11	1.01
I actively listen to diverse points of view.	Enable	47	9.06	1.07
I ensure that people grow in their jobs by learning new skills and developing themselves.	Enable	47	9.06	.94

Leadership Action and Behavior	Practice	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Table 4.18 Continued				
Model		47	9.01	.75
I ask "What can we learn?" when things do not go as expected.	Encourage	47	8.96	1.23
Encourage		47	8.92	.84
I build consensus around a common set of values for running our organization.	Model	47	8.91	1.69
I find ways to celebrate accomplishments.	Encourage	47	8.81	.95
I search outside the formal boundaries of my organization for innovative ways to improve what we do.	Challenge	47	8.81	1.15
I make it a point to let people know about my confidence in their.	Encourage	47	8.79	1.21
Inspire		47	8.71	.90
I support the decisions that people make on their own.	Enable	47	8.64	1.01
I talk about future trends that will influence how our work gets done.	Inspire	47	8.62	1.05
I give people a great deal of freedom and choice in deciding how to do their work.	Enable	47	8.60	1.04
Challenge		47	8.57	.80
I describe a compelling image of what our future could be like.	Inspire	47	8.53	1.28
I spend time and energy making certain that the people I work with adhere to the principles and standards that we have agreed on.	Model	47	8.45	1.32
I make sure that people are creatively rewarded for their contributions to the success of our projects.	Encourage	47	8.34	1.42
I challenge people to try out new and innovative ways to do their work.	Challenge	47	8.26	1.58
I experiment and take risks, even when there is a chance of failure.	Challenge	47	8.23	1.31
I ask for feedback on how my actions affect other people's performance.	Model	47	8.11	1.80
I appeal to others to share an exciting dream of the future.	Inspire	47	8.04	1.97
I seek out challenging opportunities that test my own skills and abilities.	Challenge	47	8.02	1.29

The second set of behaviors rated most commonly used by superintendents was the practice of "modeling the way" (Table 4.19). The modeling behaviors rated among the top ten behaviors identified by the superintendents were: "I follow through on the promises and commitments that I make" (M = 9.90); "I am clear about my philosophy of

leadership" (M = 9.51); and "I set a personal example of what I expect of others" (M = 9.40) (Table 18). Kouzes and Posner (1999), state that leaders go first. They set an example and build commitment through simple daily acts that create progress and momentum. Leaders are clear about their principles. "Leaders model the way through personal example and dedicated execution" (p. 39).

Another leadership practice that superintendents rated high was "encouraging the heart." Superintendents perceived themselves as encouraging through the following behaviors: "I praise people for a job well done" (M=9.30) and "I publicly recognize people who exemplify commitment to share values" (M=9.19) (Table 4.18). Kouzes and Posner (1999) recommend,

> Encouragement is a curiously serious business. It's how leaders visibly and behaviorally link rewards with performance. As people strive to raise quality, recover from disaster, start up a new service, or make dramatic change of any kind, leaders make sure constituents benefit whenever behavior is aligned with cherished values. (p. 51)

The leadership practice of "inspiring a shared vision" had two behaviors rated among the most commonly used. The inspiring behaviors were, "I speak with genuine conviction about the higher meaning and purpose of work" (M=9.28) and "I paint the 'big picture' of what we aspire to accomplish" (M=9.21). Kouzes and Posner (1999) state that inspiring a shared vision means that leaders have a desire to change how things are and to create something new. Leaders cannot command commitment; they can only inspire it. "Leaders had absolute and total personal belief that the dream could be realized. The dream or vision is the force that invents the future" (Kouzes and Posner, 1999, p. 17).

Of the five practices, "challenging the process" was the least commonly used leadership practice (Table 19). Moreover, only one behavior ranked in the top 10

leadership behaviors: “I make certain we set achievable goals, make concrete plans, and establish measurable milestones for the projects and programs that we work on” (M=9.17) Kouzes and Posner (1999) state that challenging the process is, "The key that unlocks the door to opportunity is learning. The leader's primary contribution is in recognizing good ideas, supporting them, and willing to challenge the system to get new products, processes, services, and systems adopted" (p.7).

