Alabama Superintendents' Perceptions of Staying or Leaving the Position

By

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine reasons superintendents choose to stay or leave the superintendency. By analyzing reasons why superintendents stay or leave, the data collected may provide further insight on effective practices of leadership that directly affect the longevity of their superintendency. The population for this study was all superintendents in the State of Alabama. According to the School Superintendent Association, the state of Alabama is comprised of 138 public school systems and within the 138 public school systems, there are 37 elected superintendents and 101 appointed. The total number of superintendents serving school districts on a city level is 71 and county level is 67. This includes city and public-school districts throughout the state of Alabama. Public school superintendents were invited to complete a Likert-type questions measured their perceptions. The survey also included a demographic section that addressed twelve demographic variables. Ninety-two superintendents responded to the survey, yielding a total of 67% response rate. The investigator sought to answer the following questions: (a) To what extent to leadership factors influence a superintendent's decision to leave their current position? And (b) To what extent do leadership factors influence a superintendent's decision to stay in their current position?

The results from this study found that most superintendents remain in the district for reasons such as vision, job satisfaction, community, commitment, and positive board relations. The dissatisfaction that causes superintendents to want to leave their position are dependent on reasons such as opportunities, retirement age, politics, health and stress, and school board issues.

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Chapter I: Introduction

In Alabama, the general function of a superintendent is to serve as the school system's chief administrator and educational leader with a duty to advise the school board. According to a joint publication between the Alabama Association of School Boards (AASB) and the School Superintendents of Alabama (SSA) (2017), the roles and responsibilities of superintendents are:

1. Work with the board to establish a vision and goals.

2. Focus on raising student achievement.

3. Serve as the system's chief executive officer, implementing board policies and overseeing daily operations.

4. Provide educational leadership for staff.

5. Hold employees accountable for system performance.

6. Identify and report to the board on the system's need and recommends actions.

7. Initiate development and implementation of the strategic plan.

8. Monitors and apprises the board of state and national educational developments.

9. Participate in professional development activities, including annual whole board training. (p. 2-3)

According to the joint publication, the state of Alabama is comprised of 138 public school systems serving at least 722,000 students (AASB/SSA, 2017). Within the 138 public school systems, there are 37 elected superintendents and 101 appointed superintendents (AASB/SSA, 2017). The total number of city system superintendents is 71 and the total number of county system superintendents is 67 (AASB/SSA, 2017). Currently, women make up 51.6% of Alabama's population but only 21.7% of the state's school superintendents (AASB/SSA,

2017). This means only one in five (or a total of 30 superintendents) is female compared to 108 male superintendents (AASB/SSA, 2017). Additionally, women are more likely to be the superintendent of a city system than they are of a county system. Moreover, Alabama has never had a female state superintendent (AASB/SSA, 2017).

At the peak of the accountability movement, leadership became a major interest within the realm of educational reform (Hallinger, 2009). Beginning in the 1980s, there was a strong national interest in instructional leadership that created an educational culture that specifically targeted school principals as instructional leaders. Waters and Marzano (2007) stated that a superintendent must believe in the importance of solid school leadership and hold high expectations for principals to ensure that mechanisms are in place for student achievement. Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2005) assert that educational leadership research shows a strong correlation between student achievement and district leadership. Additionally, the average number of years a superintendent serves has a direct impact on the daily operations and student achievement within the system in which they work (Waters et al., 2005). In his book *Good to Great*, Jim Collins' (2001) stated that "good is the enemy of great" (pg.1). Though the public education system has been considered great for many years, producing great individuals within our society, during the last decade, Collins' states, the American education system has been criticized for falling behind. Frequent turnover has made it difficult for school boards to recruit and retain the right individuals for these important roles. Alsbury (2008) stated that turnover may also have a negative impact on staff satisfaction and morale. A culture of collaboration amongst stakeholders is necessary for a school system to thrive. High turnover can create a climate of low expectations among staff resulting in decreased motivation and reluctance to buy-in to the mission and vision of the next superintendent (Alsbury, 2008).

Statement of the Problem

Many factors contribute to the success of school superintendents in public school systems and the task of leading an effective school district relies heavily on the support mechanisms in place. The revolving door of district leadership definitions reflect a comprehensive vision for district leadership, along with managerial and leadership components, interpersonal skills, and strategic planning (ECRA Group, 2010). Although superintendents are not directly involved in the classroom, they serve as the accountability mechanism for developing and implementing the vision for the school district (ECRA Group, 2010). The purpose of this study is to determine how superintendents of public school districts in the state of Alabama perceive the effectiveness of their leadership, to identify their leadership practices, and to shed light on the decision making process of staying or leaving. In Alabama, and across the United States, current political issues, legislation changes (i.e., failing schools & A-F Report Card), and declining resources are considerations as the workforce approaches retirement or otherwise departs from a school district (ECRA Group, 2010). The federally mandated reporting requirements of Every Student Succeeds Act call for public school administrators to lead school systems and the schools within it based a high standard. Currently, Alabama public schools are graded using two systems of accountability: The A-F Report Card (Alabama State Department of Education [ALSDE] mandate) and the Failing Schools list (Alabama State legislature mandate). The use of these two accountability measures has placed the position of superintendent under much scrutiny resulting in dissatisfaction amongst the community and the school board. Superintendents, when not faced with the obstacle of mandated accountability measures, find is easier to accomplish the mission and vision of the school district. This study will provide data related to the necessary leadership practices and an exploration of why superintendents elect to remain or chose to leave public

education. This study will also assist with hiring practices by providing the Board of Education an identifiable skill set for incoming superintendents.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to determine reasons superintendents choose to stay or leave the superintendency. Participating superintendents were from public schools in Alabama. The identification of reasons for exiting the role or staying in the role would be beneficial to those who seek these positions, to their constituents and to K-12 stakeholders who are interested in increasing the longevity of superintendents. The identification of superintendent reasons for staying or leaving would be beneficial to understanding the tenure of the superintendents in Alabama as well as other states.

Superintendents today are met with various challenges that can impede day-to-day operations. Ultimately, these challenges affect superintendents' decisions to stay or leave the position. The undue pressures that superintendents are faced with evolve from legislative reforms and has become inevitable within the field. Other undue pressures facing superintendents include the attrition of staff at both the school and the district level, social and political issues, and financial instabilities. These issues require an effective leader who shows resiliency and determination in leading the school district. The findings of this study may contribute to preparation programs as well as program development and redesign. The findings may also lend information to school boards and superintendents associated with other superintendent search committees.

Conceptual Framework

The framework for this study is centered within the concept that leaders have the ability to execute practices within a school district that ultimately create a conducive environment for all

stakeholders. The leadership practice standards cited in this study are identified as the

Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSELs), the National Education Leadership

Preparation standards (NELPs), and the Alabama Standards for Instructional Leaders (see Figure

1) Within these standards, the following key areas are identified as practice: district culture and

climate, policy mandates, communication and community relations, organizational management,

human resource management, and ethical responsibilities (NPBEA, 2011, 2015; ALSDE, 2013).

Table 1 highlights the practices identified within each leadership standard source.

Figure 1. Leadership practice standards

Table 1

Practices Identified in Leadership Standards

	Professional Standards for Educational Leaders	National Educational Leadership Preparation Standards	Alabama Standards for Instructional Leaders
District culture and climate	X	X	
Policy mandates		X	
Communication and community relations	X	X	X
Organizational management	X	X	X
Curriculum planning and development	X	X	X
Human resource management	X	X	X
Ethical responsibilities	X	X	X
Vision/Mission	X	X	

Superintendents were asked a series of Likert scale questions concerning their reasons for staying or leaving the role. These items were garnered from the conceptual framework which was aligned with the three primary leadership practice standards created to guide school leader practices.

Research Questions

1. To what extent to leadership factors influence a superintendent's decision to leave their current position?

2. To what extent do leadership factors influence a superintendent's decision to stay in their current position?

Assumptions

The research design was based on the following assumptions.

- The interview protocol used in the study to gather the perceptions of instructional leaders is a valid method of data collection.

- All participants were honest when answering the questionnaire and answered the questions to the best of their abilities.

- Obtaining the superintendent position, as the chief executive office of a school district, requires a vast amount of knowledge.

- The superintendent acts as a change agent for the district in which they serve.

- Superintendents encounter different challenges depending on where they work. Various parts of the state are assumed to render different results based on the geography and population of the state. These determinants play a large role in the tenure of a superintendent.

Limitations

Limitations that may affect the extent to which the results of the study could be broadly applied to other school systems or states include:

- The lack of resources and studies pertaining to superintendents in Alabama was scarce.

- The study was voluntary, and information obtained from public school superintendents may have been difficult to obtain due to the sensitivity of the study related to their current position.

- All of those who received a survey participated in the study.

- The survey was limited to siting superintendents in Alabama at all school districts.

- An online survey too was used to gather responses; it is assumed that all Alabama superintendents are technologically inclined to complete the survey.

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Methodology

This study is quantitative in nature and is comprised of the perceptions of superintendents representing public school districts in Alabama. The survey component is not intended to collect qualitative data. The research method used to conduct this study is, therefore, quantitative. Quantitative research provides measurements for comparison and evaluation and gives an in-depth explanation of the meaning of an idea (Shields & Twycross, 2003). The study was designed to survey all superintendents in the State of Alabama regarding factors that determine their tenure in the school district. Information has been obtained from individuals and groups using survey research. Further research is needed to include additional thoughts as they relate to beliefs to support the results of this quantitative study. Also, this study should be replicated to generalize results beyond the state of Alabama.

Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine reasons superintendents choose to stay or leave the superintendency. This study will assist in hiring practices by providing school boards with strengths and weaknesses, as well as an identifiable skill set for which to seek when hiring incoming superintendents. Utilizing these factors during the initial hire of a new superintendent will lead to a better fit and the likelihood of higher job satisfaction and longevity within the district.

Definition of Terms

- Curriculum and instruction – the road map for how a district determines the kind of education its students will receive and how they will receive this education is dictated by the curriculum and those teachers who are charged with instructing students.

- Education funding – all funds garnered in the name of educating children and managing the school district's budget.

- Exiters – those superintendents who leave a school district for additional pay or who seek other positions after briefly serving as superintendent.

- Instructional leadership – learning focused for both the student and the adult and measured by the improvement of instruction and the quality of student learning.

- Public school system – usually serve grades K-12 and are school districts that are primarily run with local, state, and federal funding. It is open to all students regardless of race, national origin, gender, and financial ability to pay.

- School board – comprised of men and women from various jurisdictions within a school district. Often, they are elected by persons living in their district or they are nominated by other governing bodies.

- School leadership – the collective body of the superintendent, assistant superintendents, principals, assistant principals, and instructional leaders.

- Stakeholders – all persons who have a vested interest in any school or school district (i.e., staff, parents, community and church leaders, businesses, organizations, students, and teachers).

- Superintendent – the chief executive officer of the school district, hired by the school board to manage the administrative affairs of the school district (Norton, Webb, Dlugosh, & Sybouts, 1996).

Chapter II: Literature Review

The term leadership garners many definitions. In the context of superintendent leadership however, the role includes leadership traits, qualities, behaviors, characteristics, and practices. The research on leadership has benefited numerous schools, organizations, businesses, and the military. This study focuses on how superintendents of school districts within the state of Alabama perceive the effectiveness of their leadership, on identifying their leadership practices, and sheds light on the decision-making process of staying or leaving.

Research Questions

1. To what extent to leadership factors influence a superintendent's decision to leave their current position?

2. To what extent do leadership factors influence a superintendent's decision to stay in their current position?

Superintendent Historical Perspective

Historically, the term *superintendent* has been widely used in the realm of public education (Kowalski, 2005). The chief executive position of superintendent, a centralized position in the United States public education system, has existed since 1837 (Kowalski, 2005). Many historical events have defined the American public education system as well as federal, state, and local community expectations of that system (Kowalski, 2005). Bjork, Kowalski, and Browne-Ferrigno (2014) assert that how a school system is structured, funded, and governed, and how a superintendent's roles are defined, influences the trajectory of superintendent career patterns and current issues. Consequently, the Tenth Amendment to the Constitution identifies public education as the responsibility of each state and not a power delegated to the federal government (Skrla, 2000).

The original position of superintendent was established around 1837 by schoolmasters, Protestant leaders, and influential men within the community (Kowalski, 2005). This position was intended to serve a different purpose than we see today. The original position of superintendent was to serve as school coordinators charged with maintaining consistency and governance within their assigned districts (Kowalski, 2005). These superintendents were used to ensure uniformity within the schools in their district making sure that the same educational opportunities, curriculum, teacher certifications, and tax dollars were used in each school (Kowalski, 2005). During the late 1800s and early 1900s, superintendents were the most influential members of the National Education Association (Kowalski, 2005). Kowalski (2005) states that superintendents have always considered themselves to be teachers first.

As the traditional duties of superintendent moved away from what they considered to be the functions of a teacher, superintendents were asked to perform more managerial tasks (Kowalski, 2005). This history of the superintendent role suggests that changes in the roles and responsibilities of superintendents have been defined by changes in social, economic, and political conditions (Bjork et al., 2014). Bjork et al. (2014) wrote that these changes in roles and responsibilities have resulted in the performance expectations for schools and students to shift as they align with changes in national need.

These shifts in roles have allowed school boards and communities to further define the role of superintendent. The superintendent has become the leaders of the public-school district and exemplifies the ability to manage fiscal, physical, and personnel resources (Glass, 2005). Most recently, the emphasis of superintendents has shifted to the establishment of a district vision, mission, and goals (Glass, 2005). Glass (2005) identifies the superintendent as the one

within the district who communicates strongly, builds relationships, and demonstrates political awareness.

