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Analysis Of Communication Between Indiana Superintendents And Public School Boards

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ANALYSIS OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN INDIANA SUPERINTENDENTS AND
PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARDS

A Dissertation

Presented to

The College of Graduate and Professional Studies

Department of Educational Leadership

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Travis Brent Haire

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ABSTRACT

This quantitative study examined the communication preferences of superintendents and public school board members. The data for this study were analyzed and interpreted using descriptive statistics, *t* test, and one-way ANOVAs. All public school superintendents and school board members in Indiana were eligible to participate in this study. This study administered a survey to all public school superintendents and school board members in Indiana. A total of 271 participants responded, 84 superintendents and 187 school board members. The survey measured the preferred methods and frequency of communication by superintendents and school board members. The survey was tested for reliability using a Cronbach's alpha test, the result of this test was a .748, demonstrating strong reliability. Superintendents and school board members completed an on-line survey, which provided descriptive and inferential data for this study. Descriptive data were used to address Research Questions 1, 2, and 3. These questions focused on the preferences of communication skills and methods between superintendents and school board members. Research Question 4 utilized an independent sample *t* test to determine if there was a significant difference in regard to position type. Research Questions 5 and 6 utilized one-way ANOVAs to determine the differences in location and longevity.

In conducting the research, there were significant differences between the urban respondents and their other two counterparts, rural and suburban. In each case, the urban respondents reported significantly less importance with regard to communication. The suburban and rural communication composite scores were not found to be significantly different. There

were no significant differences on the communication composite scores based on the longevity of the position which the person held.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Problem

Essential to the success of any school district is a positive relationship between the school board and the superintendent. Legally, school boards are extensions of state government. They have a legislative responsibility to set policy and to ensure that state laws and regulations are followed. As top-level administrators, superintendents make policy recommendations, ensure policy enforcement, and provide the leadership and management necessary for the day-to-day operations of a district and its schools. Clearly, school boards and superintendents have distinctly separate roles; however, the line separating policy development and administration is often indistinct and unobserved. The relationship between the school board and the superintendent has far-reaching leadership and policy implications that decidedly affect the quality of a school district's educational programs. Poor communication weakens relationships; and this, in turn, undermines the district's stability and morale (Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, & Ellerson, 2011).

Collaborative relationships are built on trust and the respectful treatment of others (Eller & Carlson, 2009). Research suggests communication is one of the most important aspects of the job of a superintendent. Poor communication can potentially destroy a career and a school

district; however, excellent communication can build a long-standing career and contribute to enhanced educational opportunities for students (Eller & Carlson, 2009).

Communication involves more than 90% of a superintendent's work time (Konnert & Augenstein, 1995). The superintendent must be very skilled in the art of both formal and informal communication. Much of that time is dedicated to working with school board members. Effective superintendents communicate with their school boards in a variety of ways; phone calls, meetings, appointments, and written reports are among the most common. Much of the work of the superintendent is communicated with the school board via the telephone. Word choice, content, and tone of voice are critical to ensuring the quality of these conversations. Written communication represents a significant responsibility of the superintendent; effective writing skills are pivotal to the development of content that is thoughtful, well-organized, pertinent, and understandable (Konnert & Augenstein, 1995).

Statement of the Problem

The average tenure of a school superintendent is three years (Pascopella, 2011). Research indicates that rapid turnover at the top level creates major barriers for districts and students in the pursuit of academic success. "The key point is very clear that consistency and longevity in leadership are the hallmarks of a high achieving school system" (Weinstein, 2011, para. 4). One of the key elements in running a successful district is stability; thus, a revolving door at the top is counterproductive. When there is rapid turnover, there is less chance of establishing reforms or implementing programming that is impactful and sustainable. Longer tenure generally ensures a positive effect on student achievement; however, research has found that a superintendent needs at least five years to develop a foundation that creates the possibility for obtaining the desired impact (Pascopella, 2011).

Although Pascopella (2011) noted that three years is the average tenure for the majority of superintendents, the tenure of an urban superintendent is even shorter, typically 26 to 28 months (Snider, 2006). Interestingly, over the decades, collective bargaining provides job protection to almost everyone in education, from custodians to assistant superintendents. The superintendent is the only person in the public school system without the prospect of a guaranteed lifetime position (Snider, 2006). Because of the rampant turnover in the position, Dan Domenech, Executive Director of the American Association of School Administrators, referred to superintendents as “highly paid migrant workers” (as cited in Parrish, 2013, p. 1). Superintendents can become easy targets of the political system associated with education as school boards are hesitant to have open and honest discussions concerning the superintendent’s initiatives versus the will of the teachers’ union. This solidifies the idea that effective communication between the superintendent and the school board is paramount to the success of the district and its students (Snider, 2006).

Interestingly, little research exists concerning the frequency and preference of communication from superintendents to their board members, even though this is a key component in finding the balance in ensuring the smooth working relationship that is necessary for the success of the district. John Wiemann, creator of the Communication Competence Scale, defined communication competence as

the ability of an interactant to choose among available communicative behaviors in order that they may successfully accomplish their own personal goals during an encounter while maintaining the face and line of their fellow interactants within the constraints of the situation. (as cited in Kowalski, 2013, p. 145)

This definition has a distinctive behavioral tone indicating that competence and performance are entangled. A successful and competent superintendent must understand that communication is situational and audience-dependent; a savvy superintendent chooses the vehicle for communicating with constituents that has the best chance of promoting his or her objectives while ensuring buy-in from the board (Kowalski, 2013).

A superintendent must know his or her district's culture; this includes understanding the thinking of various groups and predicting their potential reactions to district initiatives and decisions. It is important for superintendents to know the key influencers in the community as these stakeholders can assist the district in moving in the right direction while garnering community support for the school district's vision. Effective superintendents have found that increased student achievement relies on increasing the operative lines of communication among stakeholders (Campbell, 2008).

Effective superintendents create sustainable improvement systems at the district and school levels. Key stakeholders must be influential in assisting with the creation of a strategic plan which includes district achievement goals based on current research regarding best-practice instructional strategies (Waters & Marzano, 2007). Identifying an evidence-based program is the first responsibility; the second responsibility is implementing and studying the impact of those practices within the system. Ultimately, "there is a significant relationship (.05 level, 95% confidence level) between district leadership and improved student achievement" (Waters & Marzano, 2007, p. 38). As such, the superintendent must communicate to all key players the urgency of these goals and the necessity to work collaboratively and knowledgeably to make attaining them a reality.

When asked, effective superintendents reported that open communication was one of the key elements to their success. Effective superintendents realize they must be “present” in the day-to-day job. These superintendents also realize that poor communication leads to superintendent turnover (Chance, 1992). Likewise, school board members often complain that ineffective superintendents do not communicate well, are often times very set in their ways, and do not readily listen to suggestions or advice. Board members noted that ineffective superintendents only discussed what they wanted others to know. In these instances, no sense of open and honest communication exists between the board members and the superintendent. In districts with excessive superintendent turnover, the reason most frequently cited is that the superintendent failed to communicate effectively with board members (Chance, 1992). Successful superintendents must be open, accessible, and honest with all of their communications, and they must keep the board involved by keeping them well informed (Chance, 1992).

“Communication is a cooperative enterprise requiring the mutual exchange of ideas and information, and out of which understanding develops and action is taken” (Gemberling, Smith, & Villani, 2009, p. 3). School board members must focus on building collaborative relationships to find the common ground necessary to reach mutually beneficial goals. The superintendent must ensure a climate of open communication which promotes continuous school improvement efforts and must work with the school board to determine a process for a periodic review of the team’s leadership and vision (Gemberling et al., 2009). The board-savvy superintendent realizes that the concept of team must be nurtured; the superintendent must seek to model respect, professional behavior, and a commitment to continuous learning (Gemberling et al., 2009). The school board-superintendent working relationship is notoriously fragile and is very likely to

erode if not managed (Eadie, 2012). According to Eadie (2012), there are two major steps board members can take in an effort to keep the partnership healthy. The first is the board's strong commitment to the ongoing management of the relationship with the superintendent. The second is the development of an effective communication strategy between the superintendent and the board.

The breakdown in communication between a superintendent and the school board can, and often times does, have a negative impact on the effectiveness of the superintendent. Highly effective superintendents have exhibited how their communicative behavior can influence school culture, teacher behavior, and student outcomes. The disposition toward communication determines if and how superintendents apply their own knowledge and skills. Kowalski (2013) found two persistently inaccurate assumptions about superintendents and communication. First, administrators learn to communicate effectively after being exposed to the realities of practice. Second, there is an assumption that appropriate communicative behavior is determined by context (Kowalski, 2013). Regardless, the relationship between the superintendent and the school board is pivotal to the success of the superintendent; effective communication may be the key deciding factor.

Effective superintendents realize that clear communication and strong relationships with board members are vital to their success. Kowalski (2013) noted that a key element in communication between the superintendent and board members is the development of individual relationships. Effective superintendents focus on one-to-one associations for two very important reasons. First, school boards are often more factional than pluralistic as most board members commonly have different values and specific agendas. Second, a superintendent's reputation and

job survival depends on the ability to gain approval for pivotal recommendations (Kowalski, 2013).

Today, the heightened interest in school district leadership comes at a time when demands on local school leaders, superintendents, and school boards have never been greater. Among the challenges school districts face include budget shortages, growing numbers of at-risk students, and unfunded or under-funded state and federal mandates. The need for detailed policymaking, although critically important, has become difficult for many school boards. Expectations for superintendents to be efficient managers and viable instructional leaders are increasing (Education Writers Association, 2002).

Isolating what makes an effective board, one that focuses on student achievement, involves evaluating virtually all functions of a board, from internal governance and policy formation to communication with teachers, administrators, and the public. It is clear that school boards in high-achieving districts exhibit habits and characteristics that are markedly different from boards in low-achieving districts (Dervarics & O'Brien, 2011). High achieving boards are more likely to engage in goal setting and monitoring of their progress. These boards are data savvy; they make data-driven decisions based upon student needs. Board members possess detailed knowledge of their district. More importantly, these school boards have a working relationship with the superintendent, teachers, and administrators based on collegiality and a joint commitment to student success (Dervarics & O'Brien, 2011).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the communication between school boards and superintendents and to provide findings relevant to the current values, views, and perceptions of Indiana school board members and superintendents. Although little research

exists on the frequency and preference of communication between board members and superintendents, communication between the superintendent and school board members is a key in finding the balance to ensure success, not only between the superintendent and the board, but for the success of the district as well. Communication is an important leadership skill. This becomes extremely evident when the superintendent is forced to have candid conversations with school board members—particularly when the topics are controversial, entail risk, or possibly produce disagreements (Kowalski, 2013). A thoughtful plan for the coordination of communication is crucial for the success of a superintendent; hence, clear communication with the school board should be a high priority (Townsend et al., 2007).

Research Questions

This quantitative study addressed the following research questions:

1. What are the views concerning communication skills in relation to other superintendent responsibilities?
2. What are the preferred methods superintendents choose to utilize in communicating with school board members?
3. What are the methods school board members prefer when receiving communications from the superintendent?
4. Is there a significant difference in communication scores based upon position type?
5. Is there a significant difference in communication scores based upon location?
6. Is there a significant difference in communication scores based upon longevity?

Limitations

The limitations of this study included the validity and reliability of the survey instrument. In addition, the survey was limited to respondents who were cooperative and participated of their

own volition. Finally, because school board members and superintendents often come from different backgrounds and communities, these differences could have influenced how each person responded.

Delimitations

One of the delimitations of this study was that the survey instrument was provided to school board members in Indiana only. In addition, the survey was provided exclusively to superintendents in Indiana. A final delimitation of this study was that the survey was given solely to public school superintendents and school board members.

Definitions

The following definitions were pertinent to this study:

Communication is the imparting or interchange of thoughts, opinions, or information by speech or writing (“Communication,” 2014).

Communication score is the sum of the six questions found in Section 1 of the survey (Appendix B).

Enrollment is the total number of students registered to attend classes within a school district.

Longevity is the length or duration of years of service within the same school district.

Rural school district is less than or equal to five miles from an urbanized area (Institute of Education Sciences, 2006).

School board is the legal authority that organizes and operates a school district for the state with statutory responsibilities for policy, budget, and programs (“School Board,” 2014).

Suburban school district is the territory outside of a principal city and inside an urbanized area with a population less than 100,000 (Institute of Education Sciences, 2006).

Superintendent is the chief administrator of a school corporation responsible for all actions of that school corporation (“Superintendent,” 2014).

Urban school district is one found in large central cities, usually with high rates of poverty (Jacob, 2007).

Summary

This study presents the perceptions of and methods utilized for communication among school board members and superintendents in various school districts. One of the keys to a successful tenure as a superintendent is effective communication. School board members have every right to expect constant and accurate information from the superintendent; thus, effective superintendents communicate with the school board in a variety of ways and work diligently to ensure that the board members are apprised of all situations. Neither party is fond of surprises. Chapter 1 provided an introduction, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, and the definitions of terms. Chapter 2 includes a review of the literature. Chapter 3 provides information regarding the methodology of the study and methods of statistical analyses. Chapter 4 recounts the results and analyses of the data gathered regarding the research questions. Chapter 5 includes conclusions from the findings, results of the findings, and recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

History is an unending dialogue between the past and the present; knowledge of history helps to create an understanding of the present. This is especially true when it comes to the role of the superintendent. The views and attitudes toward the school superintendent are products of the history of the position (Konnert & Augenstein, 1995). The superintendent of schools is a position of wide influence, yet one that is difficult to understand. Consequently, very little is known about how the superintendent functions and why some people do it well and others do not (Houston, 2001a). Effective communication is certainly one of the keys to a superintendent's success.

Early American education was primarily private or religious, and it brought mass schooling and literacy to the nation well before the public school system known today. Public schooling arose in response to an influx of immigrants who had different religions or cultures. The primary focus was to establish social order and mainstream the children of these immigrants into a common school setting (Coulson, 1999).

A detailed history of the position of the superintendent is not available. Perhaps the reason for this is that the superintendency evolved as a product of growth in the educational arena. It was not a carefully orchestrated and planned addition to education.

History and Development of School Boards and Superintendents

Education in America began in the American colonies as a religious movement. In New England, the Puritans believed that everyone needed to learn how to read the Bible. The leaders began to enforce this through the *Massachusetts Bay School Law of 1642* (Brackmyre, 2012). This new law removed education from the hands of clergy and gave the responsibility to parents. The Puritans were essential in creating new laws that stressed the importance of the education of all children. The *Old Deluder Act of 1647* ordered that every town with 50 households should appoint one person from within the town to teach the children. This, in turn, forced all towns to fund and operate a local school. In reality, many of these schools failed because the *Old Deluder Act* began to establish and promote an elite class, thus diverting the focus from the public and all children (Brackmyre, 2012).

The years following America's independence from England in 1783 did little to change the public education system. Education remained a responsibility of individual families and local communities, not a duty of state or federal governments (Brackmyre, 2012).

The concept of the creation of local school boards dates back to 1779 when Thomas Jefferson introduced a proposal to the Virginia Assembly that the citizens of each county would elect three aldermen who would have the general charge of the schools. The aldermen were to create an overseer for every 10 school districts in the county. The early duties of this overseer included appointing and supervising teachers and examining pupils (Houston, 2001b).

Jefferson brought forth Bill 79 titled "A Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge" in 1778 and 1780 and introduced it to the House of Delegates (Berkes, 2009). The bill did not pass. The proposal in part read,

Whence it becomes expedient for promoting the public happiness that those persons, whom nature hath endowed with genius and virtue, should be rendered by liberal education worthy to receive, and able to guard the sacred deposit of the rights and liberties of their fellow citizens, and that they should be called to that charge without regard to wealth, birth of other accidental condition or circumstance. . . . It is better that such should be sought for and educated at the common expense of all. (Berkes, 2009, p. 3)

James Madison presented this bill several more times without success. Finally, a much-revised version was passed into law in 1796 as an “Act to Establish Public Schools” (Berkes, 2009, p. 4).

Horace Mann also played a significant role in the creation of early educational philosophies. In 1834, Mann ran for a senate seat in Massachusetts on a platform which examined how public education could better prepare young citizens. As Senate President, Mann signed into law a bill that created a State Board of Education, designed to distribute information statewide and to improve curriculum, methods, and facilities (Horton, 2013).