Table 4.19 Means of LPI Subscales

LPI Subscales Means in Descending Order

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Enable	47	9.12	.5054
Model	47	9.01	.7533
Encourage	47	8.92	.8397
Inspire	47	8.71	.8960
Challenge	47	8.57	.8037

The superintendents' perceptions of the importance of the five leadership practices are expressed as thirty leadership behaviors. The superintendents rated all the leadership practices and all thirty corresponding behaviors as important. Fifteen of the thirty behaviors received a mean score of 9.01 or above on the Likert scale and the remaining fifteen behaviors were rated between 8.01 and 8.99 (mean scores). Table 4.18 illustrates the most commonly used leadership behaviors employed by superintendents. Table 4.19 illustrates that out of the five leadership practices identified by Kouzes and Posner, the superintendents perceived themselves as using the practices of enabling others to act, modeling the way, encouraging the heart, and inspiring a shared vision more often than the challenging practice. Challenging the process behaviors were the least used and thus received the lowest ratings by the superintendents.

Two practices had behaviors that rated the mean above 9.01 (very important) and above (Figure 4.1). The most important leadership behaviors were from enabling and modeling. It is interesting to note that the top five behaviors for these practices also had low standard deviations of less than 1 (Table 18). This meant there was strong agreement among the superintendents on the five most important behaviors.

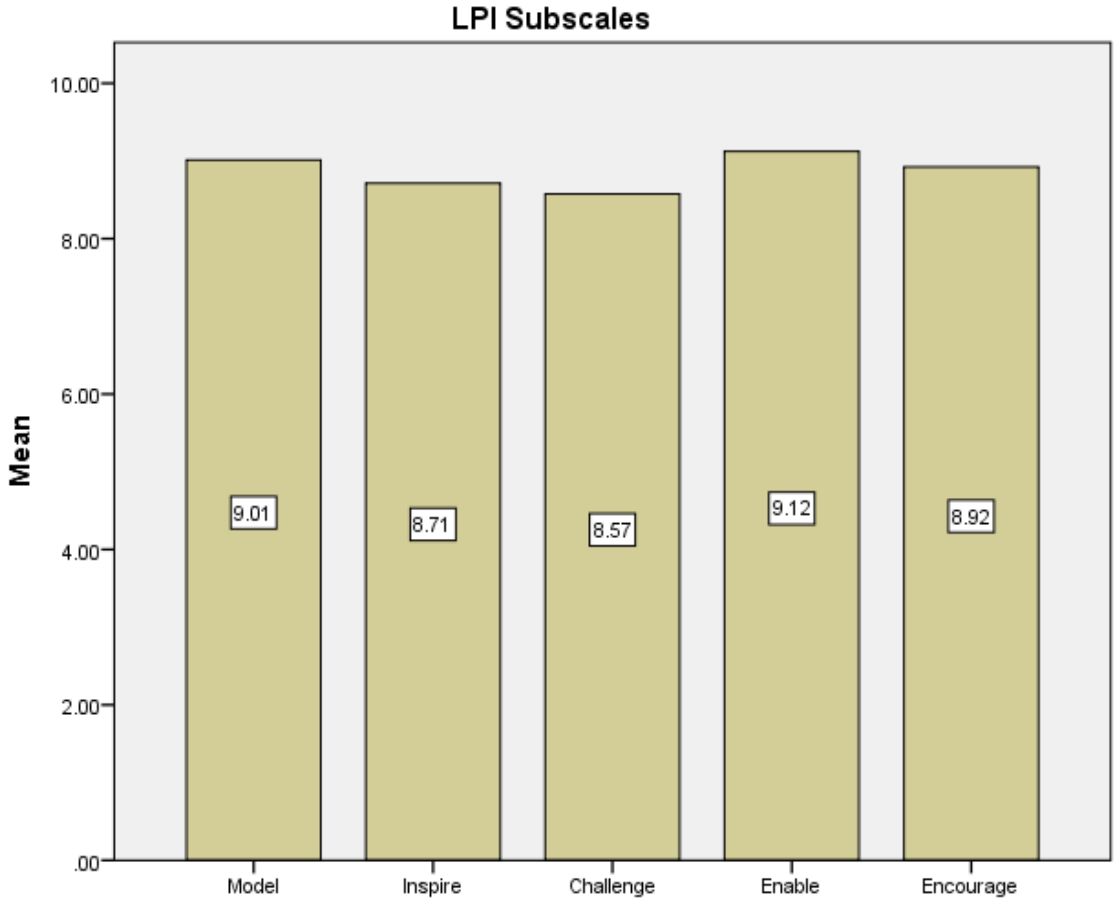

Figure 4.1. Leadership Practices Inventory Mean for Each Subscale

Summary

Chapter IV reviewed the purpose of the study, research questions, sample population, data collection procedures, and analysis of the data. The first section examined the personal and professional characteristics of superintendents of the year and