With political awareness comes the theories behind American education that are mostly rooted in a philosophy that was developed as viewpoints on American life. Foremost, American education has been designed to create life-long learners. American education has become an individual attainable goal, regardless of socioeconomic status. Education pundits believe that everyone should be given the same opportunities to learn. Progressivism has been credited as the foundation to American education. The Modern American School System is based upon progressive ideals (Cremin, 1961). These progressive ideals led to progressive school reform suggests that the vocational, physical, emotional, and psychological needs of all children be met.

As these needs were being addressed, the design of American education failed to reach its goals. Public schooling became an instrument for ensuring inequality rather than assuring equal opportunity. As we know, the American education system, although well intentioned, helped to perpetuate social injustices prevalent in American society. Race and gender still separated all people from having equal access to a public education

These social injustices racial, economic, political, and social changed the American education system. The Civil Rights Movement had a large part to play with trying to equalize education in America (Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, & Ellerson, 2011). Although in theory, progressivism provides equal educational opportunities, it has failed to achieve its intended goals (Kowalski et al., 2011). The reality is that school districts and their superintendents were faced with trying to create a system that included all students (Kowalski et al., 2011). Unfortunately, as these issues played out, superintendents were left to figure it out.

Consequently, with the many changes that have transpired over the last century, the role of the superintendent is constantly changing (Kowalski et al., 2011). Kowalski et al. (2011) assert that the superintendent is a position that was created by local boards of education, which emerged in the twentieth century as a powerful centralized position within public K-12 school systems. He goes on to state that the local school superintendent is deemed one of the most powerful individuals in the school district and most visible member of the community. He further concludes that the superintendent serves as the chief officer of the school district and manages day to day operations and are usually hired on multiple year contracts and serve in two to three districts over an average career spanning 16 years (Kowalski et al., 2011).

Additionally, superintendents take on the daily tasks of financial and instructional oversight of school districts. On a regular basis, superintendents face conditions on the job such as struggle to acquire financial resources, community issues and to eliminate the achievement gap within their districts. With current issues, superintendents spend most of their times engaging in school improvement efforts. As chief operating officer of school districts, superintendents struggle to create coherence out of the numerous and sometimes incompatible goals that the public set for the schools and school district. The superintendent has the sole responsibility for making recommendations to the school board. Their role relies heavily on working with the school board to ensure the school district operates in a legitimate fashion. However, working with the school board can pose significant challenges for the superintendent. The school board is responsible for the recruitment, hiring, and dismissal of the superintendent, determining how long superintendents remain and stay in their positions. Superintendents are also expected to show improvement within the system, however, with the lack of governance in the classroom; most district administrators have to create their own personal cause-effect models

and hope for good results (Cuban, 1998). Cuban also asserted that superintendents must synthesize a solution for three conflicting roles: instructional, managerial, and political.

Superintendent Leadership

As instructional leaders, superintendents have the direct responsibility for improving student achievement (Kowalski, 2006). Superintendents are given charge as instructional leaders and communicators. Essentially, communication is the primary key to success for superintendents (Kowalski, 2006). Student learning and achievement is important but knowing how to communicate with all stakeholders is most important (Kowalski, 2006). Superintendents must exercise in a system of transparency (Kowalski, 2006). The superintendent is also primarily responsible for guaranteeing that mandates, policies, and regulations required from the state and national level are implemented properly and for providing oversight and support to local schools (Kowalski, 2006).

According to Kowalski (2006), their duties include the following:

- advise the board of education on education and policy matters.
- make recommendations to the board regarding personnel hiring.
- ensure compliance with directives of state and federal authorities.
- prepare district budgets for board review and adoption.
- lead long-range planning activities.
- provide oversight of instructional programs and student performance.
- determine the internal organizational structure of the district.
- make recommendations regarding school building maintenance and new construction needs (Kowalski, 2006, pg 8-9).

As managerial leaders, the superintendent has foreseen many shifts over many years. The position has evolved as a role from cleric to master educator to expert manager to chief executive officer (Carter & Cunningham, 1997). The vast amount of information regarding superintendent was found in "The American School Superintendent: 2010 Decennial Study". This study was the first time that surveys were administered online (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000). The School Superintendents' Association (AASA), formerly the American Association of School Administrators, represents nearly 13,000 school administrators across the country and takes a sincere interest in the leadership characteristics and pathways of superintendents (AASA, 2018). They are also largely responsible for documenting factors determining if superintendents remain in positions and when superintendents leave their positions (Kowlaski et al., 2011). The role of superintendent has become more and more multi-faceted and diverse in its requirements (Kowalski et al., 2011).

This diversity recreated the role of superintendents which marks the major educational movement of the American education system in terms of pupil establishment of public schools; a movement created a state system of free schooling without prejudice of race or gender. School reforms believed schools could solve the problems of diversity, instability, and equal opportunity and superintendents, as leaders of their districts were at the forefront of this movement. Despite knowing that schools have not in fact solved these problems and despite their occasional periods of disillusionment with the education profession, the American school system has always persevered under the leadership of superintendents who remain in their positions.

There is distinct success for those superintendents who remain in their positions. Glass (2002) discussed the promising future of the American school system focusing on large urban city school district students who have strong superintendents at the helm. Glass found that urban

city school districts, normally located in the inner metropolitan areas, tend to enroll students that struggle both financially and academically. He further found that there is a high percentage of dropouts, turnovers, and an increasing crime rate, along with gang activity within these school districts. He estimated that by 2020, America's students who attend urban and large city schools will have increased from one-third who attends one of 10 school districts to one-half in 20 districts. American public school's successes and failures rest on the shoulders of superintendents. In addition, there are numerous expectations and standards set for any superintendent of a school system. Interestingly, this challenge has been led by mostly men.

Marshall and Mitchell (1989) found that traditionally, men have controlled the highest administrative jobs within school districts. Varying reasons have kept women from reaching the glass ceiling of public education administration. Control has been largely maintained by what is familiar and that has been choosing men as superintendents. The school system has fostered selection of new administrators who resembled the familiar in attitude, philosophy, deed, and, even in many cases, appearances, hobbies, church affiliation, and club membership. In addition, successors were expected to mirror tightly defined concepts of administrative competency. The School Superintendents Association's "2010 Decennial Study" shows that most superintendents held a valid state license or endorsement for their position at an alarming rate of 94.7% (Kowalski et al., 2011). On the contrary to that certification, only 45.3% of all the responding superintendents possessed an earned doctorate, which is the identical age from the 2000 study. Over 70% of superintendents who served 3,000 or more students were much more likely to possess a doctorate than their peers in smaller districts (Kowalski et al., 2011). Subsequently, gender equity began to play a role in how superintendents were studied (Kowalski et al., 2011). Ironically, Kowalski et al. (2011) found that gender equity within supervision and leadership

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roles in education vary across cultures and changes historically through time. Females dominate the teaching, principal, and central office roles, but not superintendent roles. They also found that approximately 5% of teaching jobs are designated by females and that there are biased thoughts about female superintendents. For example, in Wisconsin, the school board appointed the first female principal, Barbara Grohe, in 1981 (Keller, 1999). Keller (1999) recounts the appearance of the newspaper headline after Barbara Grohe was appointed – "Woman Replaces Brown." The headline did not include her name, only her gender. Keller also asserts that many school districts are now searching for female superintendents based on research that shows how female superintendents bring knowledge about curriculum, relationship building, and experience as teachers to the role of superintendent. However, the true debate is whether the problem stems from plain ole gender bias or discrimination.

According to Keller (1999), many will argue that males started in the role of superintendent, and they will forever dominate the role. She compares the role to that of the presidency or the field of business where the workforce is made up of 46% women but only 11% in a corporate leadership role and only 3% holding the position of CEO. However, many female superintendents stay in the job because they change the job. A powerful female can ignite change in both females and males. The female superintendent is often able to redefine power by using innovative techniques and strategies. Marshall and Mitchell (1989) showed that female superintendents always had lower status than male superintendents. However, the extent of the gap between gender varies across cultures and time.

Some argue that it is inversely related to social evolution which demonstrates that, on average, female superintendents have more teaching experience than their male counterparts. Some studies estimate that females are likely to have more then 20 years of teaching experience

on average yet men were four times as likely as women to become novice superintendents by the age of 36 and a staggering 53.6% of males become superintendents by the age of 45. The ratio of male to female superintendents still raises the question of what constitutes an effective superintendent (Marshall & Mitchell, 1989).

A 2015 study by greatschools.org, sought to identify characteristics of a great school superintendent. They determined that the position of the superintendent is one designed to wear many hats while keeping the vision as a priority. "The superintendent sets the direction and tone while responding to the competing demands of the board members, administrators, teachers, parents, students, the community" (Great Schools, 2015, para. 1). They go on to characterize the superintendent as the district's CEO, responsible for setting the tone, charting the course, and working closely with the community and the school board.

Superintendent Educational Leadership Standards

The National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA, 2015) unanimously approved new, refreshed standards for superintendents in October 2015. These new standards, the 2015 Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL), aim to ensure that district and school leaders improve student achievement and meet higher expectations (NPBEA, 2015). The purpose for using the 2015 PSEL is to provide additional evidence that the superintendent has the character and leadership skills to further the objectives of the district (NPBEA, 2015). The PSEL are organized around the domains, qualities, and values of leadership work that research and practice indicate contribute to students' academic success and well-being when led by competent superintendents (NPBEA, 2015). The standards are strictly applied to superintendents and other district leaders. The NPBEA (2015) recommended standards are as follows:

1. Mission, Vision and Core Values - Effective superintendents develop, advocate, and enact a shared mission, vision, and core values of high-quality education and academic success and well-being of each student.

2. Ethics and Professional Norms - Effective superintendents act ethically and according to professional norms to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

3. Equity and Cultural Responsiveness - Effective superintendents strive for equity of educational opportunity and culturally responsive practices to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

4. Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment - Effective superintendents develop and support intellectually rigorous and coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

5. Community of Care and Support for Students - Effective superintendents cultivate an inclusive, caring, and supportive school community that promotes the academic success and well-being of each student.

6. Professional Capacity of School Personnel - Effective superintendents develop the professional capacity and practice of school personnel to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

7. Professional Community for Teachers and Staff - Effective superintendents foster a professional community of teachers and other professional staff to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

8. Meaningful Engagement of Families and Communities - Effective superintendents engage families and the community in meaningful, reciprocal, and mutually beneficial ways to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

9. Operations and Management - Effective superintendents manage school operations and resources to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

10. School Improvement - Effective superintendents act as agents of continuous improvement to promote each student's academic success and well-being. (p. 9-17)

Prior to the PSEL, the National Policy Board for Educational Administration published a set of standards under the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) in 2011. The ELCC standards are aligned to the PSEL and serve the distinct purpose of providing specific performance expectations for beginning level superintendents, along with the standards for advance programs (i.e., Master, Specialist, and Doctoral level programs) that prepare superintendents to govern their districts (NPBEA, 2011). The ELCC, also known as the National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) standards describe precisely what superintendents should know and be able to do in a high-quality educational leadership preparation program (NPBEA, 2011).

The NELP standards were designed to address superintendents and were specifically developed for the field of superintendency (NPBEA, 2011). NELP standards are also used to review educational leadership programs through the Council for the Accreditation of Education Preparation (CAEP) (NPBEA, 2011). This process prepares superintendents long before they are placed in their district roles. The ELCC/NELP standards include:

1. Mission, Vision, and Core Values - Superintendent candidates who successfully complete a district level educational leadership preparation program understand and demonstrate the capability to promote the success and well-being of each student, teacher, and leader by applying the knowledge, skills, and commitments necessary

for: (a) a shared mission and vision, (b) a set of core values, and (c) continuous and sustainable district and school improvement.

2. Ethics and Professionalism - Superintendent candidates who successfully complete a district level educational leadership preparation program understand and demonstrate the capability to promote the success and well-being of each student, teacher, and leader by applying the knowledge, skills, and commitments necessary for: (a) professional norms, (b) ethical behavior, (c) responsibility, and (d) ethical behavior.

3. Equity and Cultural Leadership - Superintendent candidates who successfully complete a district level educational leadership preparation program promote the success and well-being of each student, teacher, and leader by applying the knowledge, skills, and commitments necessary for: (a) equitable treatment, (b) equitable access, (c) culturally and individually responsive practice, and (d) a healthy district culture.

4. Instructional Leadership - Superintendent candidates who successfully complete a district level educational leadership preparation program understand and demonstrate the capability to promote the success and well-being of each student, teacher, and leader by applying the knowledge, skills, and commitments necessary through: (a) systems of learning and instruction, (b) instructional capacity, (c) professional development of principals, and (d) principal effectiveness.

5. Community and External Leadership - Superintendent candidates who successfully complete a district level educational leadership preparation program understand and demonstrate the capability to promote the success and well-being of each student, teacher, and leader by applying the knowledge, skills, and commitments necessary

for: (a) community engagement, (b) productive partnerships, (c) two-way communication, and (d) representation.

6. Management of People, Data, and Processes - Superintendent candidates who successfully complete a district level educational leadership preparation program understand and demonstrate the capability to promote the success and well-being of each student, teacher, and leader by applying the knowledge, skills, and commitments necessary for effectively managed: (a) district systems, (b) resources, (c) human resources, and (d) policies and procedures.

7. Policy, Governance and Advocacy - Superintendent candidates who successfully complete a district level educational leadership preparation program understand and demonstrate the capability to promote the success and wellbeing of each student, teacher, and leader by applying the knowledge, skills, and commitments necessary to: (a) understand and foster board relations; (b) understand and manage effective systems for district governance; (c) understand and ensure compliance with policy, laws, rules and regulations; (d) understand and respond to local, state and national decisions; and (e) advocate for the needs and priorities of the district.