The time period from 1830-1850 is known as the Era of Common School Movement (Washington State University, 2011). The goal at that time at the state level was to build a system of elementary and secondary schools with an emphasis on educating all students in common facilities. Confederations of local school districts called upon county superintendents to act as liaisons between small rural districts and the state department of education. The state departments were faced with a dilemma as local schools began to show inequities in the quality and quantity of education among the various communities. State officials sought out a compromise that would reasonably balance the principles of adequacy and equity in education with liberty. The solution was to simultaneously establish state control and reaffirm local

control. This seemingly contradictory approach was accomplished by creating state agencies to oversee public education and delegate select policy powers to local school boards (Washington State University, 2011).

The position of superintendent emerged a decade or so after the creation of public schools. At first, state boards ran schools and then local lay boards without the benefit of professional guidance. Many small local school systems began to form; as a result, the state superintendent was not able to oversee all of the activities of the new schools. These responsibilities were gradually delegated to local communities. As such, the emergence of superintendents for these small local systems developed simultaneously. Buffalo, New York, and Louisville, Kentucky, are credited with establishing the first local superintendents in 1837. The idea was not quickly replicated; the position of superintendent of schools slowly emerged during the course of the 20th century. As the practice began to gain momentum, the position became a central and powerful one in most education systems (Houston, 2001b).

Today, the heightened interest in school district leadership comes at a time when demands on local school leaders, superintendents, and school boards have never been greater. A majority of school districts face budget shortages, growing numbers of at-risk students, and unfunded state and federal mandates. The increased need for strong and creative policymaking frequently stretches the capacities of school boards (Education Writers Association, 2002).

The Role of the Superintendent

A conceptualization of superintendent as a teacher-scholar was dominant from 1865-1910 (Kowalski et al., 2011). During this period, the intent was to have a person work full time supervising classroom instruction and assuring uniformity of curriculum. Persons selected for this position were typically men who were considered effective teachers. Superintendents

essentially functioned as lead educators, subordinate to board members but superior to principals, teachers, and pupils. In addition, they provided advice to the local school board. The school board completed the hiring of the superintendent, fearing that the person in this position would gain increased political power. The following provides a summary of the duties of superintendent:

It must be made his recognized duty to train teachers and inspire them with high ideals; to revise the course of study when new light shows that improvement is possible; to see that pupils and teachers are supplied with needed appliances for the best possible work; to devise the national methods of promoting pupils. (Kowalski et al., 2011, p. 2)

As education became more and more complex so did the position of superintendent. From 1890 to 1920, the superintendents began to align themselves more with the teaching profession (Kowalski, 2013). It was during this time that many superintendents began to see the role as shifting from an instructional leader to a manager. As this transition occurred, many superintendents fought to keep the role from becoming political in nature; however, it was becoming much more of a public and political role. People in positions of political power began to challenge the authority of school superintendents and debated their influence on the educational system (Kowalski, 2013).

As years passed, the role of the superintendent continued to change. A major change occurred in the 1950s when education professors in the universities began to make school administration an academic discipline. As such, the departments of education began to teach theories of legal, political, social, and economic systems as topics educational leaders should study and become proficient in order to enhance their practice (Kowalski, 2013).

Today, superintendents must incorporate many highly-skilled traits to be successful. One of these skilled traits is knowledge. Among the most important roles of a superintendent is to establish, implement, continually assess, and update a district vision of learning that is based on solid research (Wilmore, 2008). There is no way to overemphasize the importance of a district's vision to student success. Without a solid vision of where the district needs to be, the superintendent can become entrenched in the day-to-day management role instead of a true leadership role. A good balance of both management and leadership skills will assist the superintendent in making sure the district maximizes its decision-making effectiveness and resources as well as substantially increasing its productivity (Wilmore, 2008).

Superintendents must know their districts' cultures, the thinking of various groups and how these groups react to specific district initiatives and decisions. Savvy superintendents know who pulls the strings to make the community move one direction or the other and how to get the community solidly behind a united school vision. Effective superintendents have found that increased student achievement relies on increasing the lines of communication among stakeholders (Campbell, 2008).

The superintendent must provide autonomy to principals to lead their schools and at the same time expect alignment to district goals and initiatives. According to a recent study, superintendents are expected to do the following:

- Set expectations for principals to foster and carry out district achievement and instructional goals,
- Develop a shared vision of the district,
- Commit the district to continuous improvement,
- Establish strong agreed-upon principles/values which direct the actions of the people,

- Ensure that schools have a clear mission focused on the district goals,
- Ensure all students have the opportunity to learn,
- Maintain high expectations for school performance,
- Direct personnel operations to assure a stable yet improving and well-balanced workforce, and
- Provide overall leadership to principals and board members. (Waters & Marzano, 2007, p. 5)

As demands on the superintendent grow, the number of people with an interest in the position is steadily declining. Although the pay and the recognition may be appealing to the public, the real demands of 18-hour days, little or no job security, perpetual second-guessing, and personal attacks on school leaders take their inevitable toll (D. Reeves, 2005). “The role of the superintendent begins with vision, expectations, standards, and communication. The superintendent must have a clear focus when it comes to standards and holding people accountable” (D. Reeves, 2005, p. 219).

According to the research conducted by the National School Public Relations Association, 87% of 63 school administrators from 45 states surveyed said they spent 75% or more of their time communicating (Campbell, 2008, p. 5). School administrators cannot fulfill their role as instructional leaders if they spend too much time dealing with isolated complaints or agendas. According to Campbell (2008), “superintendents must put a process in place that gives every stakeholder a voice rather than giving every stakeholder an ear” (p. 5).

Effective superintendents recognize the school board as a precious asset to be deployed fully on behalf of the district’s educational mission (Eadie, 2009). An effective superintendent is not defensive when dealing with school board members and do not see working with board

members as a challenge. “Effective superintendents understand the highly complex and rapidly changing field of public and nonprofit governance inside and out” (Eadie, 2009, p. 42). These superintendents are students of the governing business, and they take the time and trouble to become real experts by being well read and participate in educational programs (Eadie, 2009).

Effective superintendents create systems that last over the years at the district and school levels (Waters & Marzano, 2007). These superintendents include their school board members, administrators, and other key stakeholders and create a strategic plan surrounding achievement and instruction. The superintendent and the instructional staff, along with the board, should decide what constitutes good instruction and set achievement goals (Waters & Marzano, 2007). Effective districts adopt a district-wide approach to instruction based on the best available research. This framework should include planning units and lessons that are grounded in research, with the basis of these units focused on effective instructional strategies. To facilitate the understanding of curriculum and instruction, effective superintendents must create a common vocabulary for students, teachers, administrators, and board members (Waters & Marzano, 2007).

Effective superintendents have a vision of what good instruction is and how to execute programs that improves teaching and learning. Instructional leadership must “articulate a vision for children’s education and weaving that vision into missions of the district, organize support for that vision through personnel moves, shared decision-making and board member involvement, and evaluate and assess personnel and programs” (Waters & Marzano, 2007, p. 4).

The new and unfamiliar challenges facing public education today require school leaders to be flexible and collaborative rather than authoritative. “Superintendents must also effectively manage change in a highly complex, politically charged and often-contentious system. In order

to survive and thrive, superintendents must be able to understand and be adept at the politics of the job” (Education Writers Association, 2002, p. 1).

Establishing effective relationships with each board member is a continuous process. Effective superintendents must create solid board relationships and realize that this is a top priority (Townsend et al., 2007). The superintendent must get to know each board member and his or her interests, goals, and passions. Whether board members are elected or appointed, effective superintendents must study the various groups of citizens which each board member represents. The superintendent must work to establish, build, and further the relationship with each board member in order to be successful (Townsend et al., 2007).

Developing a structure for ongoing communication with each board member is critical in determining the success of a superintendent (Townsend et al., 2007). During the tenure of each board member, ongoing communication is a key to the success of the relationship between the school board and the superintendent. Another useful tool is frequent personal and relaxed conversations with each board member. The effective superintendent continually assesses how each board member feels about his or her own accomplishments in the role as a board member. The superintendent must have an understanding of each board member’s personal and professional commitment to the district (Townsend et al., 2007).

Highly capable superintendents also realize that effective communication and relationships with board members are vital to their own effectiveness. There is an important association between the superintendent and school board members. Effective superintendents focus on one-to-one associations for two specific reasons. First, school boards are often more factional than pluralistic since most board members commonly have different values and specific

agendas. Second, a superintendent's reputation and job survival depends on the ability to gain approval for pivotal recommendations (Kowalski, 2013).

The Role of the School Board

The key work of school boards is to improve student achievement and increase community engagement to promote student achievement. As local boards face the challenges of providing effective governance, they are using their time and energy to focus on these twin imperatives. It is no longer either possible or credible for boards of education to serve as passive reviewers and judges of the work of others. This oversight role, assigned to local boards during the early years of the past century to ensure clean government, has changed as times have changed. Local boards of education are no longer merely overseers of school systems; they are leaders of public education in their communities. (Gemberling et al., 2009, p. 2)

To help local school boards carry out their work, the National School Boards Association has developed a framework called the Key Work of School Boards. It is broken down into eight key areas: “vision, standards, assessments, accountability, alignment, climate and culture, collaborative relationships/community engagement, and continuous improvement” (Gemberling et al., 2009, p. 2). This provides a framework for planning and acting, a framework based on systems thinking. This framework helps to provide the leadership through governance that will create the conditions under which excellent teaching and accelerated student learning can take place (Gemberling et al., 2009).

Isolating what makes an effective board—one that focuses on student achievement—involves evaluating all of the functions of that board. This evaluation must include internal governance, policy formation, and communication with teachers and administrators, as well as

the public (Dervarics & O'Brien, 2011). It is clear that school boards in high-achieving districts demonstrate characteristics that are very different from boards in low-achieving districts. High achieving school boards are more likely to engage in goal setting and monitoring of their progress. These boards are data savvy. They make decisions regarding student needs which are based on data (Dervarics & O'Brien, 2011). Board members seek to obtain detailed knowledge of their district. More importantly, these school boards have a working relationship with the superintendent, teachers, and administrators which are all based on collegiality and a joint commitment to student success (Dervarics & O'Brien, 2011).

The *American School Board Journal* has identified seven signs of effective school board members. The seven practices of highly effective boards are

1. Work together as a team. "Going solo is a no-no." School board members are elected as individuals; however, board members lack the authority or power as an individual. Board members have no individual legal authority to fix problems or decide issues. Board members must develop collegiality and work collaboratively.
2. Respect the team. The best way for an individual board member to be successful is for the entire board to be successful. Board members must work with combined collaboration and respect for the other board members.
3. Understand the difference between board and staff. Effective board members must refrain from trying to perform management functions which are the responsibilities of the superintendent and staff. It is the board's responsibility to ensure that schools operate well, but it is not the board's responsibility to get involved in the day-to-day operations of the district.

4. Share and defend personal views, but listen to the views of others. Effective board members must have the ability to compromise. Board members will not always “win” on every issue about which they are passionate.
5. Do the homework, and ask tough questions. Board members must come to board meetings prepared and ready to engage in decisions after asking clarifying questions.
6. Respect the oath. An important aspect for successful board members is to handle all matters confidentially and professionally.
7. Keep learning. Effective board members should participate in professional development. Board members must commit the time and energy necessary to be informed and effective leaders of the district. (Blumsack & McCabe, 2013, p. 2)

Board members who lack sufficient information and communication are often too divided politically to effectively set school district policy or priorities. High performing boards almost always have a strong bond and good working relationships with their superintendents (Education Writers Association, 2002). The key work of a school board is to provide leadership through governance which creates an atmosphere where accelerated teaching and learning can occur (Gemberling et al., 2009).

When new board members are elected, one of the first tasks for a superintendent is to develop strategies to help them become a productive part of the school board. Establishing a clear and direct avenue for communication is essential to build these new relationships. Effective relationships between the superintendent and the school board are a direct result of creating protocols on how to work as a team. Overall, the superintendent-board team must establish a process that will maximize communication so the real work of the district can get done (Townsend et al., 2007).

Board President and Superintendent Communication

The school board president plays an integral role in facilitating and modulating the relationship of the district superintendent and the board of education. Because of the close working relationship between the board president and the superintendent, effective communication is a must. A poor relationship between the two creates the potential to compromise the representative function of the school board and hinder the district's ability to serve the community. The board president and the superintendent relationship is crucial in the decision-making process in the area of school governance. Generally, the board president works closely with the superintendent in preparing the board meeting agenda. Clearly, the board president is responsible for the integrity of the board process, including the effectiveness of meetings and the board's adherence to its own rules (Petersen & Short, 2001).

It is also important to note that the board president is more likely than other board members to have frequent communication with the superintendent outside of the formal board meetings. School boards are dependent on a variety of outside pressures, and their decisions are often determined on a variety of factors over which they have little or no control. Practical implications suggest that these multiple and competing factors often represent many different challenges varying from administrative, legislative, and community priorities that play a major role in the development of local politics. Even with the ambiguity of numerous competing pressures, superintendents and board presidents are responsible for the content and format of board agendas (Petersen & Short, 2001).

The president of the school board's ability in the developing the board agenda, in facilitating the relationship of the superintendent with the board of education, and in leading the board meetings are the foundational elements in the school board's ability to conduct the

business of the district. Understanding the importance of the school board president's perception of the superintendent's social influence and social style and its effect on setting the board agenda and voting decisions made by the board is vital in this relationship (Petersen & Short, 2001).

School Board and Superintendent Communication

Communication is involved in more than 90% of a superintendent's work time (Gemberling et al., 2009). "Communication is a cooperative enterprise requiring the mutual exchange of ideas and information, and out of which understanding develops and action is taken" (Gemberling et al., 2009, p. 70). This means that board members must carefully listen to the advice and information the superintendent provides and make clear what they expect. The superintendent must fully explain his or her understanding of what is successful and unsuccessful and why. Superintendents must also listen to their board and realize they may have different personal styles of communication. Incumbent on everyone is the need to overcome differences and develop a relationship that works to increase effectiveness (Sylvan, 2012).

Roles of the board and the superintendent should be clearly understood based on a mutual agreement. If there is a disagreement, then time should be taken to discuss the process or perception of each person. The board and the superintendent should treat each other with mutual respect. In doing so, this provides a sense of confidence to all stakeholders. This also enhances the ability to carry out the district's initiatives (J. Reeves, 2014).

Effective communication is not limited to being able to speak and write well. The ability for the superintendent to engage with the public and the schools is growing much more complex (Bagin, 2007). Simply having meetings and sending out newsletters is no longer enough. The superintendent must be an active listener and take the time to research prudent policies and procedures when moving the district forward. Effective superintendents must possess high

levels of communication expertise (Bagin, 2007). Qualities of a strong communication program include

- Secure a good communicator as a leader;
- Admit mistakes, be truthful, be a good listener, and be proactive;
- Have a clear message;
- Provide timely accurate information in an ethical, easily understood manner;
- Promote honesty, integrity, sincerity and the ability to build trust;
- Be clear and concise;
- Listen first, be open and direct;
- Encourage open dialogue;
- Value and seek input from others; and
- Acknowledge communication as a two way street. (Bagin, 2007, p. 6)

The school board–superintendent working relationship is extremely fragile and is very likely to fall apart if it is not managed appropriately (Eadie, 2012). According to the *American School Board Journal*, there are two major steps board members can take in an effort to keep the partnership healthy. First, cultivate a strong commitment to the ongoing management of the relationship with the superintendent. Second, create an effective communication strategy between the superintendent and the board (Eadie, 2012).

The relationship between the superintendent and the school board is based on the direct working knowledge of the superintendent coupled by an expectation from the school board to receive pertinent communication. The superintendent should be the expert and orchestrate the work of the district. Board members should be prepared and expected to perform as caring and competent leaders. Superintendents should operate from a working knowledge base of the

district, built on accurate and timely information and effective communication. Clear communication and a commitment to the work of the district is a must for effective leadership. The superintendent must remain the expert, ensuring that the knowledge base is comprehensive and responsive (Zlotkin, 1993).

