

The Role of the Relationship Between the School Board
and the
Superintendent in New Jersey School Districts

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to identify the role of the relationship between the school board and the school superintendent. This study was an effort to describe the role of relationship between the two stakeholders and what effect that relationship had on school climate and how their relationship impacted their ability to develop a strong working relationship. Additionally, this study looked at the relationship's impact on a superintendent's longevity in his/her position.

After researching the current literature, a survey tool was developed to conduct a quantitative research study. These surveys were used to identify the stakeholders' perspectives on their relationship. The population targeted for this study was retired and active school board members in the State of New Jersey and retired, interim and active school superintendents in the State of New Jersey. Three research questions were used in the design of this quantitative study. The survey instrument, that included closed ended questions, was sent to the identified superintendents and school board members via survey monkey and email.

The findings from this study indicated that school board members and superintendents revealed that the majority of both stakeholders agreed that the relationship between the school board members and the superintendent has an impact on the school culture and climate. Communication, decision-making, common values, and trust were important attributes in a positive relationship that built a positive culture and climate. Furthermore respondents agreed that leadership style, communication skills and being able to maintain a positive school climate as important qualities for securing longevity for a superintendent.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Relationships can be tricky. This is particularly true in the workplace, especially at the supervisory level. Andrew Tarvin (2012) states that, “Not all work relationships are created equal—some will help propel your careers, others will help keep you sane, and a few can even be detrimental. The more you can build strong, meaningful relationships, the more likely you are to not only succeed, but be more satisfied with your career.” (p. 32)

The relationship that is established between the school board members and the superintendent of schools in the State of New Jersey has an impact on school culture and climate. The development of this relationship can influence the development and function of their ability to maintain a strong working relationship. Lastly, the quality of this relationship has an impact on the longevity of the superintendent i.e., the better the relationship, the longer they may be able to work together for long term goals.

Superintendents’ and school board members’ relationships have been identified as playing a large role in the operations of a school district (Campbell, Cunningham, Nystrand, & Usdan, 1990). Petersen and Fusarelli (2001) report that, “Patterns of board-superintendent interactions follow fairly well-established patterns of behavior along a continuum from amicable support to outright hostility” (p. 10). Owens and Valesky (2011) believe that educational organizations should foster cooperative human endeavors in order to achieve goals that cannot be achieved by an individual acting alone. Board and superintendents’ organizational ideals should normally emphasize cooperation, harmony, and collaboration. Organizations can be successful only if there is a reasonably accurate understanding throughout the organization of its purpose

and desired results (Reeves, 2006). Behaviors or characteristics of the school board and superintendent can impact the school's climate and culture. Poole (1985) explains that an organizational climate can be developed as a result of the collective perceptions of its members; this is demonstrated by behaviors and attitudes that are important to its members.

For the purpose of this study, school climate is defined as it relates to the school board members and the superintendent. Hoy and Miskel (1996) state that participants in the school organization experience school climate. This climate describes their collective perceptions of behavior and affects their attitudes and behaviors in the school. Ostroff's and Rothausen's (1997) study found that school climates are complex and are affected by peoples' ability to work together and organizations' ability to function. They found that both individual outcomes and organizational outcomes are affected by school climate.

The superintendent is the chief executive officer of the school district. He or she wears many hats and is required to interact with a variety of stakeholders within the school and school community. Stakeholders can be an asset or a liability (Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, & Ellerson 2011). Kowalski (2006) identifies the superintendent as a visionary leader. Owens and Kaplan (2006) identify superintendents as financial planners. Young (2008) identifies them as human resource managers, and Cunningham and Cordeiro (2006) identify them as instructional experts. The superintendent sets the tone, charts the course of the district, and works closely with the school board. Who the superintendent is, what the superintendent values, and the style of operations supported by the superintendent will be manifested throughout the school system (Schlechty, 2009).

The relationship between the superintendent and school board members has broad leadership and policy implications that greatly affect the quality of school districts' educational programs (Conley, 2003; Smoley, 1999). Sharp, Malone and Walters (2002) find school board

and superintendent relations to be critical when managing a school district and providing educational leadership. The roles of school board members and school administrators – particularly the superintendent – are so intertwined that it is difficult to talk about one without the other (Mayer, 2011). Renchler (1992) associates dysfunctional relationships with weakened stability and morale within a district. Morgan and Petersen (2002) indicate that a poor relationship between a superintendent and school board increases conflict over district instructional goals and objectives. Kowalski (2006) has stated that a weak relationship impedes collaborative vision and long-range planning. Petersen and Short (2002) indicate that a poor relationship negatively influences the superintendent's trustworthiness and credibility. Danzberger, Kirst, and Usdan (1992) express concerns about a district's ability to implement school improvement when the relationship between the superintendent and school board is not strong. Carter and Cunningham (1997) believe that a weak relationship generates instability.