8. Internship and Clinical Practice - completers engaged in a substantial and sustained educational leadership internship experience that developed their capacity to promote the success and well-being of each student, teacher, and leader through field experiences and clinical practice within a building setting, monitored and evaluated by a qualified, on-site mentor. (NPBEA, 2011)

The Alabama Standards for Instructional Leaders (ALSDE, 2013) encompass both knowledge and ability indicators. The chairman of AASA, John Hoyle, suggested that the

standards provided benchmarks for selection, preparation, and development of superintendents. The focus on quality practices acknowledges the multifaceted role of the superintendent, while prioritizing the academic center of attention and school coaching duties that may commonly outline the 21st-century district leader. The Alabama Instructional Leadership Standards address the following areas.

1. Planning for Continuous Improvement - This standard address the school community in planning effectively, developing and maintain a shared vision in efforts to promoted continuous improvement.

2. Teaching and Learning - This standard address aligning the curriculum and learning environment to promote success for all students.

3. Human Resources Development - This standard address recruitment and implementation of effective professional development with a focus on organizational growth.

4. Diversity - This standard address influences of personal, political, social, economic, legal and the cultural context of the classroom while address the diverse needs of students.

5. Community and Stakeholder Relationships - This standard addresses the need to create and sustain community and school relations.

6. Technology - This standard addresses the integration of current technology as a teaching tool.

7. Management and Learning Organization - This standard address the organization as a whole and promotes collaboration to create a safe and effective learning organization.

8. Ethics - This standard promotes school policies and practices that align with current legal and ethical standard for professional educators. (ALSDE, 2013)

Kowalski et al. (2011) showed that superintendents asked to maintain stability is often associated with resistance and maintenance of the status quo, and often difficult for superintendents to move forward from an unstable foundation. Kowalski, states the common principles addressed in the literature address practices such as leadership and district culture; policy and governance; communications and community relations; organizational management; curriculum planning and development; instructional management; human resources management; and the values and ethics of leadership. For superintendents, the values and ethics of leadership is about organizational improvement, specifically, establishing direction for their district. The comparison table identifies the practices that are identified in the standards.

Superintendent Leadership Practices

Kowaski et al. (2011) posit that leadership can be identified and referenced by two core functions: providing direction and exercising influence. They go on to state that these leadership functions can be carried out in different ways, which distinguishes many models of leadership In the process of carrying out these functions, leaders act in environments that are identified by stability and change. Stability and change are interdependent of each other (Kowalski et al., 2011).

Kowalski et al. (2011) further stated that the most fundamental theoretical explanations for the importance of superintendents' direction-setting practices are goal-based theories of human motivation. According to Kowalski et al.'s theory, superintendents are motivated with the aid of dreams which they discover individually compelling, as well as difficult but achievable. Having such goals helps individuals make experience of their work and enables them to locate a

sense of identification for themselves inside the context of their superintendent work the context of their superintendent work. Over time, the definition of district leadership has shifted, in terms of superintendents; a reflection a complete and challenging vision of district leadership, a mixture of managerial and leadership components, interpersonal skills, and strategic action assessment must be addressed (Kowalski et al., 2011). The superintendent is foremost a teacher who balances political concerns and creates a management style that encourages participation of all (Kowalski, 2010).

Most importantly, the superintendent must know the mission and goals of the organization and constantly teach them to the members of the organization. An indication of a successful superintendent is when each teacher or administrator embraces the superintendent's goals for the organization and implements those goals and objectives within their own workspaces (Cunningham, 1985). As cited in the 2000 Study of American Superintendents (Glass et al., 2000), "there are many factors that affect the longevity and successfulness of the superintendent" (pg. 2) There are several areas that a superintendent must master to sustain the seat and to remain an effective superintendent. Within the realm of education, research on leadership is the leading factor that has had an impact on student achievement. The superintendent's role is crucial relative to educational leaders transforming the current reform climate and adapt to the revolving issues affecting public education (Hess & Kelly, 2007).

Also, Hess and Kelly (2007) maintained, school leadership is the key to school improvement. This work of school improvement is led by the superintendent. While leading school districts, the primary goal of the superintendent is to increase academic rigor and to meet new accountability requirements. Research indicates academic achievement is the leading priority in a school district (Petersen, 2002).

For the superintendent, student learning and achievement is important but knowing how to communicate with all constituents are more important. Studies reveal, superintendents should display dispositions and personal qualities like humility, collaboration, courage, work ethic, communication skills, and self-reflection which can define successful leadership (Freeley & Seinfeld, 2012). The success of school districts and school leaders influence on a high performing organization depend on the leaders' interactions within.

As further cited in the 2000 Study of the American Superintendent, there are many factors that affect the longevity and successfulness of the superintendent. There are several key areas that on must master to sustain the seat and become an accomplished superintendent. In terms of career advancement, the following leadership practices are suggested within the realm of educational leadership for superintendents (Glass et al., 2000):

1. Demonstrate an emphasis on improving instruction

2. Knowledge of instructional processes

3. Ability to maintain organizational leadership

4. Interpersonal skills

5. Responsiveness to parents and community groups. (pg. 1)

The research has noted several categories of superintendent leadership practices. Leithwood, Tomlinson, and Genge, (1996) identified setting directions, developing people and redesigning the organization. Conger and Kanungo (1998) identified visioning strategies, efficacy building, and context changing strategies. Finally, Hallinger and Heck (1999) categorized superintendent practices purposes, people, and structures and social systems. There is an adequate amount of research to support superintendent leadership practices and responsibilities. Based on superintendent responses in a recent national study, Kowalski et al.'s

(2010) rank ordered the importance of these five role characterizations as "(1) effective communicator, (2) manager, (3) instructional leader, (4) statesman or political leader, and (5) applied social scientist" (pg. 12).

According to Devono and Price (2012), examining each of these roles in greater detail provides insight into persisting and emerging challenges facing superintendents. If the primary purpose is to educate children in the most effective learning environment, then the role of the superintendent must be one of a leader who sets the tone and direction of a shared vision delivered from someone who has listened to and articulates the desires and beliefs of principals and teachers from within the school system under his or her charge. "The collaborative effort of superintendents, principals and teachers can lead to developing effective learning environments for all students, especially when, as perceived by principals and teachers, superintendent's play the role of the visionary leader effectively" (Devono & Price, 2012, pg. 14).

> First and foremost, an authentic superintendent leadership must achieve authenticity, as defined above, through self-awareness, self-acceptance, and authentic actions and relationships. However, authentic leadership extends beyond the authenticity of the leader as a person to encompass authentic relations with followers and associates. Authentic superintendents are also posited to draw from the positive psychological states that accompany optimal self-esteem and psychological well-being, such as confidence, optimism, hope and resilience, to model and promote the development of these states in others. These relationships are characterized by a) transparency, openness, and trust, b) guidance toward worthy objectives and c) an emphasis on follower development. (Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, & Walumbwa, 2005, pg.4)

In this way, effective superintendents work with all stakeholders to pursue positive interactions with the desires of fostering shared meanings, garnering assets and support, and setting up a productive inter-organizational relationship. A high quality, effective superintendent progresses a shared vision of exemplary performance, manages contrasting elements, works diligently to make progress toward a goal, and serves as a staple for stimulated leadership. In today's constantly changing education environment, organizations cannot thrive, much less prosper without a well-focused vision for the organization that clearly determines how and why superintendents remain in their roles at the same district for a time period or why superintendents move on to other roles or superintendent positions in other districts (Lashway, 1997).

The role of the superintendent is a role of negotiator with multiple stakeholders to get approval for programs and resources. Waters and Marzano (2006) revealed that superintendents are situationally aware and agree the political climate within a school district has been determined as a leadership practice needed to garner effectiveness. Superintendents have also discovered that the political climate adversely affects the length of time they remain in a district. According to Kowalski (1999), along with the length of time that superintendents remain in the program, there is a need to understand that policies and guidelines concerning school district enhancement should be made within a framework of legal requirements and state political expectations (e.g., that school districts will be accountable for student outcomes).

Superintendents lean heavily on their ability to operate student outcomes and district responsibilities; most importantly, finances. Therefore, superintendents most notably suggest that inadequate finances are their most pressing problem. Financing education is a known concern, but especially disconcerting for superintendents who work in states with revenue standards that are less than adequate.

Policy decisions in public school funding are guided by meta values that are accepted by American society (Kowalski & Brunner, 2011). The issues of adequacy and equity frame major concerns for contemporary superintendents. Most often superintendents and policymakers disagree on what constitutes an adequate education and the amount of money necessary to fund an adequate education. The increase of autonomies does not diminish the importance of other meta values, such as equality, adequacy, and efficiency. Therefore, superintendents find themselves in an uphill battle with the need to support their district and the political constituency that governs their districts.

For many years school boards and communities had defined the superintendent almost exclusively by the leader's ability to manage fiscal, physical, and personnel resources. Recently, the emphasis has shifted to vision, and the ideal of the current model superintendent is one who communicates strongly, build relationships, and demonstrate political acumen. Typically, current social aspects are communicated negatively. There are political and philosophical disagreements, very little community involvement parental unconcern and at-risk students. All of these concerns have changed the dynamics of the superintendent and the responsibilities are more demanding and complex (Glass, 2005).

As school boards and superintendent relationships have become more contentious, the focus has shifted to issues concerning the use of power and political alignments. Ideally, school board members are expected to be public trustees, who make objective policy decisions in the best interest of the entire communities (Kowalski & Brunner, 2011). However, many board members in public school districts make policy and administrative decisions based on the beliefs of their stakeholders. Ultimately, these boards also make decisions about who the superintendent is and how long he will remain in his role.

Kowalski, Young, and Petersen (2013) stated superintendent and school board relations are constant and evolving. While the two have not separated policymaking and administration, their differences must be dealt with in a more political acute environment. Professionally, the value of superintendent community involvement did not become apparent until research on systems theory was conducted in school administration approximately six decades ago.

A problem that superintendents face during their tenure and a qualifying reason for why they leave a district is often an erosion of confidence in public education. Kowalski et al. (2011) contended superintendents must work to change this perception by showing that harmony exists between the superintendent and the community at large. The view of the superintendent as communicator emerged in conjunction with America's transition from an agricultural and farming society and as Americans became more educated, they looked to the superintendent as the leader of the school districts. The position came with a great deal of respect and weight.

Kowalski et al. (2011) further explained the weight and respect of the superintendent's leadership in school – community relations depends heavily on making sound decisions about what should be communicated. Superintendents should engage in honest, open, consistent, fair, transparent, and continuous two-way communication with the community and all stakeholders. By effectively communicating many barriers can be prevented. When barriers are eliminated, issues can be framed in ways that will lead to productive discourse and decision making. It identifies effective leadership strategies that superintendents initiated to ensure their school districts were being effective (e.g., establishing a trustful relationship with the parents and the wider community; using data and goals to reinforce a sense of urgency; and maintaining productive working relationships). These factors heavily contribute to the success of the effectiveness of the superintendent's leadership. These productive relationships became the tools

to how we understand and view the superintendent role. However, there is a fine line with these relationships because they are directly tied to if a superintendent remains in his position or if he leaves his position. The effectiveness of a superintendent is also measured by the communicative expectations. Is the superintendent able to communicate and to be transparent with stakeholders?

Communicative expectations for administrators reflect a confluence of reform initiatives and the social environment in which they are being pursued. This practice is directly related to the articulation of the vision. The vision is dependent upon how it is communicated and received by stakeholders. Leadership requires effective communication to relay expectations, roles, task and goals. Virtually every major school improvement concept and strategy encourages superintendents to work collaboratively with all stakeholders to build and pursue collective visions. (Kowalski, 1999, pg. 317-321)

These collective visions are guided by the community's vested interest in public education and influence decisions because that pay taxes to support public education and they have a stake in public education. By clearly informing the community of shared visions, goals, and outcomes, the superintendent position will become an overriding accountability in a policy-making arena requiring direct citizen monitoring (e.g., for change ideas, for tax increases). Strategies such as building and maintaining community support as an organized approach for a superintendent in accomplishing these leadership tasks is strategic marketing (Kowalski, 1999).

In many regards, the superintendent is a salesperson who must be willing to be transparent with all stakeholders and cultivate working relationships with all stakeholders. Superintendents must play a key role in stabilizing leadership roles in their communities to gain public acceptance. Without public acceptance, the superintendent carries the weight of the

position and the possibility of not being a superintendent who has any longevity in the district. Superintendents with longevity are active members of a service clubs; serving on boards and attending public functions regularly give the superintendent traction to navigate the community. This type of involvement established the superintendent as the visible and often popular head of the district.

When the superintendent operates as head of the district and in various organizational sectors, there is a common thread of core leadership practices within this model of leadership for the district. Superintendents are managerial leaders, superintendents are to hold their districts operating efficiently, with a minimal of friction, but taking risks to make crucial changes. The work executed by superintendents in small, rural school districts is quite dissimilar from the work of superintendents in larger school districts. In smaller districts, fiscal management has been stressed more due to the nature of having little to no support staff. There are practices that make up the core of successful superintendent practices: setting directions, developing people and redesigning the district (Cuban, 1988).

Cuban (1998) described practice that is designed to help district share an understanding of the superintendent's overall vision. The district's performance is guided by monitoring and consistent communication among all stakeholders. It has been noted, capacities and motivations are influenced by organizational members' experiences with superintendents, as well as the organizational context within which they work.

The leadership practice of redesigning the district determines how successful superintendents develop school districts and schools as effective. Common practices associated with redesigning a district; strengthening the district and school cultures, modifying organizational structures and building collaborative processes relies on the strength of the

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superintendent in his role as educational leader and community leader (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003).