Effective superintendents know to stay away from the common mistakes that new superintendents make. Among these are the following:

- Recommending personnel actions involving staff members who have relationships with board members;
- Being less than completely honest about district problems;
- Failing to recognize the implications of one negative vote;
- Neglecting to equally inform all board members;
- Supplying insufficient communication to board members between meetings;
- Bringing new ideas forward in public meetings without extensive discussion in advance with board members;
- Being too optimistic about potential programs. (Eller & Carlson, 2009, p. 41)

The quality of the relationship between the superintendent and the board is directly impacted by the clarity and frequency of communication between the team. Although most superintendents spend a significant amount of time each week communicating with the school board, it is important to have an understanding of the style of communication preferred. Effective superintendents know which form and frequency of communication board members prefer (Eller & Carlson, 2009). Although the district vision is clear to them, most superintendents spend too much time grappling with local political agendas and competing community interests, leaving too little time to devote to their primary objective: improving

student achievement. Maintaining an effective working relationship with all of the stakeholders is vital for the survival of the superintendent. Effective superintendents know who pulls the strings to make the community move one direction or the other, and they know how to get the community solidly behind a united school vision. Studies have shown that increased student achievement depends on a superintendent who increases the lines of communication among stakeholders. Student achievement must be a shared vision led by superintendent, the administrative team, and the board (Campbell, 2008).

Many board members bring an electorate representation focus to the boardroom, feeling more committed to dealing with the needs and interests of particular constituencies than to the concept of the board as a corporate governing entity. This anti-team attitude goes against the idea of the board's collective accountability for building a solid working relationship with the superintendent. Still fairly common among school boards is the inherently adversarial and limited view of the school board as basically responsible for "watching the critters so they don't steal the store" (Eadie, 2012, p. 4). If school board members believe that their role is to stand back and judge administrative performance, then the idea of taking the initiative to build a solid partnership with a superintendent will seem like a foreign concept (Eadie, 2012).

Effective Communication

Effective superintendents realize that a key to continued success is the ability to have open and honest communication (Chance, 1992). It is very important for superintendents to cultivate a purposeful relationship with each board member. These relationships do not just happen; they require a tremendous amount of dedication and preparation. Treating each board member equally is a must to ensure the success of a superintendent. One common pitfall for new superintendents is over-communication with the board president and under-communication with

the other board members (Carlson, 2010). Superintendents who are not successful communicate regularly with board members with whom they interact frequently, but fail to communicate with the others. Superintendents should also provide board members with time to process information. A common mistake superintendents make is to bring new ideas forward in board meetings without extensive discussion in advance. Such a mistake can prove extremely costly to the relationship between the superintendent and the board (Carlson, 2010).

Effective communication requires the superintendent to be a true leader. That leadership requires the knowledge to understand that superintendents bear the responsibility for all decisions that need to be made (English, 2008). As such, superintendents must be able to clearly articulate the vision of the school district and defend their actions. It is essential that successful superintendents spend much of their time communicating with the board as well as various stakeholders. Research suggests that how the time is spent communicating is much more important than the amount of time spent. A lack of understanding of the importance of the role of communication is one of the main factors involved in the shortening of a superintendent's tenure (Bagin, 2007).

Sometimes superintendents must be prepared to share information with the board in a variety of styles, some which may be out of their comfort zones. Superintendents should work with board members to understand the communication preferences of each individual. Frequent updates to the board assist them with communicating the district's message to the public. A judicious communication plan also helps to build trust between the superintendent and the board. Board members are appreciative of being kept informed, which leads to district and superintendent success (Townsend et al., 2007).

Superintendents usually choose to communicate with board members in one of four ways; e-mail, phone call, hardcopy, or a face-to-face meeting. It is important for superintendents to understand that each form of communication has its advantages and disadvantages; however, using a combination of the four methods greatly increases the chances for the superintendent to be successful. Effective superintendents learn that each board member may favor a particular type of communication. The key to success is determining this early in the relationship and continuing to build on the principles associated with each (Eller & Carlson, 2009).

Effective superintendents work to build relationships with board members. They realize that if there is a good working relationship with the board they are much more likely to move the district forward (Birdsey, 2014). Superintendents are unlikely to initiate and sustain change if they are continuously in conflict with board members. Interpersonal relationships are the associations that exist between two people and can range from positive to negative. Problems between the superintendent and school board members may be the product of situations such as inappropriate behavior, incompatible philosophies, or conflicting politics. Less obvious situations can occur in a district that tolerates or even furthers role ambiguity, a situation in which individuals do not know or understand their specific roles (Kowalski, 2013).

Communication Competence

In 1977, John Wiemann defined communication competence as such:

The ability of an interactant to choose among available communicative behaviors in order that they may successfully accomplish their own interpersonal goals during an encounter while maintaining the face and line of their fellow interactants within the constraints of the situation. (as cited in Kowalski, 2013, p. 145)

This definition has a distinctive behavioral tone suggesting that competence and performance work together. To be competent a superintendent must know which type of behavior is appropriate and have the skills required for behaving appropriately. Determining this competence may not be that simple. Competent communicators do not always succeed, and incompetent communicators do not always fail. A superintendent can define relational communication and explain how the process enhances the relationship with the board (Kowalski, 2013).

One of the best ways to establish and maintain an effective relationship with board members is through ongoing and frequent communication. One effective strategy is the Friday update. This is an informal communication that is sent electronically to the board each Friday highlighting major events and issues addressed each week. A confidentiality disclaimer should be considered prior to developing a Friday update for the board, as it may relate to open door policies (Carlson, 2010).

A vital component of board–superintendent communication, similar to any relationship, involves close collaboration and teamwork (Eadie, 2008). A critical component of effective communication is to make sure that the superintendent and the school board have an explicit agreement as to what information is to be shared on a regular basis and regarding the kind of interaction that all parties want to have (Eadie, 2012). There are four recommendations:

1. The superintendent must provide school board members with current and pertinent information on the issues.
2. The superintendent must keep the board apprised of emerging issues. It is reasonable for board members to expect that they will be alerted to emerging issues in the community and on internal school system information, such as a simmering issue

between a group of teachers and their principal. Board members should not be caught off guard or embarrassed because of the lack of timely information provided by the superintendent.

3. The superintendent should have frequent informal interaction with school board members. The superintendent should nurture informal interactions.
4. The superintendent should make sure that board members receive accurate and complete information. Trust and positive communication cement partnerships between the superintendent and the school board. (Eadie, 2012, pp. 38-39)

There are many different forms of communication, each of which has its own positive and negative connotations or limitations. Communication can be classified as emergency communication and normal communication. One form of communication is e-mail. E-mail is easily produced, is efficient for sending information, provides documentation, and is preferred by many board members. Unfortunately, e-mail becomes public record, can be viewed as impersonal, can be forwarded to others, and limits the opportunity for expanded conversation. Phone calls, another form of communication, are beneficial because these provide immediate feedback, offer a personal form of communication, provide opportunities to expand conversation, and allow for confidential conversation. On the other hand, phone calls require the availability of the board member. It is often difficult to reach all board members with the exact same message, and documentation can be difficult. Printed copies of information are another form of communication. Printed copies allow for items to be easily documented, can provide attachments, and are often times seen as more formal communication. It does take time to develop and distribute hard copies. Finally, there is face-to-face communication. This is the most personal form of communication which establishes rapport, provides a venue for expanded

discussion, and offers a greater opportunity to assess individual reactions. Face-to-face communication is very time consuming, can be difficult with distracters, and is hard to document (Alvarez et al., 2010).

Board members should be kept current on pertinent issues. Being kept abreast of important developments in the field of education is important because it provides a context and a framework for strategic and policy-level decision-making. Superintendents should keep board members up-to-date on state and national policies, as well as regulatory and legislative matters. In addition, board members should be informed about trends and developments in educational practices (Eadie, 2008).

Superintendents must keep board members aware of emerging issues in the community. This also applies to internal issues that might require future board action or those likely to result in questions from the constituents and the media. “Allowing board members to get caught off-guard and embarrassed because of a lack of timely communication is, in the world of educational administration, a cardinal sin” (Eadie, 2008, p. 70).

Board members should have frequent, informal interaction with the superintendent. The superintendent should strive to create a collaborative and emotional bond with each board member that is the result of close, informal contact. The superintendent should take the initiative in fostering informal interaction. Many superintendents meet one-on-one with board members away from the office in an effort to get to know each board member on a more personal level (Eadie, 2008).

The superintendent should provide all board members with complete and accurate information. Trust cements partnerships, and board members must trust that whatever they hear or read from the superintendent is both true and a complete picture that does not omit any

pertinent details. Receiving an unduly rosy report of major issues will erode trust and is totally unacceptable (Edie, 2008).

The Carmel Clay Schools in Indiana developed one example of a policy that talked about high expectations with regard to communication (Carmel Clay Schools, 2014). This policy is a good example of how the superintendent and the school board agreed to communicate regarding important and timely issues. The corporation leadership has presented to many different groups the expectations that their superintendent and school board have agreed upon. These are the expectations:

1. That board members will redirect inquiries from staff members and stakeholders to the superintendent who will then keep the board informed of subsequent follow-up.
2. That a regular communication from the superintendent will occur on a bi-weekly basis.
3. That board members will be notified via e-mail and phone (if necessary) as soon as possible for:
 - a. School emergency (lock down, fire, etc.)
 - b. Student emergency (arrest, injury, death)
 - c. Staff emergency (arrest, injury, death)
4. That board members will receive board documents the Wednesday before the scheduled board meeting.
5. That all board members will receive the same information.
6. That board members will treat each other and staff with respect.
7. That the superintendent and staff will treat all board members with respect.

8. That reasonable requests for additional information will be satisfied in a timely manner.
9. That there will be no surprises. (Carmel Clay Schools, 2014, pp. 1-3)

The superintendent expects:

1. That board members will inform the superintendent when they are visiting each school.
2. That requests for additions to the agenda will be received at least seven days prior to the meeting.
3. That direction will be given when a majority of the board votes to give direction, or when there is a clear consensus from the board directing the superintendent.
4. That board members will be respectful toward staff and be respectful of staff's time.
5. That board members will read all supporting documentation before the board meeting.
6. That board members will contact the superintendent or the board president with questions about agenda items or supporting materials.
7. That there will be no surprises. (Carmel Clay Schools, 2014, p. 9)

Creating a policy that clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of the superintendent and school board members strengthens the communication process. Working collectively to increase effective communication between the superintendent and the school board will increase the efficiency of the team. When this occurs, an opportunity is created to shift the focus to the moral imperative: student achievement.

Six Key Areas of Research Comparison

Research supports the need for effective communication between a superintendent and the school board. This is a major priority for the success of superintendents. This study specifically addressed the effectiveness of communication against six other key areas in which superintendents should be found highly competent.

Knowledge of the Budget

The board is responsible for approval of the budget based on taxpayer money. The board is also responsible for, and must approve, all expenditures. This often generates many questions and concerns concerning the budget. The superintendent must be able to communicate clearly and effectively with board members in response to their concerns regarding budgetary issues (Townsend et al., 2007). Many active superintendents compare running a school corporation to a three-legged stool with board communication, student achievement, and school budget being the three legs. Understanding and being able to communicate the school district's budget is vital to the success of a superintendent. Fiscal stability is one of the major keys to ensuring all students will have equal opportunities to instructional programs that will lead to a successful career. The superintendent must be responsible for all of communication when it comes to the district's budget. The superintendent must know budgetary procedures and be able to explain the complexity to the board so that the board gains an understanding of the budget process (Townsend et al., 2007).

The superintendent should be able to clearly articulate how the budget for the district was developed. Superintendents should use a set dollar amount per teacher that is reflective of the teacher's salary and benefits. The district, under the superintendent's direction, should have a formula for allocating teachers to each school, and the teachers allocated should directly

correlate to budgetary considerations. There should also be an explanation of each school's individual budget. The superintendent should be prepared to discuss the allocations for such things as books, supplies, equipment, technology, and professional development (Lytle, 2014).

Lytle (2014) stated,

more compelling is the evidence that having trusting, respectful relationships in schools is a precursor to improve student achievement. That means students need to trust teachers, teachers must trust the principal, parents must trust the teachers and principal. The community, its schools all need to trust those who lead and govern them—the superintendent. Nothing is more central to building organizational trust than the budget development process. (p. 3)

It is imperative that the superintendent be able to state the process for creating the budget. Having written formulas and written documents that can be shared with the board and the public will greatly facilitate the creation of trust among all stakeholders. Ultimately, the effective superintendent is responsible for providing the leadership and direction for decisions related to the budget. Being able to communicate these needs is necessary for the success of the district (Townsend et al., 2007).

Research suggests that there are four monthly reports that superintendents can use to remain informed on the district's purse strings. The first is the monthly enrollment report. Effective superintendents use these reports to monitor trend data as it relates to enrollment which is tied directly to school funding. Using trend data, superintendents can create budget and teacher staffing formulas (Eller & Carlson, 2009).

The second and third reports are the expenditure and revenue reports. Effective superintendents know that the data received from the expenditure report allows them to track

monthly expenditures and compare that data to the information the revenue reports generate. These reports allow superintendents to constantly monitor the cash flow of the district. The fourth and final report that effective superintendents use is a position control report. The position control system allows superintendents to track and manage each and every position of the district. As positions become vacant, the superintendent can use this data to determine whether or not to refill these positions (Eller & Carlson, 2009).

Interpersonal Skills

According to research, highly effective leaders care about collaboration and make it a priority. Key to collaboration is building the interpersonal skills needed to establish trust and relationships with all stakeholders. One way to build relationships is to be honest with all stakeholders. Effective superintendents realize that it is acceptable to share difficulties and communicate the district's vision in an effort to establish relationships (Gray & Streshly, 2008).

According to a study conducted by the Wallace Foundation, there are three primary roles essential to effective superintendents. They are: setting the direction for the district, developing people, and redesigning the organization to better achieve its mission (Education Policy and Leadership Center, 2006). Research suggests that interpersonal skills and the understanding of group dynamics are essential for the success of superintendents (Education Policy and Leadership Center, 2006).

Effective superintendents can increase their relationships and build on their interpersonal skills by making themselves available to the principals in the district. Frequent and close communication allows the superintendent to remove the layers often found in central office organizations to better assist the principals in reaching their fullest potentials. Superintendents

realize that building these relationships with the principals will assist them in achieving the district's goals and objectives.

In creating the interpersonal skills necessary for success, superintendents must build a base of understanding and commitment in all relationships in order to facilitate change. Superintendents who fail often times do so because they do not listen to others before presenting the plan; hence, effective superintendents get staff involved and engaged in developing the new plan. Superintendents who believe that the school board will back them regardless of the circumstances should use caution as most board members do not want to be put in such a predicament. Effective superintendents avoid directly involving the board in situations in which they must choose between the superintendent and the faculty and staff. Situations of this nature can often be the downfall for a superintendent (Eller & Carlson, 2009).

Instructional Leadership Skills

Superintendents who are effective instructional leaders collaborate with the school board, administrators, and other stakeholders to establish nonnegotiable goals for the district. In effective districts, the board and the superintendent work diligently to be aligned and supportive of the nonnegotiable goals for achievement and instruction. Effective superintendents constantly monitor district achievement. Lack of monitoring will predictably lead to minimal growth or nominal gain for a school district's achievement (Marzano & Waters, 2009).

Effective superintendents create high expectations and accountability for the adults who work in the district. High accountability is part of a system superintendents should utilize to improve student learning and increase student achievement (Bergeson, 2004). The superintendent should make learning for all students a priority in the district, and the district leadership must model how important the focus on student learning is for an effective district.

Implementing strategies that are sustainable over time will create the opportunity for significant change to occur in the district. It is important that the district superintendent establishes the learning goals and objectives which will drive student achievement and student learning. Effective superintendents know that instruction must continue to improve and must be continuously monitored (Bergeson, 2004).

Superintendents must also create a visionary model of instruction for the district. They must build an organization consisting of instructional personnel who will create and evaluate the curriculum and instruction of the district. “The superintendent is to be viewed as a leader of curriculum and instruction” (Petersen, 2002, p. 161). According to Petersen, there is a direct correlation between an articulated instructional vision and the district’s ability to show increase in student achievement. This research suggests that it is imperative for the superintendent to be the academic leader of the district. There is a significant relationship between the success of the district and the ability for the superintendent to be the educational leader (Petersen, 2002).

Political Savvy

With the increasing demands placed on the role of the superintendent, focusing on public relations and finance are no longer the only two responsibilities of the job. Modern superintendents realize that they must be able to influence vital votes. The ability to sway board member votes is a major role of effective superintendents (Petersen & Fusarelli, 2001). Many superintendents realize that there are diverse political groups with which they must work on a daily basis in addition to the inner workings of the school board (Petersen & Fusarelli, 2001).