finalists with respect to age, gender, race/ethnicity, degree held and years of service as a superintendent. Descriptive analyses classify, organize and summarize data about this population to better understand the characteristics of this group of individuals selected for their knowledge, skills and abilities in the position. The second section presented the findings for the four research questions guiding this study. The data presented for each of the four research questions were analyzed and reported in narrative and table format. Chapter V presents the key findings and conclusions and makes recommendations for research and implications for action.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

This chapter presents a summary of the study that consists of the purpose statement, research questions, methodology, key findings, and conclusions. Based on the conclusions, recommendations and implications for action are presented. This study has provided information and insight for further reflection and study, but much of what the participants reported confirmed what was contained in the review of literature about leadership characteristics and practices.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine what practices and characteristics make superintendents successful. This researcher expected to clarify the national conversation about leadership practices that are most important for school superintendents. This study strives to detail effective leadership characteristics recommended for school leadership and identifies leadership practices used by school leaders. A critical aspect of this study has been to examine the professional attributes and practices most commonly used by AASA superintendents of the year and finalists. This examination provided critical information on the quality of leadership that is required for successful school superintendents as identified by the AASA organization and superintendent of the year program.

Research Questions

1. How highly do AASA superintendents of the year and finalists rate various leadership characteristics as attributed to an effective superintendent?

2. How frequently do AASA superintendents of the year and finalists claim to have implemented the same leadership characteristics?
3. How much success does AASA superintendents of the year and finalists claim to have experienced with these leadership characteristics?
4. What professional leadership practices are perceived by AASA superintendents of the year and finalists to be crucial for superintendent effectiveness?

Methodology of the Study

The research method selected for this study was descriptive. Descriptive research is used to describe facts systematically and characteristics of a given population or area of interest factually and accurately (Isaac and Michael 1995). A descriptive study determines and reports the way things are. One common type of descriptive research involves assessing attitudes or opinions toward individuals, organizations, or procedures. Descriptive data are typically collected through a questionnaire survey or an interview (Gay 1996). Descriptive research was used to answer each research question. In this study, the researcher focused on the collection of data from 47 superintendents who had been identified as exemplary by the American Association of School Administrators. These superintendents used the Leadership Practices Inventory and researcher designed characteristics questionnaire.

Survey Population

For the purpose of this study the population consisted of practicing, exited and, in some instances, recently retired superintendents in public schools drawn from the membership of the American Association of School Administrators. In an effort to collect the most reliable and valid information regarding leadership characteristics, a cross-

section of superintendents from the United States was used. Follow-up contact was made to encourage response from those contacts not returning the survey. The population of respondents in this study consisted of 86 superintendents. The actual sampled responses were 47.

Current and recently retired exemplary superintendents were identified as participants in this study. An exemplary superintendent was defined as one who had received the AASA Superintendent of the Year Award or Nomination for the American Association of School Administrator's Superintendent of the Year Award during the school years 1988 – 2013. The selection criteria for these awards are:

- Leadership for Learning – creativity in successfully meeting the needs of students in his or her school system.
- Communication – strength in both personal and organizational communication.
- Professionalism – constant improvement of administrative knowledge and skills, while providing professional development opportunities and motivation to others on the education team.
- Community Involvement – active participation in local community activities and an understanding of regional, national, and international issues.

Discussion

Kowalski (2005) reported that most states have plenty of people that have the credentials to serve as superintendent, the problem is quality. Superintendents have the moral, ethical, and legal responsibility to provide every child in their school district with the tools necessary to achieve academic success. At the onset of my study, I thought that characteristics such as politically astute, instructional leader, spirituality, humility, and

being data competent would be most significant regarding importance, use, and success of usage. However, an analysis of these data showed that the majority of the superintendents most frequently selected the characteristic Integrity as extremely important. Clear Communications was the second most frequently characteristic selected as extremely important. Effective School Board Relations was selected by the superintendents as extremely important. Also Vision and Inspiring a Shared Vision were in the top five characteristics chosen by superintendents as extremely important.