Leithwood and Riehl (2003) continued by developing a multi-dimensional leadership plan that included best practices for superintendents who sought longevity in their roles:

- This dimension of leadership practice includes actions aimed at developing goals for schooling and inspiring others with a vision of the future.

- Identifying and articulating a vision.

- Effective educational leaders help their schools to develop or endorse visions that embody the best thinking about teaching and learning. School leaders inspire others to reach for ambitious goals.

- Effective educational leaders influence the development of human resources in their schools. Offering intellectual stimulation.

- Effective leaders encourage reflection and challenge their staff to examine assumptions about their work and rethink how it can be performed. They provide information and resources to help people see discrepancies between current and desired practices.

- Providing an appropriate model. Effective school leaders set examples for staff and others to follow that are consistent with the school's values and goals. By modeling desired dispositions and actions, leaders enhance others' beliefs about their own capacities and their enthusiasm for change.

- Modifying organizational structure. School leaders monitor and adjust the structural organization of the school, including how tasks are assigned and performed, the use

of time and space, the acquisition and allocation of equipment, supplies, and other

resources, and all of the routine operating procedures of the school.

- Building collaborative processes. Educational leaders enhance the performance of their schools by providing opportunities for staff to participating decision making about issues that affect them and for which their knowledge is crucial. In this way, leaders help others to shape the school in ways that can accomplish shared goals and address individual concerns as well.

- Managing the environment. Effective leaders work with representatives from the school's environment, including parents, community members, business and government liaisons, and influential others. They pursue positive interactions with the goals of fostering shared meanings, garnering resources and support and establishing productive inter-organizational relationships (pg. 6).

Waters and Marzano (2006) defined effective superintendents as having the task of setting goals and creating a vision for the school district. The ultimate objective is to create a goal-oriented school district. However, there are differences in opinions relative to superintendents being instructional leaders. There is evidence in inconsistent state policies for professional preparation and licensure. It has been noted, superintendents have indirectly affected instruction through the selection process, budgeting and supervision of principals. The third generation of effective schools' research translate a well-defined, effective classroom, school and leadership practices into specific actions and behaviors. These practices, actions, and behaviors play a large part in how these are perceived by stakeholders who have a large role in the superintendent's tenure and success.

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There are three sets of practices that make up the core of successful leadership practices: setting directions, developing people, and redesigning the organization (Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). The research suggests leadership practices included in setting directions is the major proportion of a leader's impact. It has been noted, capacities and motivations are influenced by organizational members experiences with leaders, as well as the organizational context within which they work. Thirdly, the leadership practice of redesigning the organization determines how successful leaders develop school districts and schools as effective organizations. Common practices associated with redesigning the organization include strengthening district and school cultures, modifying organizational structures and building collaborative processes (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). According to Leithwood et al. (2004), evidence collected in both school and non-school organizations about the developing people set of practices is substantial. The research suggests leadership practices included in setting directions is the major proportion of a leader's impact. This practice is designed to help colleagues share an understanding of the organizations overall vision. Organization performance is guided by monitoring and consistent communication amongst individuals within the organization.

The School Superintendents Association [AASA] (2018) provides a very basic framework for the roles and responsibilities of the superintendent. The overarching belief is that there are three major needs of superintendents, which include professional, social, and educational needs. It is their belief that when school systems operate within the parameters of relationships, equitable opportunities for all public-school students will be afforded. This concept correlates directly with the Alabama Association of School Boards and School Superintendents Alabama roles and responsibilities of superintendents (AASB/SSA, 2017). The contextual

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framework of this study is to add to the body of knowledge in the field of education as it relates to the role of superintendent in the State of Alabama.

Superintendent Leadership Responsibilities

Superintendent success can further be determined by their leadership qualities. There are five district-level leadership responsibilities and a bonus finding related to setting and keeping the district focused on goals related to teaching and learning. Waters and Marzano (2006) found that five district level leadership responsibilities with a statistically significant correlation with average student achievement. This leads to Waters' and Marzano's findings of five distinct functions of responsibilities for superintendent effective leadership:

1. Collaborative goal setting - Effective superintendents include all stakeholders, including board members, central office, and building level administrators.

2. Non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction - Effective superintendents set specific achievement targets for schools and students and ensure research-based strategies are implemented daily.

3. Board alignment - Effective superintendents promote non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction. The local board of education is a supporter of district initiatives that drive those goals.

4. Monitoring goals for achievement and instruction - Effective superintendents continually monitor district progress

5. Uses of resources to support achievement - Effective superintendents ensure that all necessary resources (money, time, and personnel) that will ensure those district goals for achievement and instruction are met.

6. Defined Autonomy - "Bonus" finding, the longevity of superintendent has a positive effect on student achievement. (pg. 3-4)

According to Waters and Marzano (2006), superintendents, district office personnel, and school boards have worked to overcome William Bennet's image of the "blob." However, according to research presented in *School Leadership that Works,* there is a vast and advantageous relationship between district-level supervision and student achievement when the superintendent, district personnel, and school board members do the right work in the 'right way.' Not only are they doing the work right and in the right way, these findings also suggest sound leadership at the district level, which includes superintendents, district office personnel and school board members can contribute to the success of the district when they are focused on the key leadership responsibilities and practices identified in the study (Waters & Marzano, 2006).

Lashway (2002) contended that instruction should be the top priority on a superintendent's agenda. While the managerial and political dimensions of the job will not go away, those roles should be aligned with the overriding goal of continuous instructional improvement. When a superintendent is consistently carrying the torch for an overall district plan with instruction as the focus, then superintendent instructional management becomes the primary goal and role of the superintendent.

Superintendent as instructional leader. From the time the superintendent position was created until the first decade of the twentieth century, the primary foci district superintendents were implementing a state curriculum and supervising teachers (Kowalski, 2005). As instructional leaders, superintendents endure the ultimate duty for improving student

achievement. Leadership has tremendous results on student learning, second to the effects of the quality curriculum and teachers' instruction.

In the realm of public education, the focus is centered on student learning. Superintendents ultimately with other district leadership, principals, and teachers to ensure student needs are met. By working with these individuals collaboratively, it enables others to be effective. Leadership has significant effects on student learning. Successful school leaders respond productively to the opportunities and challenges of educating diverse groups of students. Superintendents and central office personnel should regularly discuss schools' student achievement data to keep teachers and administrators focused on the improvement of teaching and learning (Leithwood, Patten, & Jantzi, 2010).

Under the leadership of the superintendent, school districts must design for district leadership, principals and teachers to a level of instruction that engages students in intellectually challenging, authentic and relevant assignments that foster student motivation and student achievement, lest not forget how this all comes together through human resources and human management (Bottoms & Schmidt-Davis, 2010).

Superintendent as human resources management leader. The most effective districts invest in the learning not only of students, but also of teachers, principals, district staff, and school board members. The most effective and resourceful superintendent invests in superior professional development for all staff members at the school and district level. To maximize and build capacity, superintendents must develop a succession plan for school principals. Making an investment in professional development will garner yielding results in growing administrators and teachers (Lashway, 2002).

Lashway (2002) advocated identifying a succession plan that addresses (early in their careers) talented teachers who have the potential to become principals and building a pipeline within the school system. In highly supportive districts, superintendents have challenged their central office staff to continuously develop and improve their knowledge and skills as instructional leaders. This builds capacity within a district and leaders are better equipped to forge a learning shift. The priority of any acting superintendent's agenda should be curriculum and instruction, while the managerial and political dimensions of the job will not disappear as the work takes place. These roles should be directly aligned with the district's vision and strategic plan.

Superintendent as moral leader. Superintendent lends itself to be a demanding position. Therefore, a commitment to ethical leadership is vital. If this leadership practice is not evident within superintendent leadership, it may cause trust issues with stakeholders. The superintendent's reputation and others' perceptions are key to values and ethical leadership. A reputation of values and ethical leadership rest on two pillars; moral person and moral manager (Trevino, Hartman, & Brown, 2000).

A moral person is characterized by someone who hold traits such as honesty, integrity and trustworthiness. Ethical leadership moral person pillar is the core of ethical leadership and it important because as leaders, traits, behaviors and decisions become a part of their moral compass. This aspect of ethical leadership represents the leaders' proactive efforts to influence follower's ethical and unethical behaviors. Moral managers make a concerted effort to model behaviors and use rewards to hold followers accountable. This aspect of ethical leadership represents the leaders' proactive efforts to influence follower's ethical and unethical behaviors. Moral managers make a concerted

effort to model behaviors and use rewards to hold followers accountable. (Brown &

Trevino, 2006, pg. 129-130)

Why Superintendents Stay

The superintendent leadership effectiveness has been highly defined by the ability of the superintendent to have a lasting and permanent position. The longevity of public-school superintendents has always been a crucial issue in education. As the torch bearer within the educational system, the superintendent must carry out instructional, managerial and political roles. One such role is having the superintendent's relationship with the board they duly serve. Successful superintendents possess skills that allow them to effectively and successfully fulfill those roles. Depending upon how the superintendent handles various issues, manages change, they may discover that the process of change may help or hinder their longevity of the superintendent (Pascopella, 2011).

Positive superintendent/board relationship. Subsequently, when superintendents and school boards have a good working relationship, it creates a relationship of trust among them, as well as the school district and school levels. Furthermore, the superintendent's leadership and effectiveness within the district is accepted by a supportive and cooperative board. The evaluation process allows boards of education to continuously review the effectiveness and continue employment, resulting in a continued commitment from superintendents to remain in the school district. A school board is the catalyst to making or breaking the success of superintendent leadership and effectiveness, which in turn can lead to high turnover among superintendents in districts throughout the country.

More and more professionals and experts have realized that stability is the key element to success in any school district. Tenure for superintendents is increasing, especially for urban

superintendents from 2.3 years to 3.6 years (Pascopella, 2011). Prior to this increase, many superintendents had enough time to clarify their roles. Without an extended tenure, superintendents are left patching up predecessor projects. Tenured superintendents have a positive effect on student achievement. If the superintendent set goals, manage change effectively, and help students become higher performing students, the superintendent needs to be in a position for at least five years. Also, board members are seeking new ways to evaluate superintendents. They believe the evaluation process should be less political and it should involve a holistic approach to honestly examining the superintendent.

Kearns and Harvey (2001) examined increasing tenure for superintendents; however, funding is not increasing. Superintendents are expected to juggle various tasks and navigate change. Change is hard to address when funding is an issue. In school systems, especially urban districts, more and more stress has been placed on the superintendent, the whole district all the way down to school leaders for increases in overall student achievement. The most effective and the most successful tenured superintendents understand the business aspect of the position and know what it takes to improve student achievement.

Job Satisfaction. Superintendents remain in their positions are often given the green light of satisfaction from the school board and in some regards are self-satisfied. Job satisfaction impacts a superintendent's decision to stay in their current position or leave. The term job satisfaction can be described as an emotional response to a job that results from the incumbent's comparison of true effects with those that are desired (Cranny, Smith, & Stone, 1992). The most commonly used description of job satisfaction was defined by Locke (1976), a pleasing or positive emotional response resulting from the assessment of one's job or job experience. Job satisfaction can be described as a motivator when administrators perceive they are effective and

influential within their organization. Houston (2001) indicated that most superintendents found the job exhilarating and those who left the position comeback to expand the possibilities of whole communities. A positive emotional well-being occurs for the superintendent when the expectations match the goals set forth by the school board along with personal goals.

Moore and Ditzhazy (1999) conducted a study with students in an administration preparation program that revealed intrinsic reasons for pursuing administration as, desire to make a difference, personal and professional challenge. Regardless of how the superintendent applies the various job satisfaction theories, the superintendent is the person who will have to fulfill this role. The reality of the role versus the perception of the role will eventually have an emotional impact on the superintendent, whether it is positive or negative. This is when job satisfaction or dissatisfaction becomes a concern and the superintendent may begin to question whether he or she is a good fit for the district based on the labor market perspective.

Personal/professional needs. Grissom and Anderson (2012) created a new report from The Broad Center which examined data for superintendent's overall performance and whether the superintendent used to be employed internally and strongly predict non-retirement exits three years later. Short-term district assessment score growth, however, is uncorrelated. Superintendents who tend to leave districts, migrate away from rural districts towards larger, higher-paying districts in urban and suburban areas (Grissom & Andersen, 2012).

As it relates to higher salary, it could potentially be a positive factor for a superintendent to meet his/her social and professional needs. According AASA's identified social needs of a superintendent, a higher salary could offer a higher standard of living. Professional needs are directly related to the comparison of peers within their state or region (Wood, Finch, & Mirecki, 2013).

Table 2

Literature Reflecting Why Superintendents Stay

	Professional Needs	Personal/ Social Needs	Community Engagement/ Positive Board Relationship	Higher Salary	Student Achievement
AASA		X			
Byrd, Drews, & Johnson (2006)	X			X	
Wood, Finch, & Mirecki (2013)	X			X	
Moore & Dizhazy (1999)		X			
Cranny, Smith, & Stone (1992)		X		X	
Kearns & Harvey (2001)					X
Richardson (1998)		X			
Kowalski, McCord, Peterson, Young, & Ellerson (2012)				X	
Parker (1996)				X	
Reed & Patterson (2007)			X		
Marzano & Waters					X
Grissom & Andersen (2012)		X	X		
Grissom & Mitani (2016)				X	

Why Superintendents Leave

School superintendent turnover has been widely researched and warrants more information addressing why they leave the profession. An energetic new leader assumes function with plans for revitalization, solely to conflict with a dysfunctional school board or aggravated community and move on to greener pastures earlier than the plans can be totally carried out, leaving the district once more searching for the subsequent idealistic chief bearing the requisite

comprehensive reform plans. Two high-profile examples abound of reform-minded superintendents whose tenures noticed an increase in test scores, but whose time in the workplace was once reduced quickly by means of public strain and a tumultuous board relationship: Arlene Ackerman in San Francisco, John Thompson in Pittsburgh, Rudy Crew in Miami-Dade County, Stan Paz in Tucson Often, the story goes, ousted superintendents move on to other districts; Ackerman moved on to and quickly left Philadelphia, Thompson was terminated after two years in Clayton County Schools, Georgia. Crew had already been chancellor of New York City's School System, Paz had served in El Paso. Two studies expose that about 20% of superintendents leave school districts, with more than one half of them leaving the role through retiring or leaving the subject of education (Grissom & Mitani, 2016).