Politics can often times become a major frustration for superintendents. This is primarily because it is not an integral part of the professional realm the position holds. Often superintendents, who are trained as educators, find themselves in political battles and conflict

with government officials and board members (Kowalski, 2013). When local politics are at odds with the superintendent and the school board, change becomes difficult. Kowalski (2013) reported that one superintendent explained,

the reality of school districts is that they are people-driven organizations, not programs or product driven organizations. When bringing about long-term meaningful change, relationships are much more important than are innovative or creative ideas. To be successful over the long haul, a superintendent must be seen as part of the culture. (Kowalski, 2013, p. 91)

Community Awareness

Without positive and genuine relationships with all stakeholders throughout the district, a superintendent cannot lead successfully. Relationships are the bloodlines of a school district. These relationships with all community stakeholders must be maintained if a superintendent is going to take his or her district to a better place. Teachers appreciate authenticity, intelligence, and integrity. Effective superintendents know that they must nurture respectful relationships throughout the district with faculty, staff, community members, and board members (Sanaghan, 2011).

According to Sanaghan (2011), superintendents can build relational capital in several ways:

- Be transparent in decision making about important district matters. Stakeholders appreciate understanding the thinking behind and the rationale for important decisions. This is usually best done in small groups and face-to-face meetings and will take time, but the pay-off is worth it.
- Be visible and accessible throughout the school district. People need to feel the

presence of the superintendent. Attending diverse events, both large and small, in the schools is one way to do this. Holding “town hall” meetings periodically during the year is a great way to build community, listen to people's hopes and concerns, and get a public pulse of the place.

- Be a good listener. Listening well and authentically is very hard to do. It takes patience, curiosity and humility. (p. 47)

It is important for effective superintendents and school boards to identify the key community leaders. These are the people who truly represent those in the community. Those leaders are often found in Rotary or the Chamber of Commerce (English, 2008). Understanding the community and the key stakeholders will greatly enhance the superintendent's ability to lead.

Personal Integrity

It is important to know that the superintendent is one of the easiest targets in town when it comes to school districts; and although the superintendent may pay the price for inappropriate behavior, often the school district is most vulnerable to lasting damage (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2009). Ethics and issues regarding personal integrity can negatively affect the superintendent.

Ethics violations obviously create negative situations for school board members, the superintendent, and the district. These ethics violations can range from stealing, to using school equipment for personal use, to falsifying reports. These types of ethics violations often results in the end of the superintendent's tenure (Grady & Bryant, 1991).

The personal life of a superintendent is very public; as such, behaviors will be continuously subject to scrutiny. Superintendents must know that they live their lives in the public eye (Grady & Bryant, 1991). Most school board members prefer that the superintendent

be a reflection of traditional family values: married, children, and attend church (Konnert & Augenstein, 1995). Superintendents should be ready to answer questions about their personal lives in general should these questions arise (Konnert & Augenstein, 1995).

Summary

“Communication is the basis of good organization. Effective teaching and learning requires effective communication among staff and the superintendent. You cannot separate good communication from anything your school system does” (Henry & Reidy, 2006, p. 3). These findings were shared in a study conducted by the National School Public Relations Association concerning research in the perceptions of best qualities and practices. This research supported the necessity that superintendents know that effective communication has a direct impact on the success of the school district and its ability to forward. Communication is vital for all aspects of the job of superintendent. “Communication is imperative for increasing student achievement” (Henry & Reidy, 2006, p. 7).

Excellent relationships and teamwork are necessary between the superintendent and the school board. Both the superintendent and the school board should communicate the district’s goals, accomplishments, and challenges on a regular basis (Sichel, 2013). Effective superintendents must constantly communicate with school board members. This communication should cover a wide variety of topics, all of which are important in advancing the district’s goals and increasing student achievement. Having these types of conversations can be difficult; however, the payoff for the superintendent is usually a long tenure and increased chances for success (Enoch, 2013).

Ultimately, it is the superintendent’s responsibility to ensure effective communication with all school board members. Clear and precise communication is the cornerstone for the

success of the superintendent. At the same time, the school board should expect this communication and be able to support the superintendent in an effort to increase student achievement and advance the school district's vision.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses research methodology including the research questions, data sources, population of the study, the data collection process, and the instrument used. The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine communication systems between superintendents and school board members. Effective superintendents realize that superior communication and relationships with board members are vital to their success. It is crucial to note the importance of the association between the superintendent and each of the board members. Kowalski (2013) stated that the success and tenure of a superintendent is dependent on having pluralistic board approval of key issues. To accomplish this, the superintendent must focus on a one-to-one association with each board member.

Effective superintendents work with the school board to establish the mission and vision of the school district. The superintendent is ultimately the chief operating officer (CEO) of the district. This means that the superintendent must meet the demands of all stakeholders, including the school board, administrators, teachers, parents, students, and the community. As the CEO, the superintendent must work closely with the school board to create a system for effective communication. In doing so, the superintendent is responsible for working with the school board in establishing policies (Great Schools Staff, 2004).

Effective superintendents share many similar traits. Those who experience the most success exhibit the following key characteristics:

- Are visionary. In working with the school board, the superintendent assists in developing and monitoring the district's vision and mission.
- Are instructional leaders. These superintendents realize that the most important job in the school district is to maximize student achievement.
- Are effective communicators. In order to be effective, superintendents must develop an effective communication system which addresses all stakeholders.
- Are good listeners. Effective superintendents know that they must take into account the different viewpoints each constituent brings and then make the best decision for the students.
- Are flexible. Effective superintendents must be able to manage the politics associated with the school district. A collaborative approach often times works best. (Great Schools Staff, 2004, p. 2)

Successful superintendents must establish and monitor high expectations for all faculty and staff throughout the corporation. In addition, effective superintendents must use all stakeholders to develop a strategic plan that is shared with the school board. It is important that board members understand that the strategic plan is the road map to be used when making decisions about the district. Once the strategic plan has been developed and shared with the board, it is the superintendent's responsibility to continuously monitor and hold people accountable for the work of the district. Effective superintendents must provide effective communication to all stakeholders, especially to board members (Waters & Marzano, 2007).

Effective school boards work together as a single unit to ensure that student achievement is the most important aspect of the district and become leaders of public education within the community. The school board is responsible for setting policies for the district and for the hiring

and firing of the superintendent. The school board and the superintendent must work closely together to set the strategic plan and then make sure the plan is followed and all goals are achieved. Effective school boards regularly evaluate the superintendent by utilizing a broad set of goals that are transferred into programs that increase student achievement (Great Schools Staff, 2004).

For the purpose of this study, superintendent and school board communication was surveyed through the use of the Indiana School Boards Association's website. An analysis was conducted to determine if there was a significant difference within the data between rural, urban, and suburban districts. In this study, survey data (Appendix A) were gathered on the Qualtrics website.

Research Questions

This quantitative study addressed the following research questions:

1. What are the views concerning communication skills in relation to other superintendent responsibilities?
2. What are the preferred methods superintendents choose to utilize in communicating with school board members?
3. What are the methods school board members prefer when receiving communications from the superintendent?
4. Is there a significant difference in communication scores based upon position type?
5. Is there a significant difference in communication based upon location?
6. Is there a significant difference in communication based upon longevity?

Null Hypotheses

The null hypotheses for the following research questions were

H₀1. There is no significant difference in the views of communication based on position type.

H₀2. There is no significant difference in the views of communication based on location.

H₀3. There is no significant difference in the views of communication based on longevity.

Participants and Instrumentation

Public school superintendents and school board members throughout the state of Indiana were surveyed. Surveys were distributed utilizing the Indiana School Boards Association database. After receiving the database of e-mail addresses, I sent the survey and Informed Consent Letter to all superintendents and school board members contained in such database. The survey was conducted during the summer 2014. An e-mail with an Informed Consent letter linking the Qualtrics website was sent to all of the participants selected for this study. The letter explained the purpose of the study and contained directions as to how to access the survey via the Qualtrics website. If participants chose not to participate, they could do so by not clicking on the Qualtrics link. This was explained in the Informed Consent letter.

The results were used to examine the effectiveness and perceptions of communication between superintendents and school board members. In addition, the results were examined to determine the frequency superintendents and school board members prefer to communicate. Finally, the research was examined to determine the perceptions of superintendents and school board members as to the frequency and type of communication preferred based upon different scenarios, including location and tenure.

Survey Design

This survey's content validity was established by giving the survey to the New Albany Ph. D. cohort. The survey was analyzed for reliability by using a Cronbach's alpha test (UCLA Statistical Consulting Group, 2006). The survey was validated using a variety of means previously mentioned. In addition, the survey was shared with the Greater Clark County Board of School Trustees to review for validity. The Greater Clark County School Board members were excluded from the study.

This survey was used to measure the importance of communication as it related to six other areas of major responsibilities for superintendents. Those major responsibilities included knowledge of the budget, interpersonal skills, instructional leadership skills, political savvy, community awareness, and personal integrity. The six questions asked the respondents to determine whether communication is more important than the other six areas in being a successful superintendent. Each of these areas was measured using a six-point Likert scale. The sum of the scores was then used to compare the importance as measured by superintendents and school board members. Creswell (1994) stated this quantitative approach "removes the writer from the picture and helps create a sense of objectivity and distance between the researcher and that being researched" (p. 67).

The second part of the survey determined the types, preferences, and frequency of communication styles between superintendents and school board members. Participants were asked their preferences on a variety of topics, as well as the frequency in which they preferred the communication. This data were compiled to determine the common preferences for each of the two levels, the superintendent and school board members.

Informed Consent

All participants were informed of their choice of voluntary participation in the cover letter supplied through the e-mail correspondence provided when the surveys were distributed electronically. This survey was an anonymous, web-based survey; although there was no absolute guaranteed anonymity, there were no collection of any participant's IP address or any attempt to identify the names of the participants. Individuals could have deleted the e-mail in which the message was delivered at any time. A follow-up e-mail was sent 10 days after the initial correspondence to thank those who had participated and remind those who had not participated that they could still do so. Should the data be published, no individual information will be disclosed.

Data Collection Procedures

All of the survey information was collected and downloaded to an external outdrive which was kept in a locked filing cabinet in a secure residential office. All steps were taken to protect any and all electronic communications. All data are saved for three years; and at the end of three years, the data are destroyed. Although anonymity cannot be guaranteed because of the electronic survey, the listed precautions made every effort to protect the identities of all participants. Once all surveys were collected, the responses were downloaded into an Excel file. The sum of all six questions in Section 1 of the survey was calculated prior to transferring the data into an SPSS file.

Method of Analysis

Research Questions 1, 2, and 3 utilized descriptive data such as frequency, means, and standard deviations. Research Question 4 used an independent samples *t* test to look for differences on one dependent variable (communication score) based on one independent variable

(position type) with two levels. The two position-type groups included in Research Question 4 were superintendents and school board members. Research Questions 5 and 6 used a one-way ANOVA to determine the differences on one dependent variable (communication score) on one independent variable with at least three levels. In Research Question 5, the three levels were the location types: rural, urban, and suburban. In Research Question 6, the independent variables were the number of years served. This was determined as from 0-4 years, 4-8 years, 8-12 years, and more than 12 years. For Research Questions 5 and 6, if a significant difference on the one-way ANOVA was determined, a post hoc test was used to determine where the differences were found among the three levels. The post hoc test chosen were dependent on whether there was a violation of the assumption of homogeneity of variance. If there was a violation of this assumption, then a Games-Howell post hoc test were utilized as this test does not require equal variances. If there was no violation found for this assumption, then the Tukey HSD post hoc test was used.

Summary

In this chapter, a description of the design components and methodology of the research was presented and described. The purpose of this study was to analyze effective communication between superintendents and the school boards they served. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the research. Chapter 5 contains the results that demonstrate the impact of the study, as well as future implications and recommendations.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS OF DATA ANALYSIS

This study examined the frequency and preferences of communication between public school superintendents and school board members in the state of Indiana. This chapter provides a description of the data and presents the results of the study. It is organized into the following sections: descriptive data for the whole group, descriptive data for individual groups, and inferential test results. The research was tested for reliability using a Cronbach's alpha test. Research suggests that a Cronbach's alpha score above .7 demonstrates reliability (UCLA Statistical Consulting Group, 2006). The result of the test for this research was .748. This score is related to the internal consistency of the six questions, that when added together, made up the composite communication score.

Descriptive Data for the Whole Group

Of the 271 individuals who responded to the survey, 84 (31.0%) were superintendents and 187 (69.0%) were school board members. Thirty-eight respondents (14.0%) represented school districts with an enrollment of fewer than 1,000 students, 118 (43.5%) represented districts with an enrollment of 1,001 – 2,500 students, 18 (6.6%) represented districts with an enrollment of 2,501 – 4,000, and 56 (20.7%) represented districts with an enrollment of more than 6,000 students. With regard to the location type for school districts, 170 (62.7%) respondents indicated they represented rural settings, 65 (24.0%) respondents represented

suburban settings, and 36 (13.3%) respondents represented urban districts. When looking at longevity, 103 (38.0%) respondents had served for 0 – 4 years, 78 (28.8%) respondents had served 5 – 8 years, 50 (18.5%) respondents had served 9 – 12 years and 40 (14.8%) respondents had served more than 13 years.

Respondents were asked about the most effective type of communication for seven issues that superintendents must be ready to communicate to school board members on a frequent basis. Table 1 reflects this information.

Table 1

Issues and the Preferred Method of Communication to School Board Members

Issue	Face-to-Face	Telephone call	E-mail	Board meeting
Personnel issue	41.0%	26.2%	23.6%	9.2%
Student issues	16.2%	31.4%	47.2%	5.2%
School emergencies	9.6%	73.4%	16.6%	0.4%
Board agenda	3.0%	3.7%	78.2%	15.1%
Community issues	9.2%	14.4%	62.0%	14.4%
Federal or State	1.8%	7.0%	63.8%	27.3%
Facility Issue	5.9%	20.7%	57.2%	16.2%

Respondents were then asked how quickly they preferred to be notified of the same seven issues. Table 2 presents those percentages.

Table 2

Issues and Preferred Timeframe of Communication to School Board Members

Issue	Immediately	Within 12 Hours	Within 24 hours	Within 48 hours	Within the week
Personnel issues	28.0%	29.9%	26.2%	5.5%	10.3%
Student issues	20.3%	37.6%	29.5%	3.7%	8.9%
School Emergency	89.3%	8.5%	1.1%	0.7%	0.4%
Board agenda	1.1%	9.25	14.8%	22.1%	52.8%
Community issues	2.2%	15.9%	30.3%	21.8%	29.9%
Federal or State issues	4.4%	5.5%	14.0%	13.3%	62.7%
Facility issues	15.5%	19.6%	25.1%	12.2%	27.7%

Respondents were asked to compare communication skills to six issues that all superintendents face. When asked to if communication skills are more important than budget skills 30.3% of the respondents marked a form of disagreement (strongly disagree, disagree, or somewhat disagree) compared to 69.8 % marked a form of agreement (somewhat agree, agree, or strongly agree). Respondents were then asked are communication skills more important than interpersonal skills. A total of 57.2% marked a form of disagreement compared to 42.8% marked a form of agreement. The next skill compared communication skills with instructional

leadership. A total of 43.9% marked a form of disagreement compared to 56.1% marking a form of agreement.

When respondents were asked if communication skills were more important than political savvy, 23.3% responded with a form of disagreement while 76% marked a form of agreement. Respondents were asked if communication skills are more important than community awareness. A total of 59.4% marked a form of disagreement compared to 40.7% marking a form of agreement. When the respondents were asked if communication skills are more important than personal integrity the responses were 61.3% strongly disagree, 29.2% disagree, 5.5% somewhat disagree, compared to 4.1% responding with a form of agreement (somewhat agree, agree, and strongly agree).

Importance of Communication Skills Compared to Other Superintendent Duties

Using a six-point Likert scale (from 1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree) participants were asked if communication skills were more important than budget skills, interpersonal skills, instructional leadership skills, political savvy, community awareness, and personal integrity. A higher mean score translated into placing a higher value on communication skills versus the other six areas. Table 3 presents the mean score and standard deviation for communication skills compared to other superintendent duties.

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations for Other Superintendent Skills

Skill	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Political savvy	4.32	1.13
Budget	4.10	1.23
Instructional leadership	3.65	1.05
Interpersonal skills	3.34	1.10
Community awareness	3.25	1.05
Personal integrity	1.56	.94

Descriptive Data for Superintendent Respondents

Table 4 reflects the descriptive data offered by the 84 superintendents who responded to the survey.