As stated by Carter and Cunningham (1997), the ability to enunciate a clear, shared vision and the ability to inspire others to work toward realizing that vision are key among the desired attributes of a superintendent that makes a difference in their leadership. But in order to choose a direction, a leader must first have developed a mental image of a possible and desirable future state of the organization (Bennis & Nanus, 1997). This is the vision. It is this vision which moves the organization into a better state of functioning and which makes the leader not just a decision maker, but a change agent. Barth (1990) suggested that good leaders will practice transformational leadership. Buck (1989) defines a transformational leader as a leader who shares a vision that becomes the fused purpose of the organization, and a leader who communicates this vision in order to provide up-to-date information to different audiences regarding the status of the organization.

The majority of the superintendents ranked the following characteristics in the top five for *importance*: Integrity, Clear Communication, Effective School Board Relations, Vision, and Problem Solver. Scholars identify credibility, articulation, and ability to see the bigger picture as some of the critical leadership characteristics of a successful leader.

Critical qualities and skills individuals already possessed included vision, commitment, ability to build relationships, a strong work ethic, genuine concern for their work and for other people, and courage. According to Chance, Butler and colleagues (1992) the successful superintendent must have vision as well as a plan to implement that vision, must possess politically savvy, and needs to recognize when to remain in a post and when to leave. Lashway (2002b) also suggested that vision and strong communication skills are vital.

Bolman and Deal (2003) referred to the importance of leadership qualities such as vision, commitment to core beliefs, the ability to inspire trust and build relationships, work ethic, and genuine concern for their work and for other people. Years ago, the school community and school boards had defined the superintendency by the leader's ability to manage fiscal, physical, and personnel resources; however, recently, the emphasis has shifted to vision, one who communicates strongly, build relationships, and demonstrate political acumen (Glass, 2005). Phillips & Phillips (2007) believed the superintendent must be relationship-centered, demonstrate vision, and interactive through the involvement of stakeholders, the fostering of teamwork, and building of strong relationships.

The top five characteristics *mostly used* by superintendents include; Integrity, Clear Communication, Effective School Board Relations, Problem Solver, and Respect. To be a successful school superintendent, one must have an understanding of what it means to be an effective school leader and put that understanding into practice. This requires continuous preparation and study, sound decision-making, a wide range of expertise, an understanding of cultural and political implications, good communication

skills, and being competent to carry out various administrative duties (Wilmore, 2008). Kowalski (2005) stated that the current role of the superintendent is that of communicator. This study confirmed his findings. Knowledge of curriculum and instruction were seen as important to the participants, but not as critical as skilled communication with all constituents, especially the Board of Education. All recognized the importance of collaborative leadership.

Clear communication is essential for a superintendent to practice successful school leadership. In this study, every participant spoke of the importance of communication. Not only is communication considered important by the participating superintendents who were surveyed, but it is also important because it is needed to implement other leadership practices such as vision, inspiring others, ethical behavior, and building relationships. In other words, if the school superintendent can effectively communicate, then he or she can promote a vision of where the school district wants to go, inspire and encourage others, and make sure those in the school district are aware of the moral and ethical obligation to do what is best for the students.

According to Patterson (2000) different superintendents have recommended that the school superintendent take time to build positive working relationships and good lines of communication with school board members by having work sessions to get to know them, by having informal conversations about issues that require decisions, and by helping board members postpone decisions when circumstances are highly emotional.

Superintendents stated that they had a *great deal of success* with Integrity. A high frequency of superintendents felt that that they also had success a great deal with the following leadership characteristics: Professional Credibility, Problem Solver, Clear

Communication and Inspiring a Shared Vision. Lambert (2003) identifies several areas of superintendent leadership, including (a) developing a shared vision of excellence, (b) taking steps to ensure collaborations, (c) having communication that is transparent and multilayered, and (d) educating and engaging board members to understand vision, policy, learning, and management of resources, and securing essential resources.