The shuffling of superintendents within school districts creates a revolving door which has been witnessed by several superintendents in Missouri. Kelvin Adams became the eighth superintendent in five years in 2008 and John Covington became Kansas City's 25th leader in 40 years in 2009 (Taylor, 2008). In Kansas City, John Covington resigned from his position in 2011. Board turnover, politics and board involvement in personnel issues, and lack of clarity in roles have also been cited as reasons for superintendent turnover (Elliff, 2012).

In addition, it has also been concluded that 76% of the superintendents who left their district went to a rural school system (Grissom & Mitani, 2016). Pascopella (2011) believed that better communication between superintendents and board presidents built better working relationships and was directly tied to long superintendent tenure. As Natkin et al. (2002) argued, this understanding has consequences for the practice of superintendents—who emerge as reluctant to take on predominant reform efforts—and the responsiveness of principals and teachers who may undertake a "this too shall pass" method to superintendents' leadership

responsibilities and directives. Unfortunately, there is little systematic evidence with which to query this common conception or issues of superintendent turnover. This is a perplexing state of affairs given the significance attributed to superintendents in leading district improvement.

As the school district's, CEO superintendents oversee key aspects of day to day district operations. The successful execution of central management functions such as staff recruitment, leads to effectiveness within a school district. Because instability in the superintendent's office disrupts daily management functions, this unfortunate turnover may negatively impact district performance for the short term. Research concluding that successful systemic school reforms take five or more years of a superintendent's focus suggests that negative impacts of turnover could be felt even longer. The attrition of a superintendent may also negatively affect staff morale and satisfaction which could have a negative impact on principal and teacher turnover and performance. According to the Wallace Foundation, leadership is second in strength as it relates to impacting student achievement, as compared to classroom instruction (Leithwood et al., 2004). The vital need of the district superintendent and the potential penalties of superintendent exits make understanding the elements that force superintendent turnover a key subject matter for empirical research (Natkin et al., 2002).

Conceptualizing superintendent turnover, researchers have been fascinated by the question of why superintendents leave their school districts for at least four decades. Though the inquiry has been recurrent in the literature over this period, most information used to address it has come from case studies, interviews, and small-scale surveys, raising concerns that the conclusions drawn from this research are not representative. This criticism echoes concern that focusing on high-profile cases of superintendent resignations has resulted in a prevailing myth that superintendents tend to last solely two or three years, when, the average tenure is longer than

four-five years. This detracts from the perception of the superintendent and predisposing superintendent reform efforts to failure (Natkin et al., 2002). It has been suggested that school board micromanagement, stress and time management are contributed to the high levels of turnover (Cunningham & Burdick, 1999).

Furthermore, studies have used statistics that usually have not engaged multivariate strategies that permit the researcher to dismiss alternative explanations for the associations revealed. The results indicate a research base thinner than those analyzing other types of turnover in education. Researchers have also cited the need for studies of superintendent turnover that utilize current data that enables consideration of the roles and relationships of superintendents and school boards in the age of problematical accountability systems and changing student demographic trends (Petersen & Fusarelli, 2008).

The theoretical aspects of the literature are deficient within the research of superintendent turnover. The earlier work of school superintendent turnover addressed dissatisfaction theory. Dissatisfaction theory suggests that districts experience long secure durations of school board membership during which community dissatisfaction with district performance progressively builds up until the relationship begins to dissolve, at which time board members are overturned and their successors replace the superintendent, completing a new cycle (Hosman, 1990). Dissatisfaction Theory contends that a school board of education and a superintendent based on current demographics, values, and community interest (Danis, 1984) reason for leaving as an opportunity to move to a larger district said that the move was due to the change in Board elections (Glass et al., 2000) which suggests that career advancement is a more important factor for superintendent turnover than are the regime changes dissatisfaction theory predicts.

Superintendent Turnover and the Labor Market Perspective

It is suggested that superintendent turnover might more prudently be conceptualized as an outcome in the labor market for superintendents. Economic labor market models have advised that developing community apathy involving school board selections and the growing prevalence of single-issue board candidates have reduced the applicability of dissatisfaction idea to modern-day school board and superintendent turnover (Fusarelli, 2005). The decision to exit the district or now not is a preference of which option presents the greater benefit-cost differential. Importantly, costs and benefits of a given job are both pecuniary and non-pecuniary, that means that the superintendent considers not only profits and benefits, but additionally working prerequisites such as the working relationship the superintendent has with the board. Because working stipulations element without delay into job expenses and benefits, differences in working prerequisites throughout districts are anticipated to affect a superintendent's selection to stay or go (Baker, Punswick, & Belt, 2010).

On the side of superintendent considerations, this perspective points us towards factors such as salary, the assorted components of superintendent working conditions, and the availability of attractive alternatives, among others. For example, we might hypothesize that earning a high salary increases the benefit to a superintendent of staying in his or her position relative to what could be earned in another district, making voluntary turnover less likely. The aspect of district or school board considerations directs us closer to factors (e.g., poor overall performance via by the seating superintendent) that would possibly make alternate superintendent candidates somewhat more attractive. The significance of this view creates an explicit force that operates on the side of the superintendent and their employer. This view is on superintendent turnover flexibility in the decision-making process. Without difficulty, it can

incorporate personnel decisions other than moving to another district, such as retirement, by making recommendations of cost and benefits when superintendents are considering making a turnover decision (Guarino, Santibañez, & Daley, 2006). There are many commonalities amongst superintendents and city managers, including both are professional, well-educated career executives charged with managing the day-to-day operations of a multifaceted public organization. Both groups of executives often are promoted from 'within the ranks' of management positions with their organizations (Watson & Hassett, 2004).

Superintendent and the Labor Market Retention and Comparison

For example, as discussed by Zeigler (1983), superintendents usually have been more insulated from the politic arena, tend to have had less disagreements with their boards over their respective roles, and spent a smaller amount of their time in conflict with the board or community. Other differences include characteristics of the school district, school board, the board's relationship with the superintendent, relevancy to his or her employment opportunities or choices (e.g., experience), and job performance, both actual and perceived. Findings from existing literature on superintendent turnover, describe applicable results from the related literature on turnover among city managers. The characteristics of the school district in which the superintendent works has a major impact on the superintendent's turnover decision. In general, because of the emphasis on dissatisfaction theory in the literature, research has paid more attention to the impact of these factors on school boards' decisions to retain the superintendent or not.

From this perspective, district and community characteristics might factor into the board's decision by affecting the likelihood that community members will become discontented with the superintendent and exercise their political power to pressure the school board to make a

change. Yet, evidence that voluntary turnover in the superintendent occurs frequently, Byrd,

Drews, and Johnson's (2006) finding indicated that 62.5% of superintendents in their study of

Texas reported leaving their districts to pursue better opportunities, suggests that the influence of

these numbers is similar data indicated in the city manager research, of whom half are estimated

to leave primarily for professional advancement (DeHoog & Whitaker, 1990).

As school board and superintendent relationships have become more contentious, the

focus has shifted to issues to the use of power, political alignments. Ideally, school board

members are expected to be public trustees, who make objective policy decisions in the best

interest of the entire communities (Kowalski & Brunner, 2011). However, many board members

in public school districts make policy and administrative decisions based on the beliefs of their

constituents. According to Kowalski and Brunner (2011), superintendent and school board

relations are constant and evolving. While the two have not separated policymaking and

administration, their differences must be dealt with in a more political acute environment.

Superintendent Tenure and District Characteristics

Tallerico and Burstyn (1996) have eleven district characteristics should be considered

from the superintendent's side. From the superintendent's view, the characteristics of a school

district are important because they define conditions that factor into the cost of staying in the

district, rather than taking opportunities elsewhere.

Interestingly, characteristics that are related with superintendent stress (e.g., location) as

evidenced by findings that emotions of professional isolation can contribute to rural

superintendents' selections to leave (Tallerico & Burstyn, 1996). Another is the difficulty and

intricacy of the superintendent's work environment, which would possibly be greater in districts

that are larger, more diverse, more financially constrained, or more populated with disadvantaged students.

Similarly, characteristics of the superintendent's current position might influence the possibility that an outside opportunity becomes available. For example, other districts might have the desire to hire superintendents who have experience in larger or more diverse districts. The link between the school board and the superintendent relies heavily on how the superintendent and school district are perceived. The school board is the superintendent's immediate supervisor, and the two entities work together to create and make policy decisions for the school district. Thus, there are some questions in case studies of superintendent turnover, difficulties related to working with board members are among the most frequently identified contributors. These difficulties include conflict between the superintendent and board and the challenges of working with a board whose members cannot cooperate with one another, which are often related (Grissom, 2009; Mountford, 2008).

The argument exists that reasons for poor relationships between superintendents and their school boards include role confusion, tendencies among some board members to micromanage, and incompatible approaches to decision. Despite evidence that positive board-superintendent relationships are the norm rather than the exception (Glass et al., 2000), findings from surveys of superintendents support the conclusion from qualitative studies that conflict with the school board is often an important factor in a superintendent exit. In surveys of superintendents who had left positions in Nebraska and South Carolina by Grady and Bryant (1991) and Monteith and Hallums (1989), respectively, board conflict or interference was cited by more than half of respondents as a contributor to their departure.

Personal characteristics of the superintendents themselves also are likely turnover, though a scarcity of studies means here means we must rely heavily on the city manager literature. In research specific to superintendent turnover, scholars have suggested the importance of such personal factors as race and though other studies have not found effects of these variables on length of tenure. Parker (1996) noted that retirement is a common reason for superintendent exits, suggesting age is a factor.

Natkin et al. (2002) found that superintendents with more advanced degrees are less likely to turn over, though again, other studies have found no degree effects the difficulty of nailing down the impact on turnover of superintendent qualifications in general is that there are potentially competing "push" and "pull" effects. Despite the potential impact on external opportunities, studies of superintendent tenure generally have found that higher degree attainment is associated with lower turnover (Feiock & Stream, 1998). Superintendent performance is the final factor identified as contributing to superintendent turnover and job performance (Glass et al., 2000).

From the perspective of the school board, the direction of the relationship between performance and the decision to release as superintendent is clear. Non-effective superintendents are more likely to generate community or board dissatisfaction, increasing the likelihood helps make the decision to part ways. From the viewpoint of the superintendent, the direction is not as clear to the degree that one who performs at a higher level increases one's job satisfaction and performance, while voluntary turnover may be negatively correlated (Eaton & Sharpe, 1996).

Survey of superintendents to ask why their predecessor left the district, board relationship conflict was identified as a similarly large factor. Though not articulated in these studies, it is important to emphasize that conflict and a strained relationship between the board, the

superintendent can influence both the decision to stay or go and the board's decision to retain the superintendent or not. At the same time, high performance in one district may increase the pull from other districts who seek to hire away an effective superintendent, in which case the probability that a superintendent voluntarily leaves his or her current district might be greater for high performers. (Eaton & Sharp, 1996)

Clearly, given these different forces, it is also possible that the overall relationship between performance and turnover is nonlinear, with low-performers facing pressures that push them out of the district, high-performers facing outside opportunities that draw them away from the district, and average performers facing neither of these forces and thus showing greater propensities to stay. Testing a relationship between turnover and performance assumes that a reasonable measure of performance is available. Given the current test-based high-stakes accountability era, student test scores are one candidate, though at least one prior empirical study questions the assumption that superintendents affect student test scores, at least in the short term (Ehrenberg, Chaykowski, & Ehrenberg, 1988).

Table 3

Literature Reflecting Why Superintendents Leave (Voluntary/Involuntary)

	Board/ Superintendent Relationship	Pay/ Workforce Decisions	Leave the Field of Education/ Professional Advancement	Stress/ Time Management	Accountability/ Reform Efforts
Cunningham & Burdick (1999)	X			X	
Bjork, Ferrigno, & Kowalski (2014)					X
Dehoog & Whitaker (1990)	X		X		
Eaton & Sharp (1996)	X				
Ehrenberg, Chaykowski, & Ehrenberg (1988)					X
Eliff (2012)	X				
Glass (2000)				X	
Glass, Bjork, & Brunner (2000)	X				
Grady & Bryant (1991)	X				
Grissom & Andersen (2018)	X	X			
Grissom & Mitani (2016)		X	X		

Superintendent Chronic Turnover and Expectations

With persistent turnover comes expectations that turnover is inevitable, making the superintendent turnover story one of short-term focus with insufficient funding in long-range vision and goals while building capacity (Buchanan, 2006). The issue is it may not be valid, at least not for a typical school district. The popular idea of the present day superintendent as a chronic mover in continual public disharmony with a conflict-ridden board is one developed from media portrayals of distinguished cases in the nation's largest city districts, whose experiences may not be a true representation of the suburban and rural districts that make-up a

great majority of local school governments—or even of the average urban district (Grissom &

Mitani, 2016).