Table 4

Descriptive Data for Superintendent Respondents

Demographic Data	<i>N</i>	Percent
Student enrollment		
Fewer than 1,000 students	13	15.5%
1,001 – 2,500 students	38	45.2%
2,501 – 4,000 students	8	9.5%
4,001 – 6,000 students	7	8.3%
More than 6,000 students	18	21.4%
School description		
Rural	54	64.3%
Suburban	22	26.2%
Urban	8	9.5%
Longevity		
0 – 4 years	35	41.7%
5 – 8 years	22	26.2%
9 – 12 years	16	19.0%
More than 13 years	11	13.1%

Communication preferences from superintendents only were surveyed. Table 5 shows superintendent responses to the most effective types of communication for each issue.

Table 5

Method of Communication (Superintendents)

Issue	E-mail	Phone call	Face to face	Board meeting
Personnel issue	10.7%	21.4%	60.7%	7.1%
Student issues	32.1%	36.9%	28.6%	2.4%
School emergency	16.7%	65.5%	16.7%	1.2%
Board agenda items	72.6%	8.3%	3.6%	15.5%
Community issues	52.4%	21.4%	15.5%	10.7%
Federal or state issues	72.6%	9.5%	3.6%	14.3%
Facility issues	51.2%	29.8%	9.5%	9.5%

When compared to the percentages of all of the respondents for personnel issues, superintendents overwhelmingly preferred face-to-face (60.7%) compared to the whole sample (41.0). Both groups believed that a board meeting was the last place to discuss the issue. When it comes to communicating student issues, superintendents preferred phone calls (36.9%). For school emergencies, both groups preferred a phone call, and both groups reported board meetings were the last place to discuss this issue. A total of 72.6% of superintendents and 78.2% of respondents agreed that e-mail was the preferred method of communication for board agenda items. When communicating about community issues, both groups preferred e-mail more than any other form of communication. When discussing federal or state issues superintendents agreed that e-mail was most preferred method of communication. E-mail communication was preferred by both groups when dealing with facility issues.

Respondents were asked how quickly they preferred to be notified on all issues. The superintendent responses are found in Table 6.

Table 6

Timing of Communication (Superintendents)

Issue	Immediately	Within 12 hours	Within 24 hours	Within 48 hours	Within the week
Personnel Issues	45.2%	26.2%	20.2%	3.6%	4.8%
Student Issues	28.6%	36.9%	27.4%	3.6%	3.6%
School emergency	95.2%	3.6%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%
Board agenda items	2.4%	11.9%	17.9%	20.2%	47.6%
Community issues	4.8%	17.9%	38.1%	16.7%	22.6%
Federal or State issues	2.4%	7.1%	20.2%	14.3%	56.0%
Facility issues	13.1%	20.2%	33.3%	9.5%	23.8%

Superintendent responses were compared with the whole group. Superintendents overwhelmingly felt personnel issues needed to be communicated to the board either immediately, within 12 hours, or within 48 hours (91.6%). Superintendent data mirrored the whole group in regard to student issues. When communicating school emergencies, superintendents were more aggressive in regard to immediately (95.2%) making contact compared to the whole group (89.3%). There was no difference when it comes to board agenda items, community issues, federal or state issues, or facility issues.

The next part of the survey asked respondents to use a six-point Likert scale to compare communication skills to six other skills widely used by superintendents. Table 7 is a comparison of those communication skills between superintendents and the whole group.

Table 7

Communication Skills Compared to Other Areas of Responsibility (Superintendent)

Question	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Communication skills are more important than the knowledge of budgets.	2.4%	2.4%	21.4%	16.7%	41.7%	15.5%
Communication skills are more important than interpersonal skills.	2.4%	17.9%	35.7%	28.6%	13.1%	2.4%
Communication skills are more important than instructional leadership skills.	0.0%	9.5%	26.2%	38.1%	19.0%	7.1%
Communication skills are more important than political savvy.	1.2%	8.3%	28.6%	29.8%	26.2%	6.0%
Communication skills are more important than community awareness.	0.0%	17.9%	36.9%	34.5%	8.3%	2.4%
Communication skills are more important than personal integrity.	56.0%	35.7%	4.8%	1.2%	1.2%	1.2%

Superintendents' responses matched the whole sample with very little differences in regard to budget skills, interpersonal skills, instructional leadership, and political savvy.

Communication skills were rated higher than budget skills, instructional leadership, and political

savvy for both superintendents and the whole sample. Interpersonal skills were more important than communication skills. Responses for community awareness varied slightly with superintendents reporting 54.0% that community awareness is more important than communication compared to the whole group response of 59.4%. Both groups responded that personal integrity is much more important than communication skills.

Communication Skills Compared to Other Superintendent Duties by Position Type

Superintendents were asked to use a six-point Likert scale to compare communication skills in six areas. Effective superintendents should possess knowledge in these areas. Table 8 ranks the skills based on the average scores reported. The higher the mean translates into more value placed on communication. The table also compares the results of superintendents to the whole sample.

Table 8

*Rank Order of Preferences Regarding Communication Compared to Other Responsibilities
(Superintendents)*

Skill	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Superintendent rank	Whole Sample Rank
Budget skills	4.39	1.19	6	5
Political savvy	3.89	1.10	5	6
Instructional leadership skills	3.88	1.06	4	4
Community awareness	3.40	0.96	3	2
Interpersonal skills	3.39	1.08	2	3
Personal integrity	1.60	0.89	1	1

Interestingly, superintendents reported that political savvy and budgeting skills are much less important than effective communication skills. Similar to the whole sample, superintendents scored personal integrity as the highest skill needed. Personal integrity was the only skill that was consistently ranked as more important than communication.

Descriptive Data for School Board Members

Table 9 reflects the descriptive data offered by the 187 school board members who responded to the survey.

Table 9

Descriptive Data for School Board Members

Demographic Data	<i>N</i>	Percent
Student enrollment		
Fewer than 1,000 students	25	13.4%
1,001 – 2,500 students	80	42.8%
2,501 – 4,000 students	33	17.6%
4,001 – 6,000 students	11	5.9%
More than 6,000 students	38	20.3%
School description		
Rural	116	62.0%
Suburban	43	23.0%
Urban	28	15.0%
Longevity		
0 – 4 years	68	36.4%
5 – 8 years	56	29.9%
9 – 12 years	34	18.2%
More than 13 years	29	15.5%

Communication preferences from school board members are shown in Table 10. The table shows their responses to the most effective types of communication for each issue. The table demonstrates percentages for each type of communication.

Table 10

Preferred Method of Communication (School Board Members)

Issue	E-mail	Phone call	Face-to-face	Board meeting
Personnel issue	29.4%	28.3%	32.1%	10.2%
Student issues	54.0%	28.9%	10.7%	6.4%
School emergency	16.6%	77.0%	6.4%	0.0%
Board agenda items	80.7%	1.6%	2.7%	15.0%
Community issues	66.3%	11.2%	6.4%	16.0%
Federal or state issues	59.9%	5.9%	1.1%	33.2%
Facility issues	59.9%	16.6%	4.3%	19.3%

When school board members were compared to the whole sample for personnel issues the results were almost identical for e-mail and phone call. School board members scored student issues, school emergencies, board agenda items, community issues, federal and state issues, and facility issues similar to the whole group.

Respondents were then asked how quickly they preferred to be notified of each issue. School board member's responses are found in Table 11 followed by a comparison of the whole sample.

Table 11

Preferred Timing of Communication (School Board Members)

Issue	Immediately	Within 12 hours	Within 24 hours	Within 48 hours	Within the week
Personnel issues	20.3%	31.6%	28.9%	6.4%	12.8%
Student issues	16.6%	38.0%	30.5%	3.7%	11.2%
School emergency	86.6%	10.7%	1.1%	1.1%	0.5%
Board agenda items	0.5%	8.0%	13.4%	23.0%	55.1%
Community issues	1.1%	15.0%	26.7%	24.1%	33.2%
Federal or state issues	5.3%	4.8%	11.2%	12.8%	65.8%
Facility issues	16.6%	19.3%	21.4%	13.4%	29.4%

School board responses were similar to the whole group for student issues, school emergencies, board agenda items, community issues, federal or state issues, and faculty issues. When there is a need to communicate school emergencies, 86.6% prefer it to be done immediately.

As with superintendents, the next part of the survey asked respondents to use a six-point Likert scale to compare communication skills to six other skills widely used by superintendents. Following Table 12 presents the results between school board members and the whole group.

Table 12

Communication Skills Compared to Other Areas of Responsibility (School Board Members)

Question	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Communication skills are more important than the knowledge of budgets.	2.1%	12.8%	17.1%	29.4%	31.0%	7.5%
Communication skills are more important than interpersonal skills.	2.1%	24.6%	31.0%	27.3%	12.3%	2.7%
Communication skills are more important than instructional leadership skills.	1.1%	14.4%	32.1%	34.8%	16.6%	1.1%
Communication skills are more important than political savvy.	0.5%	4.8%	12.3%	24.1%	42.2%	16.0%
Communication skills are more important than community awareness.	3.2%	27.3%	31.0%	26.7%	10.7%	1.1%
Communication skills are more important than personal integrity.	63.6%	26.2%	5.9%	1.6%	1.1%	1.6%

School board members' responses did not vary from the whole sample. Communication skills were rated as more important than budget skills, instructional leadership, and political savvy for both school board members and the whole sample. Interpersonal skills were rated as more important than communication skills. Responses for community awareness demonstrated

that those skills are more important than communication skills. Overwhelmingly, both groups responded that personal integrity is much more important than communication skills.

Board members were asked to score the same set of six skills as the superintendents.

Table 13 represents board member responses.

Table 13

Frequency Data Comparison School Board Members

Skill	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Board Member Rank	Whole Sample Rank
Political Savvy	4.51	1.08	6	6
Budget skills	3.97	1.22	5	5
Instructional leadership skills	3.55	1.00	4	4
Interpersonal skills	3.31	1.12	3	3
Community Awareness	3.18	1.08	2	2
Personal Integrity	1.55	0.96	1	1

Respondents were asked to compare importance of communication skills to various other skills. Little difference existed between the skills in terms of ranking. Political savvy, budget skills, and instructional leadership were scored as less important than communication skills. Interpersonal skills and community awareness were ranked more neutral compared to communication skills. However, it was clear that based on the responses, both superintendents and school board members reported that personal integrity is more important than communication skills.

Communication Skills Compared to Other Superintendent Duties by Location

Rural

Respondents were asked to identify the location of their school districts (rural, suburban, and urban) and how long they had been in their position. This was asked to determine if location and longevity played a role in communication preferences. The information contained in Tables 14 through 17 pertains to those superintendents and board members identifying their school districts as rural.

Table 14

Preferences of Communication and Frequency Data Comparison Rural Whole Group

Issue	E-mail	Phone call	Face-to-Face	Board Meeting
Personnel issue	24.7%	22.9%	41.2%	11.2%
Student issues	48.8%	28.2%	16.5%	6.5%
School emergency	13.5%	74.1%	11.8%	0.6%
Board agenda Items	78.2%	4.1%	2.4%	15.3%
Community issues	57.1%	17.1%	9.4%	16.5%
Federal or state issues	58.2%	8.8%	1.8%	31.2%
Facility issues	51.2%	22.9%	6.5%	19.4%

This information demonstrates that rural respondents (41.2%) preferred face-to-face communication when it came to personnel issues; however, this group (48.8%) indicated notification of student issues could be via e-mail. Overall, the respondents (51.2%) agreed that e-mail was the most preferable form of communication, when it came to federal or state issues. The respondents (57.1%) also preferred notification of community issues via e-mail.

Rural respondents were asked how soon they preferred being notified about each of those issues. The results are listed in Table 15.

Table 15

Preferences of Communication and Frequency Data of Rural Whole Group

Issue	Immediately	Within 12 hours	Within 24 hours	Within 48 hours	Within the week
Personnel issues	27.1%	30.6%	27.6%	4.7%	10.0%
Student issues	20.6%	36.5%	29.4%	2.9%	10.6%
School emergency	89.4%	7.6%	1.8%	1.8%	1.2%
Board agenda items	1.8%	8.2%	14.1%	21.2%	54.7%
Community issues	2.4%	18.2%	27.6%	21.8%	30.0%
Federal or state issues	5.3%	5.9%	15.9%	12.9%	60.0%
Facility issues	15.9%	20.0%	25.9%	11.2%	27.1%

Rural superintendents and school board members preferred to be notified of situations either immediately or within the first 12 hours in all but two areas, board agenda items (54.7%) and federal or state issues (60.0%). In these two areas, both rural superintendents and school board members preferred to be notified within the week.

The survey asked for responses as communication related to other areas in which effective superintendents need to be competent. Table 16 shows the responses as related to rural superintendents and school board members.

Table 16

Views of Communication Compared to Other Superintendent Responsibilities (Rural)

Question	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Communication skills versus budgets	1.8%	9.4%	19.4%	24.7%	36.5%	8.2%
Communication skills versus interpersonal skills	1.2%	24.1%	32.4%	25.9%	14.7%	1.8%
Communication skills versus instructional leadership skills	0.6%	12.4%	30.0%	34.7%	19.4%	2.9%
Communication skills versus political savvy	0.6%	3.5%	17.6%	24.1%	38.8%	15.3%
Communication skills versus community awareness	1.8%	23.5%	32.4%	30.0%	10.6%	1.8%
Communication skills versus personal integrity	57.6%	30.6%	7.1%	1.8%	1.8%	1.2%

Rural participants gave responses similar to the whole group responses. Rural superintendents and school board members placed a greater importance on the area of communication in all of the categories except for one. Personal integrity (57.6%) was rated as much more important than communication.

Table 17 shows in rank order the importance of communication compared to the other responsibilities when rural superintendents were compared to the whole group. When comparing communication skills to the other skills, a score of 1 was considered most important.

Table 17

*Rank Order of Preferences Regarding Communication Compared to Other Responsibilities
(Superintendents)*

Skill	Rank	Whole Sample Rank
Budget skills	5	5
Political savvy	3	6
Instructional leadership skills	4	4
Community awareness	6	2
Interpersonal skills	2	3
Personal integrity	1	1

Rural respondents agreed with the whole sample in that personal integrity was by far more important than communication skills. The disparity in rank when comparing the whole group to the rural respondents was in the categories of political savvy and community awareness. Community awareness was ranked as least important among the rural superintendents.

Suburban

Superintendents and school board members who self-described themselves as suburban indicated their preferences of communication and frequency in Table 18.

Table 18

Preferences of Communication and Frequency Data Comparison Suburban/Whole Group

Issue	E-mail	Phone call	Face-to-face	Board meeting
Personnel issue	16.9%	38.5%	40.0%	4.6%
Student issues	41.5%	41.5%	15.4%	1.5%
School emergency	21.5%	72.3%	6.2%	0.0%
Board agenda items	78.5%	4.6%	1.5%	15.4%
Community issues	70.8%	7.7%	10.8%	10.8%
Federal or state issues	78.5%	1.5%	3.1%	16.9%
Facility issues	67.7%	13.8%	6.2%	12.3%

This information demonstrated that suburban respondents preferred face-to-face (40.0%) or a telephone (38.5%) communication when it came to personnel issues. This group also preferred a phone call (41.5%) or e-mail (41.5%) for student issues. Overall, the respondents agreed that e-mail was the preferred form of communication when it came to federal or state issues (78.5%). The respondents also preferred notification of community issues by e-mail (70.8%).

Suburban respondents were asked how soon they preferred being notified about these issues. Their responses are found in Table 19.

Table 19

Preferences of Communication and Frequency Data of Suburban Whole Group

Issue	Immediately	Within 12 hours	Within 24 hours	Within 48 hours	Within the week
Personnel issues	36.9%	29.2%	21.5%	6.2%	6.2%
Student issues	16.9%	40.0%	35.4%	6.2%	1.5%
School emergency	92.3%	6.2%	0.0%	0.0%	1.5%
Board agenda items	0.0%	10.8%	18.5%	26.2%	44.6%
Community issues	1.5%	12.3%	33.8%	26.2%	26.2%
Federal or State issues	3.1%	4.6%	9.2%	9.2%	73.8%
Facility issues	16.9%	15.4%	26.2%	10.8%	30.8%

Suburban superintendents and school board members preferred to be notified of situations either immediately or within the first 12 hours in all but two areas, board agenda items (44.6%) and federal or state issues (73.8%). In both areas, participants indicated they could be notified within the week in both of these areas.

The survey asked for responses as communication related to other areas where effective superintendents need to competent. Table 20 shows the responses as it relates to suburban superintendents and school board members.