Based on the data, the superintendents rated three practices as most commonly used. In rank order, enabling others to act, modeling the way, and encouraging the heart were the most commonly used leadership practices. Of the five leadership practice categories, the most commonly used by superintendents that were identified by the forty-seven exemplary superintendents came from the category “enabling others to act.” The highest ranking behavior statements in the enabling practice are as follows: “I treat others with dignity and respect" and “I develop cooperative relationships among the people I work with." According to Kouzes and Posner (1999), "Exemplary leaders enlist the support and assistance of all those who make the project work. Leaders involve, in some way, all those who must live with the results, and they make it possible for others to do good work. They enable others to act (p. 27). "

The second set of behaviors rated most commonly used by superintendents was the practice of “modeling the way.” The modeling behaviors rated among the top ten behaviors identified by the superintendents were: "I follow through on the promises and commitments that I make;" "I am clear about my philosophy of leadership;" and "I set a personal example of what I expect of others.” Kouzes and Posner (1999), state that leaders go first. They set an example and build commitment through simple daily acts that create progress and momentum. Leaders are clear about their principles. Leaders

model the way through personal example and dedicated execution" (p. 39). Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach (1999) summarized seven dimensions of transformational leadership. These are charisma/inspiration/vision, intellectual stimulation, individual stimulation, contingent reward, high performance expectations, goal consensus, and modeling.

Another leadership practice that superintendents rated high was “encouraging the heart.” Superintendents perceived themselves as encouraging through the following behaviors: "I praise people for a job well done" and “I publicly recognize people who exemplify commitment to share values.” Effective leaders inspire followers to a higher level of commitment to their work and to the organization. If the leader is passionate about what he or she does and communicates optimism, it brings hope and inspiration to others (Bennis, 2003).

In the mid-decade superintendency study, Glass and Franceschini (2007) indicate that superintendents “have one of the most responsible and complex roles in modern society” (p. ix). This study suggested quantitatively what was imperative to the success of the superintendent.

Implications for Future Research

The context of the superintendency is complex and demanding (Kowalski & Oates, 1993; Kowalski & Perreault, 2001). It is defined by the culture and climate of the community (Kowalski, 2005), the philosophy and beliefs of the superintendents (Björk et al., 2005), and the academic needs of the students (Marzano et al., 2005). Each of these aspects impact each district independent of each other and the implications for practice must be teased out of each superintendent separately. The literature identifying the skills

and characteristics of successful superintendents is very limited. Continued research is needed in this area. From this study, several implications have emerged for additional research and consideration:

1. This study verified the characteristics from a limited number of successful superintendents. Surveying AASA organization that work with superintendents identified the successful superintendents. It is limited in the conclusions that can be drawn from it. There may exist superintendents in the United States that are successful but do not work closely with this organization. A study could be conducted to identify if other successful superintendents of this nature exist in the United States and determine if they value the same practices and characteristics.
2. In future research, an in-depth interview methodology would enable the researcher to garner a deeper understanding of the context of the work of the superintendent. The use of a phenomenological interview process to gain an in-depth perception of "essence" of exemplary superintendents may provide a more complete picture of the role (Merriam, 1998). This understanding could greatly enhance the literature on effective superintendents.
3. Continued research about the practices and characteristics of successful superintendents is important to determine how to develop future changes in training programs. Research should continue to look at each area of this study to determine what changes are necessary.
4. Future research on the key characteristics of superintendents could increase the generalizability of these results by increasing the sample size and widening the scope of the sampled population. For instance, in this study effective

superintendents were defined as having been recognized by their peers. Increasing the criteria for determination of effectiveness to include student achievement rates, community quality surveys, and/or additional data may encompass a broader perspective of the effective superintendent.

5. When exploring the possibilities for further study, one must consider the possibility of doing a quantitative study on the leadership practices, doing a qualitative study on a specific leadership practice, such as modeling or shared leadership, and doing a qualitative study involving teachers' and principals' views on superintendent leadership practices. A qualitative study can be completed about the leadership practices in this study by interviewing teachers and principals about which leadership practices they feel are most important for the office of the superintendent. An interview schedule would be formulated to address the specific needs of the research questions of the study. The interviews could include questions about which of the leadership practices they feel are most crucial in the superintendency.

Implications for Practice

Listed below are the recommendations for practice to further investigate the superintendency:

1. That leadership programs, regional conferences, and other professional development must imbed the leadership practices and attributes from this study. Furthermore, the data collected on the leadership practices and attibutes identified in the study should be incorporated in the design of doctoral educational leadership programs.