Chapter III: Methods

The purpose of this study is to determine reasons superintendents choose to stay or leave the superintendency. By analyzing reasons why superintendents stay or leave, the data collected may provide further insight on effective practices of leadership that directly affect the longevity of their superintendency. This study is focused on collecting information from superintendents with the intent to increase awareness by collecting data from the individuals who are transient in the public education system.

By analyzing research about traditional leadership and targeting the perceptions of the current population of leaders, new information can be obtained concerning the potential reasons why superintendents leave or stay in the profession. All superintendents in the State of Alabama were recruited to participate in this study. This research study was conducted using quantitative statistical results to determine these perceptions. Survey research provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of the population (Creswell, 2014).

This chapter contains the methodology and focuses on the research processes used to conduct the study. Specifically, this section includes the research questions, research design, population and sample, instrumentation, procedures for collecting and analyzing the data, data analysis, and a brief summary.

Research Questions

1. To what extent do leadership factors influence a superintendent's decision to leave their current superintendent position?

2. To what extent do leadership factors influence a superintendent's decision to stay in their current superintendent position?

Research Design

      This chapter was designed to describe and outline the research methods that will be utilized to answer the research questions. A descriptive research design was utilized to determine reasons superintendents choose to stay or leave the superintendency.

      The research method used to conduct this research is quantitative. Quantitative research provides measurements for comparison and evaluation and gives an in-depth explanation of the meaning of an idea (Shields & Twycross, 2003). The Likert-type survey provided quantitative data relative to the constructs of leadership, tenure, and job satisfaction that contribute to the perceptions on Alabama superintendents toward the position. The research design supported this investigation well by allowing the variables to determine the perceptions of superintendents in Alabama.

      Survey research is defined as the gathering of information from a sample of individuals through their responses to questions. This can be gauged by asking a few targeted questions of individuals to obtain information related to behaviors and preferences, to a more efficient rigorous study using multiple valid and reliable instruments (Mellon, 2010). Survey examination has historically included large population-based data gathering. According to Check and Schutt (2012), large surveys normally obtain information reflecting demographic, personal characteristics, and consumer feedback. Surveys were often utilized to provide demographic characteristics of individuals or obtain opinions on which to base programs or products. This type of research utilizes a variety of methods to recruit participants, collect data, and utilize various methods of instrumentation. The end goal of survey research is to develop a deep understanding of this topic, issue, or problem from individual's perspective (Check & Schutt,

2012). The primary purpose of this survey research was to gather and analyze information

describing features of a large sample of individuals of interest somewhat quickly.

Population and Sample

The purpose of this study is to determine reasons superintendents choose to stay or leave

the superintendency. The population for this study was all superintendents in the State of

Alabama. According to the School Superintendent Association, the state of Alabama is

comprised of 138 public school systems and within the 138 public school systems, there are 37

elected superintendents and 101 appointed. The total number of superintendents serving school

districts on a city level is 71 and county level is 67. This includes city and public-school districts

through.

Contact information was located on the Alabama State Department of Educations'

websites database to confirm the 138 school superintendents. The website provided the names,

school district addresses, and email addresses of all the superintendents in Alabama via email.

An introductory letter, an informed-consent document, consistent with the guidelines of the

Institutional Review Board, and the address of the website where the survey was located were

sent to each of the superintendents in Alabama. The purpose of the introductory letter and

consent form was to outline the purpose of the study, solicit their participation in the study, and

acquaint the potential respondents with the purpose out the state.

The School Superintendent Association, Executive Director was contacted to request

permission to provide Alabama superintendents with an overview of the study at sponsored

regional meetings. An introductory letter, an informed-consent letter, consistent with the

guidelines of the Institutional Review Board, and the address of the website where the

questionnaire was located was sent via email to all 138 active superintendents in Alabama. Once

permission was granted, each regional president was contacted to confirm a slot on the agenda to present an informational session at each superintendent regional meeting. During this meeting, superintendents were informed that the survey was voluntary. If a superintendent was not present, a follow-up phone call was made to ensure they received information regarding the study. If potential respondents did not respond within a week after the initial launch of the survey, a follow-up request was sent to superintendents via email to complete the survey.

According to Bhattacherjee (2012), sampling is the statistical process of selecting a subset of a population of interest for purposes of constructing observations and statistical inferences about that population. In survey research, the goal of sampling strategies is to obtain an adequate sample that truly represents the population. It is often not practicable to collect data from an entire population of interest, therefore, a subset of the population or sample is used to estimate the population responses (Bhattacherjee, 2012). A large random sample increases the probability that the responses from the sample will accurately reflect the entire population. Using a mixture of methods of survey administration can help to ensure better sample coverage, therefore reducing coverage error (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2014; Singleton & Straits, 2009). To precisely draw conclusions about the population, the sample must include individuals with characteristics similar to the population.

Instrumentation

The purpose of this study is to determine reasons superintendents choose to stay or leave the superintendency.

1. To what extent do leadership factors influence a superintendent's decision to leave their current superintendent position?

2. To what extent do leadership factors influence a superintendent's decision to stay their current superintendent position?

The research data will be obtained by participants' responding to questions from Survey of Leadership in Alabama 2019 (SOLIA, 2019). The survey is based on reputable psychometric measures with empirical data supported by the literature. The dependability of this survey instrument is verified by reliability and validity testing. The survey instrument was designed to ascertain demographic variable information and practices that may have contributed to, or inhibited, their longevity as a superintendent. The research shows that by far superintendents stay in a district due to personal and professional reasons and leave because of board relationships. By including all active superintendents in Alabama, respondents should cover a diverse population of superintendents. A broad population will provide an in-depth generalization of research results. Using a survey methodology for data collection will allow the researcher to collect data specific to experienced practices by all superintendents, as well as demographic data including age, ethnicity, experience, highest education level, district size, and free lunch or reduced price lunch percentage.

The focus point of the survey were background and general data information. The purpose of this study was to determine Alabama superintendents' perceptions of staying or leaving the position. As part of the procedures to assure validity and reliability, the original survey instrument was reviewed and revised by a panel of experts. The original survey instrument was modified to enrich, localize, extend, and/or delineate the information consistent with the findings in the literature review.

The demographic section consisted of enough questions to create an identifiable profile for each superintendent. However, each participant will still remain anonymous. The identifiable

profile is only created for the researcher to eliminate the need for the researcher to follow up unnecessarily with superintendents who had already submitted their surveys and participated in the study. The demographic section consists of the following information:

1. Gender

2. Current age

2. Ethnicity

3. Highest academic degree obtained

4. Age of super first superintendency

5. Percentage of certified students receiving free or reduced lunch

6a. How long have you served as superintendent in current position?

6b. Are you appointed or elected?

6c. What is the salary range for a superintendent in your school district?

6d. How many total years have you been a superintendent?

7. Position held immediately before superintendent?

8. How long did you serve in previous position?

9. In previous position was it in your current or previous district?

10. What is your highest level of certification?

11. Retirement eligibility year?

12. When do you plan to retire?

Each respondent was provided a Likert type scale for each statement that ranged from never to almost always. The respondents were asked to choose the best selection that applied to each statement. The survey utilized for this study in located in Appendix A.

Data Collection and Procedures

The SOLIA (2019) instrument was used to survey perception data from practicing superintendents in Alabama regarding their beliefs about leadership practices when making a decision to leave or stay in the position. The data collection process will occur electronically via Qualtrics. Permission to conduct the study was granted through Auburn University. The researcher located information on the Alabama State Department of Educations' websites database to confirm the 138 school superintendents. The website provided the names, school district addresses, and email addresses of all the superintendents in Alabama via email. An introductory letter, an informed-consent document, consistent with the guidelines of the Institutional Review Board, and the address of the website where the survey was located to each of the superintendents in Alabama. The purpose of the introductory letter and consent form was to outline the purpose of the study, solicit their participation in the study, and acquaint the potential respondents with the purpose and importance of the study. In addition, the researcher wanted to assure each superintendent of the importance of confidentiality to the researcher and study. According to Couper (2000), confidentiality is a prime concern for respondents of web-based surveys. A window of four weeks was allowed in which to receive responses to the survey.

If potential respondents did not respond within a week after the initial launch of the survey, an encouraging follow-up email reminder was sent. The email was only sent to the ones not responding stating that the importance of the survey and reaffirming the importance of their particular response to the survey. After the third week, the researcher contacted the ones who did not respond via phone. In addition, if any addresses were returned, the researcher rechecked and updated them. Finally, the survey was sent to the new address.

Data Analysis

The use of descriptive statistics was utilized to summarize the demographic data reported by Alabama superintendents. The respondents completed a Likert-type scale survey with statements development around leaving or staying in the position. Responses to the statements were assigned a point value for calculation purposes of standard deviation and mean. Individual standard deviations and means were calculated for each statement along with each overall construct section.

Summary

This study focused on how superintendents of school districts in the State of Alabama perceive the effectiveness of their leadership, to identify their leadership practices, and to shed light on the decision-making process of staying or leaving. This study used quantitative data. It consisted of the (a) research questions that guided this study, (b) hypothesis to explain the data, (c) research design to lay-out how the survey was distributed, (d) population and sample to describe the potential participants, (e) instrumentation to describe the survey that was used, (f) data collection to describe the method in which the data were collected from the participants, (g) and the data analysis to explain how the data collected were analyzed by the researcher.

Chapter IV: Results

A descriptive research design was utilized to determine reasons superintendents choose to stay or leave the superintendency. This study was based on the perception of Alabama superintendents. The results of this study will add to the literature as it relates to superintendent leadership. This chapter will present the results of the study using descriptive statistics. The descriptive statistics includes means, frequencies, and standard deviations.

Research Questions

1. To what extent do leadership factors influence a superintendent's decision to leave their current superintendent position?

2. To what extent do leadership factors influence a superintendent's decision to stay in their current superintendent position?

A total of 138 Alabama superintendents 'were invited to participate in the survey. Of the 138 invitees, the survey was completed by 92 participants. The response rate was sixty-seven percent. Two of the five sections addressed reasons for leaving the current school superintendent position. Of the two, one consisted of 18 Likert-type items with 1 = Never and 5 = Almost Always. The second section asked participants to list the top five reasons for leaving their current position as school superintendent. Two of the five sections addressed reasons for staying in the current school superintendent position. One section consisted of Likert-type items with ratings of 1 = Never and 5 = Almost Always and the second section requested that participants list the top five reasons for staying in their current position. The last section consisted of demographic information relative to Alabama superintendents.

Theme: Opportunity

The theme Opportunity was most often cited for leaving the current superintendent position. There were two Likert-type questions to address the theme opportunity.

Second retirement. Respondents were asked to rate the frequency ~~in~~ with which they consider obtaining another position in Alabama as a reason for leaving. The first item related to starting a second retirement plan in another state produced a mean of 2.63 and a standard deviation of 1.26. Twenty-eight percent of respondents selected four or five on the Likert-type scale with second retirement as a factor for leaving the superintendent position. Frequencies of ratings are presented in Table 4. Although opportunity was listed most often as a reason for leaving, it was only moderately endorsed based on this Likert-type item rating (never to always a reason for leaving).

Table 4

Frequencies Regarding a Second Retirement

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
	1	24	26.1	26.1
	2	18	19.6	45.7
Likert Scale	3	24	26.1	71.7
	4	20	21.7	93.5
	5	6	6.5	100.0
	Total	92	100.0	

Another position. Respondents were asked to rate the frequency with which they consider obtaining another position in Alabama as a reason for leaving. This item produced a mean of 2.66 and standard deviation of 1.32 (see Table 5). Thirty-one percent of respondents selected four or five on the Likert-type scale with another position as a factor for leaving the

superintendent position. Although opportunity was listed most often as a reason for leaving, it was only moderately endorsed based on this Likert-type item rating (never to always a reason for leaving).

Table 5

Frequencies Regarding Another Position in Alabama

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
	1	23	25.0	25.0
	2	22	23.9	48.9
Likert Scale	3	19	20.7	69.9
	4	19	20.7	90.2
	5	9	9.8	100.0
	Total	92	100.0	

Theme: Retirement Age

Retirement age was cited second most often as a reason to leave the superintendent position. There was one Likert-type item that addressed retirement age. This item produced a mean of 2.52 and a standard deviation of 1.23 (see Table 6). Twenty-six percent of respondents selected four or five on the Likert-type scale with retirement age as a factor for leaving the superintendent position. Although retirement age was listed second most often as a reason for leaving, it was only moderately endorsed based on this Likert-type item frequency rating.

Table 6

Frequencies Regarding Retirement Age

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
	1	26	28.3	28.3
	2	17	18.5	46.7
Likert Scale	3	25	27.2	73.9
	4	17	18.5	92.4
	5	7	7.6	100.0
	Total	92	100.0	

Theme: Politics

The theme Politics was listed third most often for leaving the current superintendent position. Respondents were asked to rate the frequency with which they consider obtaining another position in Alabama as a reason for leaving. There were two Likert-type questions that addressed politics.

School Politics. The first item addressed school politics and produced a mean of 3.41 and a standard deviation of 1.159 (see Table 7). Forty-nine percent of respondents selected four or five on the Likert-type scale with school politics as a factor for leaving the superintendent position. The Likert-type item mean was moderate, on the average, which is consistent with the theme politics as listed third most often as a reason for leaving

Table 7

Frequencies Regarding Politics

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
	1	5	5.4	5.4
	2	16	17.4	22.8
Likert Scale	3	26	28.3	51.1
	4	26	28.3	79.3
	5	19	20.7	100.0
	Total	92	100.0	

Political Stress. For the second item, respondents were asked to rate level in which they consider political stress or system/school politics as a reason for leaving. This item produced a mean of 3.14 and standard deviation of 1.306 (see Table 8). Forty-four percent of respondents selected four or five on the Likert-type scale with political stress as a factor for leaving the superintendent position. See Table 5 for frequencies of ratings. The Likert-type item mean was moderate, on the average, which is consistent with the theme politics as listed third most often as a reason for leaving.