Table 20

Views of Communication Compared to Other Superintendent Responsibilities (Suburban)

Question	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Communication skills versus budgets	1.5%	6.2%	18.5%	29.2%	27.7%	16.9%
Communication skills versus interpersonal skills	0.0%	12.3%	32.3%	35.4%	13.8%	6.2%
Communication skills versus instructional leadership skills	0.0%	7.7%	26.2%	47.7%	15.4%	3.1%
Communication skills versus political savvy	1.5%	4.6%	13.8%	24.6%	44.6%	10.8%
Communication skills versus community awareness	3.1%	24.6%	36.9%	26.2%	7.7%	1.5%
Communication skills versus personal integrity	67.7%	27.7%	0.0%	1.5%	0.0%	3.1%

Suburban respondents gave responses similar to the whole group. Suburban superintendents and school board members placed an importance on the area of communication skills higher than all other areas except one, personal integrity (57.6%).

Table 21 shows in rank order the importance of communication compared to the other responsibilities. A score of one indicated of least importance compared to communication and six indicated more important than communication. Table 21 compares suburban respondents compared to the whole group.

Table 21

*Rank Order of Preferences Regarding Communication Compared to Other Responsibilities
(Superintendents)*

Skill	Rank	Whole Sample Rank
Budget Skills	5	5
Political Savvy	3	6
Instructional leadership skills	4	4
Community Awareness	6	2
Interpersonal Skills	2	3
Personal Integrity	1	1

Suburban respondents agreed with the whole sample in that personal integrity was more important than communication skills. The disparity in rank when comparing the whole group to the suburban respondents was in the categories of political savvy and community awareness. Community awareness was ranked as least important among the suburban superintendents.

Urban

Superintendents and school board members who self-described themselves as urban answered their preferences of communication and frequency Table 22.

Table 22

Preferences of Communication and Frequency Data Comparison Urban Whole Group

Issue	E-mail	Phone call	Face-to-face	Board meeting
Personnel issue	30.6%	19.4%	41.7%	8.3%
Student issues	50.0%	27.8%	16.7%	5.6%
School emergency	22.2%	72.2%	5.6%	0.0%
Board agenda items	77.8%	0.0%	8.3%	13.9%
Community issues	69.4%	13.9%	5.6%	11.1%
Federal or state issues	63.9%	8.3%	0.0%	27.8%
Facility issues	66.7%	22.2%	2.8%	8.3%

This information demonstrated that urban respondents preferred face-to-face (41.2%) or e-mail (30.6%) communication when it came to personnel issues. This group also accepted student issues could be e-mailed (50.0%). Overall, the respondents agreed that e-mail was the most preferred form of communication, when it came to federal or state issues (63.9%) and community issues (69.4%).

Urban respondents were asked how soon they preferred being notified about each issue. Their responses are found in Table 23.

Table 23

Preferences of Communication and Frequency Data of Urban Whole Group

Issue	Immediately	Within 12 hours	Within 24 hours	Within 48 hours	Within the week
Personnel issues	16.7%	27.8%	27.8%	8.3%	19.4%
Student issues	25.0%	38.9%	19.4%	2.8%	13.9%
School emergency	83.3%	16.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Board agenda items	0.0%	11.1%	11.1%	19.4%	58.3%
Community issues	2.8%	11.1%	36.1%	13.9%	36.1%
Federal or state issues	2.8%	5.6%	13.9%	22.2%	55.6%
Facility issues	11.1%	25.0%	19.4%	19.4%	25.0%

Urban superintendents and school board members preferred to be notified of situations either immediately or within the first 12 hours in all but two areas, board agenda items (58.3%) and federal or state issues (55.6%). One area that stood out was the school emergency as 100% of the respondents wanted to know either immediately or within 12 hours.

The survey asked for responses as communication related to other areas where effective superintendents need to be competent. Table 24 shows the responses as they relate to urban superintendents and school board members.

Table 24

Views of Communication Compared to Other Superintendent Responsibilities (Urban)

Question	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Communication skills versus budgets	5.6%	16.7%	13.9%	22.2%	36.1%	5.6%
Communication skills versus interpersonal skills	11.1%	33.3%	33.3%	22.2%	0.0%	0.0%
Communication skills versus instructional leadership skills	2.8%	25.0%	38.9%	19.4%	11.1%	2.8%
Communication skills versus political savvy	0.0%	19.4%	22.2%	36.1%	16.7%	5.6%
Communication skills versus community awareness	2.8%	27.8%	27.8%	30.6%	11.1%	0.0%
Communication skills versus personal integrity	66.7%	25.0%	8.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Urban respondents gave responses somewhat different to the whole group. They placed an importance on the area of communication in all of the categories except one, personal integrity (66.7%), which was ranked more important than communication.

Table 25 shows in rank order the importance of communication compared to the other responsibilities. When comparing communication skills to the other skills a score of 1 was considered most important. Table 25 reflects urban respondents ranking compared to the whole group.

Table 25

Rank Order of Preferences Regarding Communication Compared to Other Responsibilities
(Urban)

Skill	Rank	Whole Sample Rank
Budget skills	6	5
Political savvy	5	6
Instructional leadership skills	4	4
Community awareness	3	2
Interpersonal skills	2	3
Personal integrity	1	1

Urban respondents agreed with the whole sample in that personal integrity was more important than communication skills. All other rankings were very similar to the whole group.

Table 26 represents the rank order by each demographic location and compares all three location types.

Table 26

Rank of Importance for Superintendents Skills by Location

Skill	Rural Rank	Suburban Rank	Urban Rank
Budgetary skills	5	5	6
Interpersonal skills	3	3	5
Instructional leadership skills	4	4	4
Political savvy	6	6	3
Community awareness	2	2	2
Personal integrity	1	1	1

The three locations ranked personal integrity as more important than possessing effective communication skills. The rank order of political savvy showed a discrepancy in the urban setting. Political savvy was more important in the urban setting than in rural and suburban. All other areas showed a similar ranking.

Communication Skills Compared to Other Superintendent Duties by Longevity

The last set of data examined longevity. Subgroups were also broken out to determine if longevity played a role in communication preferences. Superintendents and school board members were asked to report how long they had served in their capacity. Respondents were asked to choose from among four categories; 0 – 4 years, 5 – 8 years, 9 – 12 years, or 13 years or more.

Zero to Four Years

The responses relating to communication for those superintendents and board members who have been in their positions 0 – 4 years. Table 27 represents their preferences of communication and frequency.

Table 27

Preferences of Communication and Frequency Data Comparison 0 – 4 Years (Whole Group)

Issue	E-mail	Phone call	Face-to-face	Board meeting
Personnel issue	25.2%	23.3%	44.7%	6.8%
Student issues	48.5%	27.2%	20.4%	3.9%
School emergency	16.5%	71.8%	10.7%	1.0%
Board agenda items	79.6%	2.9%	1.9%	15.5%
Community issues	57.3%	18.4%	9.7%	14.6%
Federal or state issues	66.0%	4.9%	2.9%	26.2%
Facility issues	61.2%	14.6%	7.8%	16.5%

This information demonstrated that respondents who had served 0 – 4 years preferred face-to-face (44.7%) communication when it came to personnel issues. Overall, the respondents agreed that e-mail is the most preferred form of communication, when it came to federal or state issues (66.0%) community issues (57.3%) and student issues (48.5%).

The respondents were asked how soon they preferred being notified about each of these issues. Their responses are found in Table 28.

Table 28

Preferences in Communication and Frequency Data of 0 – 4 Years (Whole Group)

Issue	Immediately	Within 12 hours	Within 24 hours	Within 48 hours	Within the week
Personnel issues	25.2%	32.0%	25.2%	7.8%	9.7%
Student issues	14.6%	43.7%	32.0%	4.9%	4.9%
School emergency	88.3%	8.7%	1.0%	1.9%	0.0%
Board agenda items	1.0%	8.7%	15.5%	19.4%	55.3%
Community issues	1.9%	16.5%	29.1%	23.3%	29.1%
Federal or state issues	6.8%	5.8%	12.6%	14.6%	60.2%
Facility issues	15.5%	20.4%	23.3%	11.7%	29.1%

Superintendents and school board members who had served 0 – 4 years preferred to be notified of situations either immediately or within the first 12 hours in all but two areas, board agenda items (55.3%) and federal or state issues (60.2%). Superintendents and school board members indicated notification within the week was acceptable.

The survey asked for participants to respond to how communication related to other areas in which effective superintendents needed to be competent. Table 29 shows the responses.

Table 29

Views of Communication Compared to Other Superintendent Responsibilities (0 – 4 years)

Question	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Communication skills versus budgets	1.0%	8.7%	19.4%	21.4%	26.2%	34.0%
Communication skills versus interpersonal skills	1.9%	28.2%	31.1%	20.4%	15.5%	2.9%
Communication skills versus instructional leadership skills	1.0%	15.5%	31.1%	29.1%	20.4%	2.9%
Communication skills versus political savvy	0.0%	4.9%	17.5%	24.3%	38.8%	14.6%
Communication skills versus community awareness	1.9%	24.3%	33.0%	29.1%	11.7%	0.0%
Communication skills versus personal integrity	58.3%	33.0%	8.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Respondents gave responses similar to the whole group in all of the categories except for one, personal integrity (58.3%), which was identified as much more important than communication.

5 – 8 Years

The responses for superintendents and school board members who had served 5 – 8 years in their respective roles are indicated in Tables 30 through 32. Table 30 represents their preferences, of communication and frequency.

Table 30

Preferences of Communication and Frequency Data Comparison 5 – 8 years (Whole Group)

Issue	E-mail	Phone call	Face-to-face	Board meeting
Personnel issue	21.8%	29.5%	41.0%	7.7%
Student issues	43.6%	33.3%	17.9%	5.1%
School emergency	14.1%	75.6%	10.3%	0.0%
Board agenda items	76.9%	2.6%	1.3%	19.2%
Community issues	60.3%	14.1%	7.7%	17.9%
Federal or state issues	60.3%	11.5%	0.0%	28.2%
Facility issues	51.3%	30.8%	2.6%	15.4%

Overall, the respondents (60.3%) agreed that e-mail was the most preferred form of communication when it came to federal or state issues. Notification of community issues (63%) and student issues (43.6%) were preferred via e-mailed. Respondents preferred face-to-face communication when it came to personnel issues (41%)

The same respondents were then asked how soon they preferred being notified about a variety of school issues. Those responses are found in Table 31.

Table 31

Preferences in Communication and Frequency Data of 5 – 8 Years (Whole Group)

Issue	Immediately	Within 12 hours	Within 24 hours	Within 48 hours	Within the week
Personnel issues	30.8%	32.1%	20.5%	3.8%	12.8%
Student issues	28.2%	29.5%	29.5%	3.8%	9.0%
School emergency	91.0%	7.7%	1.3%	0.0%	0.0%
Board agenda items	1.3%	12.8%	9.0%	25.6%	51.3%
Community issues	2.6%	20.5%	26.9%	20.5%	29.5%
Federal or state issues	5.1%	7.7%	12.8%	14.1%	60.3%
Facility issues	16.7%	23.1%	25.6%	12.8%	21.8%

Superintendents and school board members who had served 5 – 8 years preferred to be notified of situations either immediately or within the first 12 hours. This was especially true with school emergencies (91.0%). The only two items where this was not true was board agenda items (51.3%) and federal or state issues (60.3%). Superintendents and school board members both indicated they preferred notification within the week for board agenda items and federal or state issues.

The next part of the survey asked for responses as communication related to other areas in which effective superintendents need to be competent. Table 32 presents the responses.

Table 32

Views of Communication Compared to Other Superintendent Responsibilities (5 – 8 years)

Question	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Communication skills versus budgets	1.3%	7.7%	17.9%	24.4%	35.9%	12.8%
Communication skills versus interpersonal skills	0.0%	16.7%	34.6%	30.8%	14.1%	3.8%
Communication skills versus instructional leadership skills	0.0%	10.3%	23.1%	48.7%	15.4%	2.6%
Communication skills versus political savvy	0.0%	5.1%	14.1%	32.1%	35.9%	12.8%
Communication skills versus community awareness	2.6%	21.8%	30.8%	29.5%	14.1%	1.3%
Communication skills versus personal integrity	64.1%	26.9%	2.6%	1.3%	2.6%	2.6%

Respondents placed an importance on the area of communication in all of the categories except for one, personal integrity (64.1%), which was much more important than communication.

9 – 12 Years

The responses for superintendents and school board members who had served 9 – 12 years are indicated in Tables 33 through 35. Table 33 contains their preferences of communication and frequency.

Table 33

Preferences of Communication and Frequency Data Comparison 9 – 12 years (Whole Group)

Issue	E-mail	Phone call	Face-to-face	Board meeting
Personnel issue	20.0%	28.0%	36.0%	16.0%
Student issues	44.0%	40.0%	8.0%	8.0%
School emergency	16.0%	74.0%	10.0%	0.0%
Board agenda items	72.0%	8.0%	8.0%	12.0%
Community issues	64.0%	8.0%	16.0%	12.0%
Federal or state issues	66.0%	6.0%	4.0%	24.0%
Facility issues	54.0%	24.0%	8.0%	14.0%

Overall, the respondents agreed that e-mail was the most preferred form of communication when it came to federal or state issues (66.0%) and community issues (64.0%). The respondents preferred face-to-face (36.0%) communication when it came to personnel issues. This group preferred notification of student issues via e-mailed (44.0%) or phone call (40.0%).

The respondents were then asked how quickly they preferred being notified about each of these issues. Their responses are found in Table 34.

Table 34

Preferences in Communication and Frequency Data of 9 – 12 Years (Whole Group)

Issue	Immediately	Within 12 hours	Within 24 hours	Within 48 hours	Within the week
Personnel Issues	28.0%	20.0%	40.0%	6.0%	6.0%
Student Issues	18.0%	38.0%	30.0%	4.0%	10.0%
School emergency	92.0%	6.0%	2.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Board agenda items	2.0%	4.0%	16.0%	22.0%	56.0%
Community issues	0.0%	8.0%	34.0%	28.0%	30.0%
Federal or State issues	0.0%	2.0%	14.0%	12.0%	72.0%
Facility issues	14.0%	16.0%	30.0%	14.0%	26.0%

Superintendents and school board members who had served 9 – 12 years preferred notification of situations either immediately or within the first 12 hours. This was especially true of school emergencies (92.0%). The two items where this method of notification was not acceptable were board agenda items (56.0%) and federal or state issues (72.0%).

Superintendents and school board members indicated they preferred notification within the week for these two areas.

The survey asked for responses as communication related to other areas in which effective superintendents need to be competent. These responses are reflected in Table 35.

Table 35

Views of Communication Compared to Other Superintendent Responsibilities (9 – 12 Years)

Question	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Communication skills versus budgets	2.0%	8.0%	20.0%	26.0%	36.0%	8.0%
Communication skills versus interpersonal skills	2.0%	18.0%	32.0%	40.0%	6.0%	2.0%
Communication skills versus instructional leadership skills	1.0%	15.5%	31.1%	29.1%	20.4%	2.9%
Communication skills versus political savvy	4.0%	8.0%	20.0%	20.0%	38.0%	10.0%
Communication skills versus community awareness	4.0%	20.0%	40.0%	28.0%	4.0%	4.0%
Communication skills versus personal integrity	60.0%	28.0%	8.0%	2.0%	2.0%	0.0%

These respondents gave responses similar to the whole group. Superintendents and school board members who had served 9 – 12 years placed an importance on the area of communication in all of the categories except for one, personal integrity (60.0%), which was ranked more important than communication.

More Than 13 Years

The final group reporting data was superintendents and school board members who had served in their capacity for more than 13 years. Their responses are listed in Table 36 to 38.

Table 36 represents their preferences of communication and frequency.

Table 36

Preferences in Communication and Frequency Data Comparison of 13 years or More (Whole Group)

Issue	E-mail	Phone call	Face-to-face	Board meeting
Personnel issue	27.5%	25.0%	37.5%	10.0%
Student issues	55.0%	27.5%	12.5%	5.0%
School emergency	22.5%	72.5%	5.0%	0.0%
Board agenda items	85.0%	2.5%	2.5%	10.0%
Community issues	75.0%	12.5%	2.5%	10.0%
Federal or state issues	62.5%	5.0%	0.0%	32.5%
Facility issues	62.5%	12.5%	5.0%	20.0%

Overall, the respondents agreed that e-mail was the most preferred form of communication when it came to federal or state issues (62.5%), community issues (75.0%), and student issues via e-mail (55%). The respondents preferred face-to-face (37.5%) communication when it came to personnel issues. The respondents were then asked how soon they preferred being notified about each issue. Their responses are found in Table 37.