2. That exemplary superintendents serve as mentors to new superintendents. The exemplary superintendents must dialogue with new superintendents about how the exemplary superintendents set direction and develop cooperative relationships with principals and other school leaders.
3. School-district governing boards may find these data informative and useful as they search for new superintendents as well as part of the ongoing evaluation process for existing superintendents. The relationship between the superintendent and the board is a key component to a successful district and in retaining an exemplary superintendent. Governing board relationships may also be enhanced by seeking training and support activities to support relationship building opportunities.
4. Finally, the study attempted to identify practices that might be emphasized within superintendent preparation programs such as AASA and considered essential for training and supporting successful school superintendents.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to contribute to the leadership knowledge base by identifying the most commonly selected characteristics and practices needed to be an exemplary superintendent. The purpose of the study was to identify the leadership practices and characteristics most important and most commonly used by the selected exemplary superintendents. This study examined the leadership practices and behaviors of selected superintendents. The Leadership Practices Inventory (Kouzes & Posner 1997) and characteristics questionnaire was administered to 47 superintendents. To be successful future leaders of the school, district, or other levels will require very different

characteristics than those expected of leaders in the last decade (Fullan, 2000). The enormity of the role combined with the increasing complexity of schools districts provides many administrative challenges for superintendents. Understanding the characteristics and practices that influence the effectiveness of a superintendent is a significant step in the process of improving the superintendency and superintendent preparation programs.

The leadership characteristics of having a vision, effectively communicating, inspiring followers, practicing professional credibility, integrity and building effective board relationships are all important in helping a school superintendent carry out his or her duties. This study has indicated that the school superintendent must make great efforts to utilize effective communication and a strong sense of ethics in doing what is good for the students. Findings in this study provide evidence for understanding the role of the superintendent and the characteristics perceived to be important in the context of the role. Understanding the nature of the superintendency and the characteristics that exemplary superintendents hold in common are important contributions to the literature.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Superintendents' Cover Letter

EASTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY
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College of Education

Department of Educational Leadership and
Policy Studies

Cover Letter

Dear Superintendent:

I am a December 2014 candidate for a doctorate in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Eastern Kentucky University. I am a recent National SUPES Academy graduate (IL) and the 2013 recipient of the American Association (AASA) of School Administrators Educational Leadership Scholarship Award. My dissertation is entitled **Leadership Characteristics and Practices of (AASA) Superintendents of the Year and Finalists**. You are being invited to voluntarily participate in the above-titled research study. The purpose of the study is to investigate the key leadership characteristics and practices required to be an exemplary superintendent. You are eligible to participate because you were selected as either a nominee or the recipient of the National AASA Superintendent of the Year Award. You will be receiving an online survey composed of questions pertaining to issues faced by superintendents on a daily basis. There is also a demographics section which is pertinent to the study.

This research study is supported by the American Association of School Administrators. Completing the online survey will indicate your permission to be included in this study. If you agree to participate, please take a few minutes of your valuable time to complete the survey electronically on Survey Monkey at your earliest convenience. The survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. **The link to the survey is provided below. Please complete the survey by August 8, 2014.**

All responses will be held in the strictest of confidence. Individual participants will not be identified when analyzing the data. A code number has been used to identify your questionnaire for the sole purpose of allowing a follow-up contact to those who do not respond to the first request.

Your responses are of value to our profession. Your insights and information will help support those currently holding the position of superintendent and those who will be filling this most visible and critical role in education. The results of this study will

produce a profile of the most successful superintendents who are leading our nation's schools. The results of this study also will provide information of interest to practicing and prospective superintendents, boards of education, educational leadership programs, as well as to add to the literature in the field.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please call me at 859-893-1700 or contact me via email at doris_crawford27@mymail.eku.edu. You may also contact Dr. Charles Hausman (Dissertation Chairperson) at 859-622-8250 or via email at charles.hausman@eku.edu. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Survey link:

Regards,

Doris Crawford
Doctoral Candidate
Eastern Kentucky University

Appendix B: LPI Permission

June 5, 2014

Doris Crawford
128 Castlewood Drive
Richmond, KY 40475

Dear Ms. Crawford:

Thank you for your request to use the LPI®: Leadership Practices Inventory® in your dissertation. This letter grants you permission to use either the print or electronic LPI [Self/Observer/Self and Observer] instrument[s] in your research. You may ***reproduce*** the instrument in printed form at no charge beyond the discounted one-time cost of purchasing a single copy; however, you may not distribute any photocopies except for specific research purposes. If you prefer to use the electronic distribution of the LPI you will need to separately contact Marisa Kelley (mkelley@wiley.com) directly for further details regarding product access and payment. Please be sure to review the product information resources before reaching out with pricing questions.