Table 8

Frequencies Regarding Political Stress

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
	1	11	12.0	12.0
	2	22	23.9	35.9
Likert Scale	3	19	20.7	56.5
	4	23	25.0	81.5
	5	17	18.5	100.0
	Total	92	100.0	

Theme: Health/Stress

The theme Health/Stress was the fourth most often cited response for leaving the superintendent position. Respondents were asked to rate the frequency with which they consider obtaining another position in Alabama as a reason for leaving There were two Likert-type questions that addressed this response.

Burnout. The first item addressed burnout and produced a mean of 3.10 and a standard deviation of 1.205 (see Table 9). Thirty-nine percent of respondents selected four or five on the Likert-type scale with burnout as a factor for leaving the superintendent position. Even though health/stress was only the fourth most often listed as a reason for leaving, the mean on this Likert-type scale item was rated at a moderate level.

Table 9

Frequencies Regarding Health/Stress - Burnout

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
	1	9	9.8	9.8
	2	22	23.9	33.7
Likert Scale	3	25	27.2	60.9
	4	23	25.0	85.9
	5	13	14.1	100.0
	Total	92	100.0	

Barriers. This item produced a mean of 3.34 and standard deviation of 1.14 (see Table 10). Fifty percent of respondents selected four or five on the Likert-type scale with barriers as a factor for leaving the superintendent position. Even though health/stress was only the fourth most often listed as a reason for leaving, the mean on this Likert-type scale item was rated at a moderate level

Table 10

Frequencies Regarding Health/Stress – Barriers

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Likert Scale	1	6	6.5	6.5
	2	17	18.5	25.0
	3	23	25.0	50.0
	4	32	34.8	84.8
	5	14	15.2	100.0
	Total	92	100.0	

Theme: School Board

This item was cited least often as a reason for leaving the superintendent position. Respondents were asked to rate the frequency with which they consider obtaining another position in Alabama as a reason for leaving. There was one Likert-type question that addressed school boards. This item produced a mean of 2.60 and a standard deviation of 1.293 (see Table 11). Twenty-six percent of respondents selected four or five on the Likert-type scale with school board as a factor for leaving the superintendent position. The item was a little below moderate in frequency rating, somewhat consistent with the theme being listed least most often as a reason for leaving.

Table 11

Frequencies Regarding School Board

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
	1	25	27.2	27.2
	2	19	20.7	47.8
Likert Scale	3	24	26.1	73.9
	4	16	17.4	91.3
	5	8	8.7	100.0
	Total	92	100.0	

Theme: Vision/Mission

Vision/mission was most often cited as the top reason for staying in the position. Respondents were asked to rate the frequency with which they consider obtaining another position in Alabama as a reason for leaving. There was one Likert-type question to address vision/mission. The question addressing vision/mission produced a mean of 3.98 and a standard deviation of .882. (see Table 12) Seventy-five of respondents selected four or five on the Likert-type scale with vision/mission as a factor for staying in the superintendent position. This Likert-type item mean was above moderate, which is consistent with the relative frequency with which vision/mission was cited as a reason for staying

Table 12

Frequencies Regarding Vision/Mission

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Likert Scale	2	7	7.6	7.7
	3	15	16.3	24.2
	4	42	45.7	70.3
	5	27	29.3	100.0
	Total	91	98.9	
	Missing System	1	1.1	
	Total	92	100.0	

Theme: Job Satisfaction

Enjoy Work. Enjoying work was cited second most often as a reason to stay in the superintendent position. Respondents were asked to rate the frequency with which they consider obtaining another position in Alabama as a reason for leaving. There were two Likert-type items to address how superintendents felt about their job. The question addressing job satisfaction produced a mean of 4.53 and a standard deviation of .735 (see Table 13). Ninety percent of respondents selected four or five on the Likert-type scale with job satisfaction as a factor for staying in the superintendent position. This item was, on the average, given a fairly strong rating, which is consistent with the relative frequency with which the item was cited.

Table 13

Frequencies Regarding Job Satisfaction – Enjoy Work

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
	1	1	1.1	1.1
	3	7	7.6	8.8
Likert Scale	4	25	27.2	36.3
	5	58	63.0	100.0
	Total	91	98.9	
	Missing System	1	1.1	
	Total	92	100.0	

Mentorship. Respondents were asked to rate the-frequency with which they consider obtaining another position in Alabama as a reason for staying. There was one Likert-type question to address mentorship. The question addressing mentorship produced a mean of 3.33 and a standard deviation of 1.136 (see Table 14). Forty-seven percent of respondents selected four or five on the Likert-type scale with job satisfaction as a factor for staying in the superintendent position. This item was moderately rated which is somewhat inconsistent with the relative frequency with which the item was cited.

Table 14

Frequencies Regarding Mentorship

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Likert Scale	1	7	7.6	7.7
	2	13	14.1	22.0
	3	28	30.4	52.7
	4	29	31.5	84.6
	5	14	15.2	100.0
	Total	91	98.9	
	Missing System	1	1.1	
	Total	92	100.0	

Theme: Community

The theme community was cited third most often for superintendents having the desire to stay in the position. Respondents were asked to rate the frequency with which they consider obtaining another position in Alabama as a reason for staying. There was one Likert-type item to address how they are supported in the community. The question addressing community produced a mean of 3.63 and a standard deviation of 1.059 (see Table 15). Eighty-nine percent of respondents selected four or five on the Likert-type scale with family support as a factor for staying the superintendent position. The fairly strong rating for this item is inconsistent with the relative frequency with which the item was listed as a reason for staying.

Table 15

Frequencies Regarding Community

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
	3	9	9.8	9.9
	4	28	30.4	40.7
Likert Scale	5	54	58.7	100.0
	Total	91	98.9	
	Missing System	1	1.1	
	Total	92	100.0	

Theme: Commitment

The theme commitment was cited fourth most often for superintendents having the desire to stay in the position. Respondents were asked to rate the frequency with which they consider obtaining another position in Alabama as a reason for staying. There was one Likert-type item that addressed commitment. This item produced a mean of 4.44 and a standard deviation of .748. (see Table 16). Eighty-nine percent of respondents selected four or five on the Likert-type scale with work ethic as a factor for leaving the superintendent position. The fairly strong rating for this item is inconsistent with the relative frequency with which the item was listed as a reason for staying.

Table 16

Frequencies Regarding Commitment

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Likert Scale	1	1	1.1	1.1
	3	8	8.7	9.9
	4	31	33.7	44.0
	5	51	55.4	100.0
	Total	91	98.9	
	Missing System	1	1.1	
	Total	92	100.0	

Theme: School Board Relations

School board relations was cited least most often as a reason to stay in the superintendent position. Respondents were asked to rate the frequency with which they consider obtaining another position in Alabama as a reason for staying. There was one Likert-type item to address how they are supported by the Board. The question addressing school boards produced a mean of 3.63 and a standard deviation of 1.059 (see Table 17). Fifty-eight percent of respondents selected four or five on the Likert-type scale with school boards as a factor for leaving the superintendent position. Though this item is listed the least often as a reason for staying, the corresponding Likert-type item frequency rating was above average.

Table 17

Frequencies Regarding School Board Relations

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
	1	4	4.3	4.5
	2	8	8.7	13.5
	3	24	26.1	40.4
Likert Scale	4	34	37.0	78.7
	5	19	20.7	100.0
	Total	89	96.7	
	Missing System	3	3.3	
	Total	92	100.0	

This chapter addressed the top reasons why Alabama superintendents choose to stay or leave their position as superintendent. The Likert-type questions were grouped by theme identified based on the frequency with which the theme was listed as a reason for leaving or staying. Tables 3-17 display frequencies from Likert-type questions on the survey presented to superintendents. The item means and standard deviations were also reported. The next chapter will provide a summary of the data, implications, and recommendations for further research.

Chapter V: Conclusion

In this chapter of the dissertation, the researcher will revisit the literature related to the superintendent and include the purpose of the study, research questions, research design and participants, including data collection and data analysis processes. The researcher will discuss implications of the findings and help others recognize the importance of factors that influence superintendent's decision to stay or leave the position. Lastly, the researcher will provide recommendations for future research.

Review of the Literature

The purpose of this study was to determine why superintendents choose to stay or leave the superintendency. The research questions for this study were:

1. To what extent do leadership factors influence a superintendent's decision to leave their current superintendent position?

2. To what extent do leadership factors influence a superintendent's decision to stay their current superintendent position?

As discussed in chapter two, superintendent success can further be determined by their leadership qualities. There are five district-level leadership responsibilities and a bonus finding related to setting and keeping the district focused on goals related to teaching and learning. Marzano and Waters (2006) found that five district level leadership responsibilities with a statistically significant correlation with average student achievement. This leads to Marzano's findings of five distinct functions of responsibilities for superintendent effective leadership:

1. Collaborative goal setting - Effective superintendents include all stakeholders, including board members, central office, and building level administrators.

2. Non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction - Effective superintendents set specific achievement targets for schools and students and ensure research-based strategies are implemented daily.

3. Board alignment - Effective superintendents promote non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction. The local board of education is a supporter of district initiatives that drive those goals.

4. Monitoring goals for achievement and instruction - Effective superintendents continually monitor district progress

5. Uses of resources to support achievement - Effective superintendents ensure that all necessary resources (money, time, and personnel) that will ensure those district goals for achievement and instruction are met.

6. Defined Autonomy - "Bonus" finding, the longevity of superintendent has a positive effect on student achievement.

Summary of Research Design, Data Collection and Data Analysis

A quantitative approach was employed to conduct the research for this study. The sample consisted of public-school superintendents throughout the State of Alabama. The researcher presented information at regional meetings to inform superintendents of the study. Surveys were sent to superintendents to collect the data. A total of 92 out 138 superintendents responded to the survey. After collecting the quantitative data, it was analyzed using the SPSS system. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data.

Summary of Findings

This study used a quantitative approach to examine reasons superintendents choose to stay or leave their current position. The data was obtained from the Survey of Leadership in

Alabama 2019 (SOLIA, 2019). The survey is based on reputable psychometric measures with empirical data supported by the literature. The dependability of the survey instrument was verified by reliability and validity testing. The survey instrument was designed to ascertain demographic variable information and practices that may have contributed to, or inhibited, the longevity as a superintendent.

Research question one. To what extent do leadership factors influence a superintendent's decision to leave their current superintendent position? Historically across the United States, the superintendent position has been a revolving door. Researchers concluding that successful systemic school reforms take five or more years of a superintendent's focus suggests that negative impacts of turnover could be felt even longer (Natkin et al., 2002). There are common themes in the literature that relate to superintendent leadership and why superintendents leave the position. According to Grissom and Mitani (2016), two studies indicate that about 20% of superintendents leave school districts, with more than one half of them leaving the role through retiring or leaving education as a whole. Those reasons why include: (a) the challenging role/stress, (b) a lack of board and community support and connections, (c) potential retirement policies, (d) less than expected salary and (e) dissatisfaction with the current role (Cooper et al, 2000; Grissom, 2012; Harris et al, 2004). In reviewing the quantitative data, three out of the five reasons cited are consistent with reasons identified by superintendents on the SOLIA (2019) survey. This study found five top reasons superintendents choose to leave the position. The themes addressed in this study are as followed: opportunity, retirement age, politics, health/stress, and board turnover.

Theme one: Opportunity. Superintendents cited opportunity as the most often cited theme for leaving the superintendent position. According to Guarino et al, superintendents

possess flexibility opportunities by making cost and benefit recommendations when considering other opportunities. Because superintendents have the desire to pursue better opportunities, according to a Texas Study, 62.5% of superintendents leave for professional advancement. The superintendents in this study addressed seeking another position and second retirement as a reason for leaving.

Theme two: Retirement age. The theme retirement age was endorsed second to opportunity and correlates with the research regarding departure from the position. Parker (1996) noted that retirement is a common reason for superintendent exits, suggesting age is a factor. Within Alabama, the Retirement Systems of Alabama grant retirement when an individual accrues 25 years of service. A Likert-type questions rendered a moderate number of responses indicating that age was a factor in leaving the position.

Theme three: Politics. The theme politics was listed third most often as it relates to superintendents leaving the position. Within the realm of politics, the research suggest that superintendent and board relationships are important. The commonality between superintendent's responses addressing politics in directly aligned with turnover due to Boards of Education. As school board and superintendent relationships have become more contentious, the focus has shifted to issues to the use of power, political alignments. Superintendents moderately responded to the Likert-type questions addressing politics. As discussed by Zeigler (1983), superintendents who usually have been more insulated from the politic arena, tend to have had less disagreements with their boards over their respective roles, and spent a smaller amount of their time in conflict with the board or community.

Theme four: Health/stress. Superintendents found health and stress as a factor for leaving the position. This theme is consistent with research regarding superintendent turnover.

Interestingly, research indicates that emotions of professional isolation can contribute to rural superintendents' selections to leave (Tallerico & Burstyn, 1996). Superintendents are deemed the CEO of a school district; therefore, they are responsible for solving all issues within the district.

Theme five: Board turnover. Board turnover was rated lastly by superintendents as a factor for leaving. According to Eliff, board turnover, politics and board involvement in personnel issues, and lack of clarity in roles have been cited as reasons for superintendent turnover. Board turnover issues include conflict between the superintendent and board and the challenges of working with a board whose members cannot cooperate with one another, which are often related (Grissom, 2009; Mountford, 2008).