Table 37

Preferences of Communication and Frequency Data of More Than 13 Years (Whole Group)

Issue	Immediately	Within 12 hours	Within 24 hours	Within 48 hours	Within the week
Personnel issues	30.0%	32.5%	22.5%	2.5%	12.5%
Student issues	22.5%	37.5%	22.5%	0.0%	17.5%
School emergency	85.0%	12.5%	2.5%	0.0%	0.0%
Board agenda items	0.0%	10.0%	22.5%	22.5%	45.0%
Community issues	5.0%	15.0%	35.0%	12.5%	32.5%
Federal or state issues	2.5%	5.0%	20.0%	10.0%	62.5%
Facility issues	15.0%	15.0%	22.5%	10.0%	37.5%

Superintendents and school board members who had served more than 13 years preferred to be notified of situations either immediately or within the first 12 hours in all but two areas, board agenda items (45.0%) and federal or state issues (62.5%). In both of these areas, superintendents and school board members preferred notification notified within the week.

The survey asked for responses as communication relates to other areas in which effective superintendents need to be competent. Table 38 shows these responses.

Table 38

Views of Communication Compared to Other Superintendent Responsibilities (More Than 13 Years)

Question	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Communication skills versus budgets	7.5%	17.5%	10.0%	25.0%	30.0%	10.0%
Communication skills versus interpersonal skills	7.5%	25.0%	32.5%	25.0%	10.0%	0.0%
Communication skills versus instructional leadership skills	2.5%	15.0%	32.5%	27.5%	17.5%	5.0%
Communication skills versus political savvy	0.0%	7.5%	20.0%	25.0%	35.0%	12.5%
Communication skills versus community awareness	0.0%	35.0%	27.5%	30.0%	5.0%	2.5%
Communication skills versus personal integrity	65.0%	25.0%	0.0%	5.0%	0.0%	5.0%

Respondents gave responses similar to the whole group. Superintendents and school board members who had served for more than 13 years placed an importance on the area of communication in all of the categories except one, personal integrity (65.0%), which was much more important than communication.

Table 39

Rank Order by Longevity

Skill	0 – 4 years Rank	5 – 8 years Rank	9 – 12 years Rank	13 years or more Rank
Budgetary skills	5	5	6	5
Interpersonal skills	3	3	3	2
Instructional leadership	4	4	4	4
Political savvy	6	6	6	6
Community awareness	2	2	2	3
Personal integrity	1	1	1	1

Personal integrity was more important than effective communication skills among rank order.

The data shows very little difference in rank order among longevity respondents.

Inferential Test Results

For H_01 , an independent samples t test was performed to determine if a significant difference existed between the two position types, superintendents and school board members. An independent samples t test was selected because there was only one dependent variable along with one independent variable (position type) that had two groups (superintendents and school board members). For H_02 and H_03 , one-way ANOVAs were selected because there was one dependent variable and the independent variable had more than two levels for each null hypothesis. The groups examined in the second null were rural, suburban, and urban superintendents and school board members. The groups examined in the third null came from longevity levels of 0 – 4 years, 5 – 8 years, 9 – 12 years, and 13 years or more.

There was no significant difference in the views of communication based on position type. A composite communication score was used to determine the scores for each level. This score was used to determine if there was a significant difference on the composite communication score based on the position type (superintendent/school board member). To ensure the validity of the inferential findings, the assumptions for an independent samples t test were examined. Examination of the box plots determined that no data point was more than 1.5 standard deviations away from the edge of the box; therefore, no outliers within the dependent variable scores were present. The assumption of normality was examined using the Shapiro-Wilks test. This assumption was met as the significance value was greater than .05.

To determine whether there were equal variances among the dependent variable for both groups, the assumption of homogeneity of variance used a Levene's test. The assumption was met as long as the significance value (p value) in the Levene's test was greater than .05. The assumption of homogeneity of variance was not violated with a non-significant Levene's test for equality of variance, $F = .001, p = .974$.

There was no significant difference between the superintendent communication composite score ($M = 20.56, SD = 3.71$) and school board members communication composite score ($M = 20.06, SD = 3.54$). This was evident as the result of the independent samples t test was not significant, $t(269) = 1.06, p = .29$, two-tailed. The significance level was greater than the chosen alpha level of .05; thus, the null hypothesis was retained.

There is no significant difference in the views of communication based on location. To ensure the validity of the inferential findings, the assumptions for a one-way ANOVA were tested. Examination of the box plots determined that no data point was more than 1.5 standard deviations away from the edge of the box; therefore, no outliers were discovered among the

dependent variable scores for the three groups. The assumption of normality was examined using the Shapiro-Wilks test. This assumption was met as the significance value was greater than .05. The assumption of homogeneity of variance examines whether the variances within the dependent variable are equal for all levels of the independent variable. The assumption was met, $F(2, 268) = .461, p = .631$. The assumption was met because $p > .05$.

The communication composite score had significant differences within the model, $F(2, 268) = 8.69, p < .001$. To determine where the significant difference is found within the model, examination of the coefficients output occurred. The scores on the communication composite were lower on the urban respondents ($M = 17.97, SD = 2.90$) when compared to both the rural ($M = 20.48, SD = 3.64$) and the suburban ($M = 20.77, SD = 3.40$) respondents, $p < .001$ for both comparisons. There was no significant difference between the rural and suburban communication composite scores with $p = .834$. Therefore, the null was retained.

There was no significant difference in the views of communication based on longevity. To ensure the validity of the inferential findings, the assumptions for a one-way ANOVA were tested. Examination of the box plots determined that no data point was more than 1.5 standard deviations away from the edge of the box; therefore, no outliers were discovered among the dependent variable scores for the three groups. The assumption of normality was examined using the Shapiro-Wilks test. This assumption was met as the significance value was greater than .05. The assumption of homogeneity of variance examines whether the variances within the dependent variable are equal for all levels of the independent variable. The assumption was met, $F(3, 267) = 1.52, p = .712$. The assumption was met, $p > .05$, and the null was retained.

There is no significant difference on the communication composite score based on longevity. This is evident with a non-significant One-Way ANOVA, $F(3, 267) = 1.517, p =$

.210. Examination of the coefficients output were not necessary due to having a non-significant result.

Summary

This chapter consisted of an analysis of the data collected in this quantitative study to investigate the six research questions. Public school superintendents and school board members from the state of Indiana were asked to complete an on-line survey which provided descriptive and inferential data for this study. Descriptive data was used to address Research Questions 1, 2, and 3. These questions focused on the preferences of communication skills and methods between superintendents and school board members. Research Question 4 utilized an independent sample t test to determine if there was a significant difference in regard to position type. There were no significant differences for the communication composite scores based on position type. Research Questions 5 and 6 utilized one-way ANOVAs to determine the differences. There were significant differences between the urban respondents and their other two counterparts, rural and suburban. In each case, the urban respondents reported significantly less importance with regard to communication. The suburban and rural communication composite scores were not found to be significantly different. There were no significant differences on the communication composite scores based on the longevity of the position which the person held.

A discussion of the results is presented in Chapter 5. Also, provided are the summary of the findings, implications, limitations, recommendations for future research and a summary of the study.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

This chapter is organized into four sections. The first section presents a discussion of the findings, including a summary of the descriptive data and a summary of the hypothesis testing. The second section reveals the implications associated with the study. The third section includes a discussion of the limitations associated with this study. The final section outlines the recommendations for further research.

Eliminating obstacles that lie in the pathway to success is one of the main responsibilities of every great leader (Adamson, 2014). This applies to superintendents and school board members as well. School board members seldom mention that these barriers include board dysfunction, negative relationships, ineffective communication, or lack of community support; however, these are the barriers that many superintendents and school board members face (Adamson, 2014).

Poor communication often leads to key errors being made by a board member, the superintendent, or both. Board members should take key issues to the superintendent and clearly communicate their expectations. If board members are not satisfied with the response of the superintendent, then those members should expand the dialogue to provide a more detailed description of the problem or concern. Superintendents must understand that effective communication is critical when dealing with school board members (Mayer, 2014).

Effective school systems take advantage of opportunities to engage in highly-operative communication strategies. Decidedly successful school boards and superintendents share a common vision, set common goals, and work together as a unified team to achieve maximal outcomes. The public's perception of a school district most frequently begins at the top. Therefore, productive communication must be a priority for school board members and the superintendent. The manner in which communication is conducted among board members and the superintendent sets the tone of the district and wields a huge impact on its potential for success (Carr, 2012).

Summary of Findings

This quantitative study examined communication between superintendents and school board members. Research suggests that effective school corporations are characterized by the quality of the communication between the superintendent and the school board. Effective communication must be a priority for both groups. In order to explore this premise, the following research questions were employed for this study:

1. What are the views concerning communication skills in relation to other superintendent responsibilities?
2. What are the preferred methods superintendents choose to utilize in communicating with school board members?
3. What are the methods school board members prefer when receiving communications from the superintendent?
4. Is there a significant difference in communication scores based upon position type?
5. Is there a significant difference in communication based upon location?
6. Is there a significant difference in communication based upon longevity?

This study was conducted by administering a survey designed to measure the importance of communication as it relates to six areas of major responsibilities for superintendents. Those major responsibilities include knowledge of the budget, interpersonal skills, instructional leadership skills, political savvy, community awareness, and personal integrity. Six questions were utilized which required respondents to determine whether communication was the most important of the six areas attributed to being a successful superintendent. Each of these areas was measured using a six-point Likert scale. The sum of the scores was then used to compare the relative importance of each as measured by superintendents and school board members. The range of the sum of these scores was between six and 36, the higher score (closer to 36) indicated a greater emphasis on communication and a lower score (closer to 6) indicated a lower emphasis on communication.

The second part of the survey determined the types, preferences and frequency of communication styles between superintendents and school board members. Participants were asked their preferences on a variety of topics, as well as the frequency in which they preferred the communication.

A total of 271 individuals responded to the survey, 84 (31.0%) superintendents and 187 (69.0%) school board members. Of the respondents, the location type for school districts included 170 (62.7%) within a rural setting, 65 (24.0%) suburban and 36 (13.3%) from urban districts. Results for longevity of respondents were 103 (38.0%) serving for 0 – 4 years, 78 (28.8%) serving 5 – 8 years, 50 (18.5%) serving 9 – 12 years, and 40 (14.8%) serving more than 13 years.

The findings of this study were presented in Chapter 4 as were the results of the statistical analysis. The examination of the findings presented in this chapter includes results in three categories: position, location, and longevity.

Position: Superintendent/School Board

One item of data which superintendents and school board preferred is immediate contact when a school emergency occurs. Superintendents reported that a phone call (65.5%) should be made immediately (95.2%). Likewise, school board members preferred a phone call (77.0%). Board members preferred calls to be made immediately (86.6%). Another area where both superintendents and school board members agreed was personal integrity. Both groups reported that personal integrity was much more important than communication skills.

There was no significant difference in the views of communication based on position type. A composite communication score was used to determine if there was a significant difference in communication based on the position type (Superintendent/School Board Member). An independent samples *t* test was utilized to determine if a difference existed.

There was no significant difference between the superintendent communication composite score ($M = 20.56$, $SD = 3.71$) and school board members communication composite score ($M = 20.06$, $SD = 3.54$). One of the potential reasons for this perception can be attributed to the knowledge that these positions share a mandate from stakeholders to provide a transparent leadership style which builds trust through clarity of purpose, vision, mission, and accomplishment. In addition, there is increased training for both groups conducted by many different organizations in an effort to increase effective communication.

The vision and mission of a school district are the blueprints for corporation's progress toward their goals. As the superintendent and school board work together in establishing and

meeting the goals of the district transparent and open communication must occur. A high-quality strategic plan is essential for establishing a healthy culture and successful school district.

Effective communication is the key (Gabreil & Farmer, 2009).

Location

There was no significant difference in the views of communication based on location for rural and suburban school districts. There was a significant difference for urban school settings. To ensure the validity of the inferential findings, the assumptions for a one-way ANOVA were tested. The scores on the communication composite were lower on the urban respondents ($M = 17.97$, $SD = 2.90$) when compared to both the rural ($M = 20.48$, $SD = 3.64$) and the suburban ($M = 20.77$, $SD = 3.40$) respondents. One potential reason for the perceptions of rural and suburban school districts is most likely tied to enrollment size. Rural and suburban districts typically have lower enrollments which opens the door for closer ties with constituents.

Rural superintendents are expected to personally handle many of the daily situations that arise in the district. Everyone expects access to the superintendent. Rural superintendents are expected to be more visible and to communicate with all stakeholders, especially the school board. Rural superintendents are expected to be at as many school and community functions as possible. Rural communities regard their superintendent as the community leader (Copeland, 2013).

Suburban superintendents must also effectively communicate with all of the stakeholders, especially the school board. Suburban superintendents be effective educational leaders and support their principals to lead effective schools. These superintendents face political bureaucracy in their district, which sometimes leads to their leaving the district (Farkas, Johnson, Duffett, Foleno, & Foley, 2001).

On the other hand, urban school districts with larger enrollments may preclude more direct communication with stakeholders. Urban superintendents scored communication lower in importance as the result of less political pressure from individual constituents. The pressures that do arise come in the form of extremely diverse special interest groups, a result in part of the more heterogeneous composition of these districts which tend to have numerous subgroups: race, ethnicity, poverty, and special education. Although potential pressures at the more homogeneous rural or suburban school might be boundary changes, school closings or new buildings, urban districts struggle with the complexities of the demands and perceptions of diverse student populations and interest advocacy groups with specialized concerns

The results of this survey are not surprising given the increasing demands placed on urban superintendents. In recent years, two trends have plagued urban superintendents. First, the longevity of urban superintendents is rarely more than three years. Second, urban superintendents new to the job, come in with their own visions and try to change the course of a large district, which often times slows the progress of the district (Strauss, 2013).

The task of overseeing a large urban school system is a difficult job. Urban school superintendents are often responsible for a school district with an enrollment larger than many colleges and universities, responsible for serving more meals than local convention halls, responsible for transporting more people than the city's bus services, and responsible for providing a diagnosis of everything from playground scrapes to seizures. Urban districts are among the largest employers in their communities and operate much like a small city within a city (Harvey, 2003).

The ever-increasing accountability movement will add to the traditional pressures urban superintendents face. In addition to the regular day-to-day pressures, urban superintendents now

feel an emphasis on leading learning. In becoming educational leaders, urban superintendents are now required to demonstrate satisfactory performance on assessments administered in each grade, three through 10. Each of these districts will also be required to demonstrate that no gap exists between the performances of students from different racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic backgrounds (Harvey, 2003.)

Urban superintendents should possess classroom experience in urban schools. These educational leaders should communicate expectations that address gaps in achievement. Successful urban superintendents must also bring a commitment and ability to partner with many key stakeholders and develop educational leaders. As well as communicate their vision with school board members and many other special interest groups (Strauss, 2013).

The new mark of effective urban schools must focus on extraordinary high levels of student achievement. The most valuable asset for any superintendent is time, which in an urban school setting is consumed by special interest groups' demands. As advocates for learning, urban school superintendents must be excellent communicators at every level. Urban superintendents must create a vision, set goals and set policy. Superintendents and school boards must be united so that the entire school district can view the superintendent and the board as a unified team (Harvey, 2003).

Urban superintendents appear to have revolving-door positions as their average tenure is typically three to four years. One major reason is that in order to please one faction, the superintendent can alienate or anger the others. Effective communication with all stakeholders is a must. The urban superintendent experiences pressure from many powerful political forces. What can be difficult, Michael Casserly, head of the Council for the Great City Schools said, "the demands of the job are among the toughest in the nation, with cultural, racial and language

challenges; increasingly high academic standards and scarcer resources; demanding unions and communities; and brutal local politics” (as cited in Drummond, 2014).

Longevity

There is no significant difference in the views of communication based on longevity. To ensure the validity of the results of assumption for the one-way ANOVA, the communication composite score was used. The scores on the communication composite failed to indicate any significant difference. One possible explanation for this finding is that the tenure of the superintendent and school board members is typically political in nature. On the one hand, the school board decides whether or not the superintendent’s contract is renewed or revoked; and this decision is often grounded in the board’s desire to manage and control each and every aspect of the district rather than in the desire to allow the superintendent to do his/her job. On the other hand, the voters in a district have the power to change the complexion of a school board with their choices in cyclical elections; the choices made are typically based upon special interests, political machinations, or even personal vendetta. The fickle nature of both institutions can be a deciding factor in tenure issues, making this topic one that is erratic and unpredictable. The neutrality of the responses clearly reflects this possibility.