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Best wishes for every success with your research project.

Cordially,

Ellen Peterson
Permissions Editor
Epeterson4@gmail.com

Appendix C: Questionnaire

Electronic Survey

Part I. Demographics and Personal Information

Please respond to the questions below.

1. Number of superintendencies held including your current position
2. Total years you have served as a superintendent.
3. What is your level of education (master's, certificate, doctorate)?
4. Please list student population (#) and designation of your district (rural, urban, suburban)
5. Are you currently working as a superintendent: _ Yes _ No
6. Gender: _ Male _ Female
7. Ethnicity:
8. What is your age: a) 31 – 40 b) 41 – 50 c) 51 – 60 d) Over 60
9. Year as finalist as AASA Superintendent of the Year?
10. Year selected as AASA Superintendent of the Year?

Part II. Leadership Characteristics

Please respond to the following questions by circling your choice.

For each of the characteristics below, indicate in Column A the **importance of the leadership characteristic** used as a superintendent: (1 = Not important; 2 = fairly important; 3 = neutral; 4 = important; 5 = very important; 6 = extremely important)

Then in Column B, indicate the **frequency of the leadership characteristic** used as a superintendent: (1 = Never; 2 = Rarely; 3= Occasionally; 4 = Often; 5 = Very Often; 6 = Always)

Finally in Column C, indicate **how much success you have had** using each leadership characteristic as a superintendent: (1 = None; 2 = Very Little; 3= Moderate; 4 = Average; 5 = Above Average; 6 =A Great Deal)

	Importance (Not Important – Extremely Important)	**Frequency of Use** (Never – Always)	**Level of Success** (None – A Great Deal)
11. Instructional Leader	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6
12. Politically astute	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6
13. Clear Communication	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6
14. Knowledgeable about school law	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6
15. Vision	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6
16. Problem Solver	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6
17. Knowledgeable about school finance	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6
18. Civic and Community Relations	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6

19. Leverage Team Strengths	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6
20. Focus on Professional Development	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6
21. Effective School Board Relations	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6
22. Empathy	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6
23. Manager of resources to support the instructional system	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6
24. The ability to persuade	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6
25. Technologically savvy	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6
26. Managing media relations	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6
27. Inspire a shared vision	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6
28. Data competent	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6
29. Culturally sensitive	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6
30. School Safety Awareness	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6
31. Delegator	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6
32. Professional Credibility	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6
33. Integrity	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6
34. Strong Beliefs	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6
35. Holistic Perspective	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6
36. Optimism	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6
37. Self-confident	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6
38. Conviction	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6
39. Consistency	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6
40. Compassion	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6
41. Humility	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6
42. Collaborative	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6
43. Fearlessness	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6
44. Respect	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6
45. Spirituality	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6

Part III. Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI)

Please respond to the following questions below.

The response scale runs from 1—Almost Never to 10—Almost Always.
(1-Almost Never; 2-Rarely Never; 3-Seldom; 4-Once in a While; 5-Occasionally; 6-Sometimes;7-Fairly Often; 8-Usually; 9-Very Frequently; 10-Almost always)

46. I set a personal example of what I expect of others Model
47. I talk about future trends that will influence how our work gets done Inspire
48. I seek out challenging opportunities that test my own skills and abilities Challenge
49. I follow through on the promises and commitments that I make Model
50. I treat others with dignity and respect Enable