Research question two. To what extent do leadership factors influence a superintendent's decision to stay in their current superintendent position? The superintendent leadership effectiveness has been highly defined by the ability of the superintendent to have a lasting and permanent position. Tenure for superintendents is increasing, especially for urban superintendents from 2.3 years to 3.6 years (Pascopella, 2011). The research suggests that there are common themes related to why superintendents remain in positions: (a) professional needs, (b) personal and social needs, (c) community engagement, (d) salary and (e) student achievement. In reviewing the data, three out of the five reasons cited are consistent with the themes identified by the SOLIA (2019) survey. The themes addressed in this study are as follows: vision and mission, job satisfaction, community, commitment, and school board relations.

Theme one: Vision/mission. Vision and mission were the most cited factor for superintendents staying in the position. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) addressed vision within a multi- dimensional plan that included best practices.

- This dimension of leadership practice includes actions aimed at developing goals for schooling and inspiring others with a vision of the future.

- Identifying and articulating a vision.

Marzano and Waters (2006) defined effective superintendents as having the task of setting goals and creating a vision for the school district. This research is directly aligned with the responses from the Likert-type questions addressing vision and mission.

Theme two: Job Satisfaction. The theme job satisfaction was cited second by superintendents as a factor for staying in the position. They cited on the Likert-type questions that they enjoy working as superintendent. Superintendents remain in their positions are often given the green light of satisfaction from the school board and in some regards are self-satisfied. Job satisfaction impacts a superintendent's decision to stay in their current position or leave. Houston (2001) indicated that most superintendents found the job exhilarating and those who left the position comeback to expand the possibilities of whole communities.

Theme three: Community. Community was cited thirdly as a factor for staying in the position as the superintendent position. The research supports the responses from the Likert-type questions. Superintendents with longevity are active members of a service clubs; serving on boards and attending public functions regularly give the superintendent traction to navigate the community. This type of involvement established the superintendent as the visible and often popular head of the district. Superintendents with longevity are active members of a service clubs; serving on boards and attending public functions regularly give the superintendent traction to navigate the community. This type of involvement established the superintendent as the visible and often popular head of the district. All of the aforementioned practices are associated with redesigning a district; strengthening the district and school cultures, modifying

organizational structures and building collaborative processes relies on the strength of the superintendent in his role as educational leader and community leader (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003).

Theme four: Commitment. Superintendents responses related to work ethic align with the research. The theme commitment was cited fourth as a factor for staying in the position. Studies reveal, superintendents should display dispositions and personal qualities like humility, collaboration, courage, work ethic, communication skills, and self-reflection which can define successful leadership (Freeley & Seinfeld, 2012).

Theme five: School Board. Superintendents identified effective relationships with boards of education as being very important. Pascopella (2011) believed that better communication between superintendents and board presidents built better working relationships and was directly tied to long superintendent tenure. According to Marzano and Waters (2006), superintendents, district office personnel, and school boards have worked to overcome William Bennet's image of the "blob." However, according to research presented in *School Leadership that Works,* there is a vast and advantageous relationship between district-level supervision and student achievement when the superintendent, district personnel, and school board members do the right work in the 'right way.' Not only are they doing the work right and in the right way, these findings also suggest sound leadership at the district level, which includes superintendents, district office personnel and school board members can contribute to the success of the district when they are focused on the key leadership responsibilities and practices identified in the study (Waters & Marzano, 2006).

Implications of the Study

The implications of this research can impact superintendents, provide additional direction to organizations and colleges that prepare, train, and support superintendents and board members. This study will help to increase, deepen and broaden the, e literature on superintendent leadership in public schools.

Training and preparation are imperative for those in leadership positions, particularly superintendents. Usually, statewide organizations support specialized groups of administrators. Most states have superintendent associations that address training, public policy, professional learning and networking. These organizations can take away from this research the positive impact of professional learning and leadership training have on superintendents. This study will allow organizations to assist superintendents with identifying professional development that address board relations, community issues, stress, and politics. Understanding these factors will allow superintendents to better cope with the issues they are faced with.

This research implies that superintendents should understand the importance of leadership skills while effectively navigating through the role of superintendent. Therefore, recognizing ongoing support is needed while the vision and mission of the school district is carried out.

The role of the superintendent is evolving and constantly changing. One implication that can be concluded from this study is the impact it can have on school districts. Many of the superintendents identified the board as a factor for both staying and leaving. This shows the level of impact that a board can have on a superintendent's desire to stay or leave a school district. This finding will inform boards of education of the specific challenges and strengths faced by superintendents as well how to better support them.

Limitations

The researcher has identified possible limitations to this research study. First, the research was limited to superintendents in the state of Alabama. Although, the study was voluntary, and information obtained from public school superintendents it may have been difficult to obtain information due to the sensitivity of the study related to their current position. The findings, however, may not be generalizable to all superintendents in other locations.

Consideration for Future Research

The researcher in this study reviewed existing literature surrounding why superintendents leave or stay in their position in the state of Alabama. The literature is scarce in the area of Superintendent leadership. It would be a great opportunity for further research to be explored in the following areas:

- Replicate this study across a larger sample of superintendents in other states.

- Replicate this study comparing female and male beliefs.

- Replicate this study comparing rural and urban school districts.

- Conduct a qualitative study to obtain additional insight related to their beliefs.

Researcher's Learning Experiences

The researcher in this study has been and educator for seventeen years. Five years as a teacher, five years as a principal and seven years as a central office administrator. Although, the researcher has worked in several capacities, this line of research has enlightened the knowledge base. This process of researching the superintendent position has allowed the sharing of information with the researcher's administrative team on improving district level practices. I believe this research will assist me in my role as a central office administrator by navigating through issues I am faced with daily. This study has offered me a since of motivation in pursuing

the superintendent position in the future. Furthermore, my beliefs were validated regarding why superintendents choose to stay or leave the position.

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Appendix A

Administration for the 21st Century:

A Survey of Leadership in Alabama Superintendents

Administration for the 21st Century:

A Survey of Leadership in Alabama Superintendents

(SOLIA – 2019)

Part I: Superintendent Leadership

To what extent do you consider the following practices crucial to your district leadership?

	Not crucial to my district leadership			Very crucial to → my district leadership	
1. Articulate the mission, vision, core values	1	2	3	4	5
2. Act ethically and practice professional norms	1	2	3	4	5
3. Promote equity and cultural responsiveness for each student's academic success	1	2	3	4	5
4. Develop rigorous and coherent systems of curriculum, instruction and assessment	1	2	3	4	5
5. Cultivate an inclusive community of care and support for students	1	2	3	4	5
6. Develop professional capacity and school personnel for student success	1	2	3	4	5
7. Foster a professional community for teachers and professional staff	1	2	3	4	5
8. Engage families and community in meaningful ways that support students	1	2	3	4	5
9. Manage school operations to support district mission	1	2	3	4	5
10. Act in ways that support continuous school improvement	1	2	3	4	5

Part II: Factors that influence leaving (not seeking reappointment or reelection) to your present superintendent position.

	Never		→		Almost Always
1. Obtain a position out of state and begin a second retirement plan	1	2	3	4	5
2. Burn out	1	2	3	4	5
3. Political conflicts in local community	1	2	3	4	5
4. Financial inadequacies and uncertainty in the district, making the job difficult to perform	1	2	3	4	5
5. Obtain another position in Alabama	1	2	3	4	5
6. Time requirements of the position	1	2	3	4	5
7. Need more time with family	1	2	3	4	5
8. Frustration with barriers and inability to accomplish goals	1	2	3	4	5
9. External mandates or requirements from national, state or other sources	1	2	3	4	5
10. Internal (district) mandates and requirements	1	2	3	4	5
11. Opposition from teacher's organizations (such as AEA, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
12. System politics or political stress	1	2	3	4	5
13. School board turn over	1	2	3	4	5
14. Accountability Pressures	1	2	3	4	5
15. Changing Student Demographics	1	2	3	4	5
16. Voluntary Turnover	1	2	3	4	5
17. Replaced by a better candidate	1	2	3	4	5
18. Age	1	2	3	4	5

1. What would be your top five reasons for leaving your present superintendent position?
   1. _____
   2. _____
   3. _____
   4. _____
   5. _____

Part III: Factors that influence staying (seeking reappointment or reelection) to your present superintendent position.

	Never		→		Almost Always
1. Continue to enjoy working as a superintendent at the current system	1	2	3	4	5
2. Feel supported by community and colleague(s)	1	2	3	4	5
3. Finances	1	2	3	4	5
4. Still able to make a difference	1	2	3	4	5
5. Feel supported by family	1	2	3	4	5
6. Do not know what I am going to do after retirement	1	2	3	4	5
7. I hold an advanced degree which increased my salary	1	2	3	4	5
8. Promoted within ("Homegrown")	1	2	3	4	5
9. Possess strong communication skills	1	2	3	4	5
10. Mentoring that I received in my leadership role	1	2	3	4	5
11. The development of my self-reflection skills	1	2	3	4	5
12. Because there is an established vision for the - system	1	2	3	4	5
13. Because of my commitment to beliefs of the school system	1	2	3	4	5
14. My ability to Inspire Trust	1	2	3	4	5
15. Because of my work ethic	1	2	3	4	5
16. Because of my understanding of emotional intelligence	1	2	3	4	5
17. My possession of healthy coping mechanisms	1	2	3	4	5
18. School Board's Willingness to Change	1	2	3	4	5

1. What are your top five reasons for staying in your present superintendent position?
   1. _____
   2. _____
   3. _____
   4. _____
   5. _____

Part IV: Leadership Resiliency

Leadership Resiliency – the ability to rebound from stress and resume adaptive functioning in the face of challenges.

	Never				Almost Always
			→		
1. Like to investigate things	1	2	3	4	5
2. Generate few novel ideas	1	2	3	4	5
3. Am always open to new ways of doing things	1	2	3	4	5
4. "Get involved" in almost everything I do	1	2	3	4	5
5. Do not actively seek to learn new things	1	2	3	4	5
6. Make many novel contributions	1	2	3	4	5
7. Stay with the old tried and true ways of doing things	1	2	3	4	5
8. Avoid thought-provoking conversations	1	2	3	4	5
9. Behave in many different ways for a given situation	1	2	3	4	5
10. Attend to the "big picture."	1	2	3	4	5
11. Are Very curious	1	2	3	4	5
12. Try to think of new ways of doing things	1	2	3	4	5
13. Rarely aware of changes	1	2	3	4	5
14. Have an open-mind about everything, even things that challenge my core beliefs	1	2	3	4	5
15. Like to be challenged intellectually	1	2	3	4	5
16. Find it easy to create new and effective ideas	1	2	3	4	5
17. Rarely alert to new developments	1	2	3	4	5
18. Figure out how things work	1	2	3	4	5
19. Not an original thinker	1	2	3	4	5
20. Am Very Creative	1	2	3	4	5
21. Do not actively seek to learn new things	1	2	3	4	5
22. I am able to adapt when changes occur	1	2	3	4	5
23. I can deal with whatever comes my way	1	2	3	4	5
24. I try to see the humor side of things when I am faced with problems	1	2	3	4	5
25. Having to cope with stress can make me stronger	1	2	3	4	5
26. I tend to bounce back after illness, injury or other hardships	1	2	3	4	5
27. I believe I can achieve my goals even if there are obstacles.	1	2	3	4	5
28. Under pressure, I stay focused and think clearly	1	2	3	4	5
29. I am not easily discouraged by failure	1	2	3	4	5
30. I think of myself as a strong person when dealing with life's challenges and difficulties	1	2	3	4	5
31. I am able to handle unpleasant and painful feelings like sadness, fear and anger.	1	2	3	4	5

Part IV: Background/General Data Information

Please complete the appropriate blanks:

1. Gender: □ Male   □ Female

2. Age: □ under 40 □ 40-49 □ 50-59 □ 60-69 □ 70 or more

3. How do you describe your ethnicity?

☐ African American

☐ Asian American

☐ European American/Caucasian

☐ Hispanic or Latino

☐ Native American

☐ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

☐ Other (Please specify) _____

4. Check the highest education level you have attained.

☐ Earned bachelor's degree   ☐ Graduate credit not toward a degree

☐ Graduate credit toward a master's degree   ☐ Earned master's degree

☐ Graduate credit toward a doctoral degree   ☐ Earned doctorate

☐ Other (Please specify) _____

5. Were you appointed or elected as superintendent?   _____

6a. How long have you served as a superintendent in your current position? _____ Years.

6b. How many total years have you been a superintendent? _____ Years.

6c. What is the salary range of a superintendent for your system? _____

6d. What percentage of your school system is certified to receive free or reduced-price lunch? _____

7. Please indicate the position you held immediately before your current position. Before my current position, I served as a/an:

☐ Superintendent   ☐ Assistant or Associate Superintendent

☐ Federal Programs Director   ☐ Special Education Coordinator

☐ Transportation Director   ☐ Principal

☐ Assistant Principal   ☐ Counselor

☐ Other (Please specify) _____

8. How long had you served in your previous position? _____Years.

9. Did you serve in the previous position in your current system or another system?

□ Current System　　　　　　　　　□ Another System

10. What is your highest level of certification?

□ "A" Certification or Equivalent　　　　　□ "AA" Certification or Equivalent

□ Other (Please specify) _____

11. In what year will you be eligible for retirement? _____

12. In what year do you plan to retire? _____

13. How do you describe your current system?

- Rural fringe (within 5 miles of urban center)
- Rural distant (5-25 miles from urban center)
- Rural remote (25 miles or more from urban center)
- Suburban
- Urban
- Other _____