One of the keys to a successful district is related to the longevity of the superintendent. Tenure matters and there are many more opportunities for superintendents and school board members to attend training. Better evaluation tools, increased training and effective communication leads to effective tenure for a superintendent. One tool that can lead to a successful tenure is a strategic plan that is clearly communicated to all stake holders and constantly updated to the school board (Pascopella, 2011).

Implications

The analysis of the survey employed in this study showed a distinct correlation between effective communication among school board members and the superintendent and the efficacy of the school district. The research also suggests that successful communication is a must for the superintendent to remain a viable district leader. There are several implications of this study and their application to superintendent and school boards.

Superintendent

A major theme which emerged throughout this research was the importance of personal integrity. Personal integrity was preferred over communication skills by all of the respondents. This is important for superintendents, especially new superintendents, to remember. Superintendents can use this knowledge as they proceed in their career. Superintendents will constantly be under the microscope as a member of the community. Great care must be utilized on a daily basis to make responsible decisions.

Personal integrity goes farther than just a superintendent's behaviors. Professionalism is a must for all superintendents. Administrators should understand that written and verbal communication should always be professional and accurate. Part of personal integrity is the demand for personal excellence. Expectations should be clear to all stakeholders. As superintendents move the district toward the vision and mission, accountability is a key.

Another implication could occur if superintendents administered this survey with school board members. Superintendents could use the results to discuss expectations with board members. Utilizing the survey (Appendix A), superintendents would come to understand preferences and frequencies as it pertains to the area of communication with the board.

Superintendents could use the results to establish protocol to put into practice with school board members. Superintendents would understand the preferences of board members, whether it is a phone call, e-mail or face-to-face communication.

In addition, superintendents could use the information gleaned from the survey to define the expectations of board members. A major example from the survey data revealed that board members preferred to be contacted immediately in regard to school emergencies. There is a need to define school emergencies and how to communicate them with board members. Utilizing this survey, superintendents could conduct a board retreat with board members to define situations and communication. This exercise could promote a common consensus in communication immediately.

This is important because the superintendent and school board relationship is crucial. The relationship is also fragile. When moving a school district forward, there may be times where not all stakeholders are in agreement. Board support will be imperative if a superintendent finds themselves in this position. Effective communication greatly increases the chances of being successful.

The superintendent and the school board should have clearly defined roles. The superintendent should provide leadership and manage the school district, advocate for the school district in the community, facilitate the development of the district's vision, mission and strategic plan, recommend and implement programs, procedures, and personnel.

There should be timely and effective communication among the superintendent and school board. Both groups should work diligently to avoid surprises. Often, superintendents fail because of a lack of communication. It is important for superintendents to have a clear understanding of the expectations of the school board. The better the understanding the more

likely it will be for the superintendent to be successful. Board training will not take the place of trust between the superintendent and the school board. Both parties must trust the other for effective, truthful, and honest communication.

Rural Superintendents

This study demonstrates that rural superintendents have different expectations compared to suburban and urban superintendents. As rural school districts tend to have a smaller enrollment, the superintendent is often times a one-person show. The rural superintendent is expected to be an effective communicator and to be seen at many different venues. Community awareness is more of a priority for rural superintendents. New superintendents could use this research to conduct an exercise on expectation as it relates to communication and community awareness. A new superintendent could conduct a school board retreat and utilize this research and have board members rank their priorities. Doing this would facilitate a conversation where the new superintendent could become aware of expectations from the school board.

Suburban Superintendents

Results of the survey show that suburban superintendents need to show a greater appreciation for political savvy. This is important to know and could be used to dialogue with board members on various topics. Typically, suburban school districts are larger than rural districts creating a need for increased communication among more stakeholders. Suburban superintendents could utilize this survey to enter into a dialogue with board members about expectations and protocols for communication.

Urban Superintendents

The results of this study show that political savvy is important for the success of urban superintendents. A possible explanation could be the increased amount of sub-groups associated

with an urban district. An urban superintendent could use give this instrument with the school board and discuss the results. This information could be used to provide a framework for the board and superintendent to work in tandem with the various community stakeholders. The results of this study indicate that urban superintendents put less of an emphasis on communication and a greater emphasis on other skills. Superintendents could benefit from using this survey with their board members. School board members have the potential to rank the importance of the other skills. This could be extremely beneficial to the superintendent as expectations are being established. This could lead to an increased effort in better communications between both groups.

School Boards

The school board should govern the district, be a liaison between the community and the superintendent, develop board policy hire and evaluate the superintendent, and vote on the superintendent's recommendations. The school board president could ask the superintendent to complete the survey instrument. This would effectively establish a baseline of what the superintendent values. This information should be shared with the other board members. Once all parties have a better understanding of what is valued, more effective communication should follow. This could potentially increase and improve communication, which leads to a more effective school district.

Other Implications

This information could be shared with new superintendents and new school board members. Utilizing the survey instrument and survey data, superintendents could begin looking at the best ways to guide and communicate with board members. Likewise, board members

could use this information to learn how the superintendent responds. Doing this would establish expectations for both the superintendent and school board members.

Many superintendents and school board members work together to establish a protocol for communication. This survey and the results could be used as a springboard for these discussions as well as the framework for such a document. The Indiana Association of Public School superintendents and the Indiana School Boards Association could also benefit from sharing the findings of this data with both parties. Both groups could use the survey or the findings with new superintendents or new board members to create better communication strategies and protocols. Both organization conduct new member training. This data could begin the conversations needed to increase a successful tenure for all parties.

Finally, this research and data reveal that communication between the superintendent and the school board is vital to the success of the district. This instrument could be used to begin the discussion between both parties to establish protocol for a successful outcome. The research is clear that communication is a key to success, but is also very complicated.

Limitations

The limitations of this study included the validity and reliability of the survey instrument. In addition, the survey was limited to respondents who were cooperative and participated of their own volition. Finally, because school board members and superintendents often come from different backgrounds and communities, these differences could have influenced how each person responded.

Considerations for Further Research

The findings of this study and research reflections offer many opportunities for future research and practice in the areas of communication of superintendents and school boards.

Initially, it is imperative that superintendents and schools board members strive to normalize communication, face the brutal facts, and work together to resolve issues among themselves and within the district. Superintendents would benefit from asking the question, “Are you getting what you need?”

Further research in this area should focus on questions which are more far-reaching and comprehensive than those chosen for this research. The quality of the questions utilized for this study may have homogenized the results somewhat. In the data analysis, responses were limited to a reduced number of variables. This, in turn, narrowed the findings and failed to include a multitude of variables that might have given a broader spectrum of consideration to the nature of the study. A wider set of variables could have been offered in the survey.

One of the variables that should have been included in the questioning for the survey is the total enrollment of the school district. This variable is potentially impactful as the state of communication between the superintendent and school board rests on availability, the extent of information gathering, the networking that occurs within the district, and the ability of all parties to process and disseminate knowledge to the appropriate constituents. For a district of a thousand or so students, this may prove to be a much easier task to facilitate than for a district of several thousand. Large urban districts, as was previously noted, tend to place stringent demands upon a superintendent making the position one of the most challenging in the field of education. Smaller rural districts, on the other hand, tend to be less politically charged and offer more opportunity for close conversation and exchange of ideas.

In addition, personal interviews could be conducted with superintendents and school board members. New superintendents could have been interviewed to determine their course of action, as it relates to board communication. Interviews with teachers, parents, community

members, and students could be conducted to discuss the role of communication from the superintendent.

Another component which would benefit from additional research is enrollment of the district. Typically, urban school districts have a greater enrollment than smaller rural districts. Also, comparing the response of the superintendent and the school board from the same school district may provide additional insight. Exit interviews conducted with outgoing superintendents could also be researched to determine the reason for leaving. The board members of the same district could also be interviewed to determine where the breakdowns occurred. As well as determining what were the reasons for the superintendent's leaving.

In addition, a study could be conducted to determine the importance of personal integrity. Research could be conducted to determine if there is a correlation between longevity and personal integrity. Finally, a multi-state study could also be conducted to examine all of the issues presented in this research.

Summary

As the ever-increasing demands continue to be placed on superintendents, and as the tenure for the position continues to decrease, the necessity for effective communication becomes even more significant. One of the most important decisions a school board will make is the hiring of the superintendent. Once that decision is made, it is imperative for the superintendent to begin modeling and expecting clear and open communication. A superintendent's success can be analyzed through many different lenses; but without responsive and understandable dialogue and discussion with the school board and all stakeholders, a leader cannot sustain this position of authority for long. A change will become inevitable.

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APPENDIX A: SURVEY

My name is Travis Haire and I am a doctoral candidate at Indiana State University. For my dissertation study, I have chosen to study communication between superintendents and school board members. I am requesting your participation in this research study. Your participation is voluntary and there is no consequence if you do not participate. No one will be able to identify you as a participant. At any time you have the right to refuse to participate by simply closing the browser and exiting the program.

Section I: Communication

Section I is based on six statements. Please rate each statement on the six-point scale following each statement.

1. Successful superintendents have better communication skills than the knowledge of budgets.
 - Strongly Disagree (1)
 - Disagree (2)
 - Somewhat Disagree (3)
 - Somewhat Agree (4)
 - Agree (5)
 - Strongly Agree (6)
2. Successful superintendents have better communication skills than interpersonal skills.
 - Strongly Disagree (1)
 - Disagree (2)
 - Somewhat Disagree (3)
 - Somewhat Agree (4)
 - Agree (5)
 - Strongly Agree (6)
3. Successful superintendents have better communication skills than instructional leadership skills.
 - Strongly Disagree (1)
 - Disagree (2)
 - Somewhat Disagree (3)
 - Somewhat Agree (4)
 - Agree (5)
 - Strongly Agree (6)
4. Successful superintendents have better communication skills than political savvy.
 - Strongly Disagree (1)
 - Disagree (2)
 - Somewhat Disagree (3)

Somewhat Agree (4)
 Agree (5)
 Strongly Agree (6)

5. Successful superintendents have better communication skills than community awareness.
 Strongly Disagree (1)
 Disagree (2)
 Somewhat Disagree (3)
 Somewhat Agree (4)
 Agree (5)
 Strongly Agree (6)
6. Successful superintendents have better communication skills than personal integrity.
 Strongly Disagree (1)
 Disagree (2)
 Somewhat Disagree (3)
 Somewhat Agree (4)
 Agree (5)
 Strongly Agree (6)

Section II: Communication, Types and Preferences

Section II is divided into seven questions. Each question is two parts. First, please rank the four communication techniques with the following scale:

- a. Always
- b. Sometimes
- c. Never
- d. It does not matter

Second, please rate the frequency in which you prefer to receive the information.

1. Personnel issues

E-mail

- A. Always B. Sometimes C. Never D. It does not matter

Phone call

- A. Always B. Sometimes C. Never D. It does not matter

Face-to-Face

- A. Always B. Sometimes C. Never D. It does not matter

Board Meeting

- A. Always B. Sometimes C. Never D. It does not matter

I would want this information:

- A. Immediately
- B. Within 12 hours
- C. Within 24 hours
- D. Within 48 hours
- E. Within the week

2. Student Issue

E-mail

- A. Always B. Sometimes C. Never D. It does not matter

Phone call

- A. Always B. Sometimes C. Never D. It does not matter

Face-to-Face

- A. Always B. Sometimes C. Never D. It does not matter

Board Meeting

- A. Always B. Sometimes C. Never D. It does not matter

I would want this information:

- A. Immediately
- B. Within 12 hours
- C. Within 24 hours
- D. Within 48 hours
- E. Within the week

3. School Emergency

E-mail

- A. Always B. Sometimes C. Never D. It does not matter

Phone call

- A. Always B. Sometimes C. Never D. It does not matter

Face-to-Face

- A. Always B. Sometimes C. Never D. It does not matter

Board Meeting

- A. Always B. Sometimes C. Never D. It does not matter

I would want this information:

- A. Immediately
- B. Within 12 hours
- C. Within 24 hours
- D. Within 48 hours
- E. Within the week

4. Board agenda items

E-mail

- A. Always B. Sometimes C. Never D. It does not matter

Phone call

- A. Always B. Sometimes C. Never D. It does not matter

Face-to-Face

- A. Always B. Sometimes C. Never D. It does not matter

Board Meeting

- A. Always B. Sometimes C. Never D. It does not matter

I would want this information:

- A. Immediately
 B. Within 12 hours
 C. Within 24 hours
 D. Within 48 hours
 E. Within the week

5. Community issues

E-mail

- A. Always B. Sometimes C. Never D. It does not matter

Phone call

- A. Always B. Sometimes C. Never D. It does not matter

Face-to-Face

- A. Always B. Sometimes C. Never D. It does not matter

Board Meeting

- A. Always B. Sometimes C. Never D. It does not matter

I would want this information:

- A. Immediately
 B. Within 12 hours
 C. Within 24 hours
 D. Within 48 hours
 E. Within the week

6. Federal and/or state issues

E-mail

- A. Always B. Sometimes C. Never D. It does not matter

Phone call

- A. Always B. Sometimes C. Never D. It does not matter

Face-to-Face

- A. Always B. Sometimes C. Never D. It does not matter

Board Meeting

- A. Always B. Sometimes C. Never D. It does not matter

I would want this information:

- A. Immediately
B. Within 12 hours
C. Within 24 hours
D. Within 48 hours
E. Within the week

7. Facility Issues

E-mail

- A. Always B. Sometimes C. Never D. It does not matter

Phone call

- A. Always B. Sometimes C. Never D. It does not matter

Face-to-Face

- A. Always B. Sometimes C. Never D. It does not matter

Board Meeting

- A. Always B. Sometimes C. Never D. It does not matter

I would want this information:

- A. Immediately
B. Within 12 hours
C. Within 24 hours
D. Within 48 hours
E. Within the week

Section III: Experience in education and school corporation information

Directions: Please answer each question as it pertains to your current situation. Please select appropriate responses.

1. Currently, I am serving as a
 - a. Superintendent
 - b. School board member
2. The enrollment of your district:
 - a. Under 1,000
 - b. 1,001-2,500
 - c. 2,501-4,000

- d. 4,001-6,000
 - e. More than 6,000
3. Which best describes your district:
- a. Rural
 - b. Urban
 - c. Suburban
4. How many years have you served as a superintendent/school board member?
- a. 0-4 years
 - b. 5-8 years
 - c. 9-12 years
 - d. more than 12 years

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT

July 2014

A Study on Superintendent and School Board Communication

You are being invited to participate in a research study about Superintendent and School Board Communication. This research project is being conducted by Travis Haire, under the guidance of Dr. Terry McDaniel from the Educational Leadership Department at Indiana State University. This study is being conducted to fulfill a dissertation requirement. The purpose of this study is understand the preference and frequency of communication superintendents and school board members prefer. It is being conducted in all public school systems throughout Indiana. The survey is being given to current superintendents and school board members.

There are no known risks if you decide to participate in this research study, nor are there any costs for participating in the study. The information you provide will help superintendents understand how best to communicate with the school board members, as well as the frequency of communication. The information collected may not benefit you directly, but what I learn from this study should provide general benefits to superintendents and school board members.

This survey is anonymous. If you choose to participate, do not include your name with the questionnaire. This is a web-based survey; although there is no absolute guaranteed anonymity, there will be no collection of any participants' IP address or any attempt to identify the names of the participants by the researcher. You may delete this e-mail in which this message was delivered at any time. A follow-up e-mail will be sent ten days after the initial correspondence thanking those who have participated and reminding those who have not participated, may do so. In addition, no one will know whether or not you have participated in this study. Individuals on the Institutional Review Board may inspect these records. Should the data be published, no individual information will be disclosed.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. By completing parts or all of the survey through the Qualtrics program, you are voluntarily agreeing to participate. You are free to decline to answer any particular question you do not wish to answer for any reason. At any time, you may close the browser and exit the program if you do not wish to complete the survey after starting the process.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact me at (812)-283-0701 or at thaire@sycamores.indstate.edu. You may also contact my faculty sponsor, Dr. Terry McDaniel, at (812) 237-3862 or at terry.mcdaniel@indstate.edu.