51. I make certain that we set achievable goals, make concrete plans, and establish measurable milestones for the projects and programs that we work on Challenge
52. I give people a great deal of freedom and choice in deciding how to do their work Enable
53. I spend time and energy making certain that the people I work with adhere to the principles and standards that we have agreed on Model
54. I challenge people to try out new and innovative ways to do their work Challenge
55. I actively listen to diverse points of view Enable
56. I make it a point to let people know about my confidence in their abilities Encourage
57. I appeal to others to share an exciting dream of the future Inspire
58. I build consensus around a common set of values for running our organization Model
59. I experiment and take risks, even when there is a chance of failure Challenge
60. I develop cooperative relationships among the people I work with Enable
61. I search outside the formal boundaries of my organization for innovative ways to improve what we do Challenge
62. I ask "What can we learn?" when things do not go as expected Challenge
63. I support the decisions that people make on their own Enable
64. I am clear about my philosophy of leadership Model
65. I ensure that people grow in their jobs by learning new skills and developing themselves Enable
66. I give the members of the team lots of appreciation and support for their contributions Encourage
67. I describe a compelling image of what our future could be like Inspire
68. I ask for feedback on how my actions affect other people's performance Model
69. I show others how their long-term interests can be realized by enlisting in a common vision Inspire
70. I praise people for a job well done Encourage
71. I paint the "big picture" of what we aspire to accomplish Inspire
72. I find ways to celebrate accomplishments Encourage
73. I speak with genuine conviction about the higher meaning and purpose of our work Inspire
74. I make sure that people are creatively rewarded for their contributions to the success of our projects Encourage
75. I publicly recognize people who exemplify commitment to shared values Encourage

Appendix D: AASA Permission

Re: Doctoral Research Study

Dearden, Paula <pdearden@aasa.org>

To: Crawford, Doris L.

Hi Doris,

Just wanted to let you know that Dan and Denny approved your request for information pertaining to SOY. I have requested the current contact information for past NSOY and potentially the finalists since 1987. The information may have been coded in such a way in the database that we may have what you need more easily. Keep your fingers crossed! :)

I'll send it to you as soon as I get it. Whew! Hope that helps. :) Have a great rest of your day.

Paula Dearden

AASA Director,

Awards and Scholarships

Appendix E: Follow Up Correspondence to Superintendent

Crawford, Doris L.
Mon 8/4/2014 11:55 AM

Dear Former AASA Superintendent of the Year or Finalist,

I am tremendously grateful for the overwhelming response to my request for participation in the AASA Superintendents of the Year/Finalists doctoral study that I am conducting. This email is just a reminder to those who have not yet completed the questionnaire that you still have time. The final deadline for participating in the study is this **Friday, August 8, 2014**.
Please consider participating in this study. The results of the findings will provide important information for current superintendents and aspiring superintendents. Your feedback is vital for successful outcome and results of this important study.

Again, many thanks to all who responded to the questionnaire and to those who have yet to do so, I encourage you to take a few minutes of your time and go to the enclosed link and fill out the questionnaire.

Questionnaire Link: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Supes

Thank you for your generous support,

Doris
Doctoral Candidate
Eastern Kentucky University

Appendix F: IRB Permission

Graduate Education and Research
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NOTICE OF IRB EXEMPTION STATUS
Protocol Number: 15-002
Institutional Review Board IRB00002836, DHHS FWA00003332

Principal Investigator: **Doris Crawford** Faculty Advisor: **Dr. Charles Hausman**

Project Title: **Leadership Characteristics and Practices of American Association of School Administrators (AASA) Superintendents of the Year and Finalists**

Exemption Date: 07/14/2014

Approved by: **Dr. Laura Newhart, IRB Chair**

This document confirms that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) has granted exempt status for the above referenced research project as outlined in the application submitted for IRB review with an immediate effective date. Exempt status means that your research is exempt from further review for a period of three years from the original notification date if no changes are made to the original protocol. If you plan to continue the project beyond three years, you are required to reapply for exemption.

Principal Investigator Responsibilities: It is the responsibility of the principal investigator to ensure that all investigators and staff associated with this study meet the training requirements for conducting research involving human subjects and follow the approved protocol.

Adverse Events: Any adverse or unexpected events that occur in conjunction with this study must be reported to the IRB within ten calendar days of the occurrence.

Changes to Approved Research Protocol: If changes to the approved research protocol become necessary, a description of those changes must be submitted for IRB review and approval prior to implementation. If the changes result in a change in your project's exempt status, you will be required to submit an application for expedited or full IRB review. Changes include, but are not limited to, those involving study personnel, subjects, and procedures.

Other Provisions of Approval, if applicable: None

Please contact Sponsored Programs at 859-622-3636 or send email to tiffany.hamblin@eku.edu or lisa.royalty@eku.edu with questions.