The superintendent and board's ability to communicate, build on common commitments, and share educational philosophies may develop into a role of cooperation and long-term goal building that has a far-reaching impact. Being a leader within the context of a school district requires a special appreciation of shared decision-making. Andero (2000) states that school board members must trust the superintendent to make professionally-based decisions. The success of a school district requires teamwork among board members and the superintendent (Mayer 2011). Newton and Sackney (2005) conducted a recent study, which found that school board members and superintendents who share knowledge and work as a team create a positive working relationship. This was identified as being critical to their success. Lutz (1994) also supports the findings that a superintendent and school board must maintain a strong positive relationship. Both stakeholders must communicate honestly and openly and develop mutual respect for each other.

An effective board relationship is a continuous process; it should be a priority for a school superintendent and the focus of his or her daily work (Townsend et al., 2007). Houston and Eadie (2002) identify three characteristics of a relationship between a superintendent and a board: a school board that consistently produces high-impact governance, a partnership that is close, positive, and productive, and lastly, a school board that takes ownership and pride in their work product. Townsend et al. (2007) state that the superintendent should help all board members to be as effective in their roles as possible. Superintendents must know and understand board members' motivations, knowledge, and skills.

The relationship between the school board and superintendent also has an impact on a superintendent's longevity. Research indicates that the average school superintendent remains in the position an average of 2.5 years to 6.5 years in length (Walters & Marzano, 2006). Mobility of school superintendents is intensified by the limited number of qualified candidates and availability of positions that provides candidates to move to a different position that may end up giving them a better position personally and professionally (Danzberger, Kirst & Usden, 1992). Solomon (2006) reported that the need for qualified applicants for school superintendents is very high and the availability is very low.

McCurdy (1992), "There is a widespread concern in public education that a high turnover rate of superintendents and/or board members causes instability that can, and often does, impede progress of a district's school and its students." (p.5) Furthermore, McCurdy identified the following concerns when a superintendent's tenure is limited:

1. Institutional change may be undermined.
2. With lack of consistency people are less likely to take risks. Stakeholders in education take safe actions because they feel they cannot accomplish anything in a climate of instability.

3. It is difficult to implement long-range plans and 'visionary leadership. Principals and teachers become stagnant, waiting for signs of lasting leadership.
4. The organization will create an environment of security to protect itself from a new superintendent waiting to build a relationship with the new leader. (p.5)

A study by Walters and Marzano has shown that a superintendent's longevity has a positive impact on student achievement (Walters & Marzano, 2006). There are multiple reasons for reduced time in office for superintendents. Townsend et al. (2007) highlight the fact that the way a superintendent leaves is critical to the health of the organization. Many researchers identify superintendent/school board relations and the fit within the community as factors that have an impact on superintendent longevity (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Glass et al., 2000). Bryant and Grady (1989) state that turnover of superintendents will create inconsistency in establishing policy and lack of administrative rule.

Marlowe (2001) identifies the relationship that exists between the school board and the superintendent as one of the reasons for short tenures. Short tenures in turn lead to a shortage in superintendents. When the relationship between the two stakeholders deteriorates, an assessment needs to take place to evaluate the impact that the failing relationship is having on the superintendent's performance (Townsend et al., 2007). Goals are likely to become ambiguous, employees are likely to divert their loyalty from the organizational goals, and a crisis-oriented management style will dominate the district (Bryant & Grady, 1989). Townsend et al. (2007) state that if the relationship is highly dysfunctional, the only recourse for the superintendent is to leave the district, go to another district, retire, or leave the profession. Once the damage is done, it can be very difficult to forge a successful relationship and move forward.

There have been numerous studies that focus on the relationship between the superintendent and school board and the impact this relationship has on superintendent tenure. It

is important to examine the history of school boards and the superintendency. The examination of the relationship between school boards and superintendents will identify the evolution of the system as it is today. When asked, a group of superintendents identified their relationship with the board as the most contentious part of their job (Smoley, 1999). Houston and Eadie (2002) believe that the primary responsibility of the superintendent is to play a leading role in building and maintaining strategically significant relationships with the school board.

New Jersey Schools Districts

In the New Jersey Department of Education's Office of Public Information document *Public Education in New Jersey*, (2001), it states that "It is the state's constitutional responsibility to provide all students with a thorough and efficient education (p.1)."

According to the New Jersey Department of Education, New Jersey public school districts educated over 1.36 million students in grades pre-k through 12 during the 2012-2013 school year. The number of full-time classroom teachers during the 2012-2013 school year was 117,803. New Jersey supported 2,492 schools in 590 school districts. This included 2,001 elementary schools and 443 secondary schools.

As stated in the New Jersey Constitution "The legislature shall provide for the maintenance and support of a thorough and efficient system of free public schools for the instruction of all children in the state between the age of five and eighteen years." Local school districts have been given the responsibility of implementing the education of their student population in compliance with state law. Local school boards develop the policies and procedures for operating local public schools. Students and staff are governed by these policies and procedures.

Historically, parents paid for their children to attend school in the state of New Jersey. Parents who were unable to afford the cost of school for their children sent their children to

schools that were sponsored by religious or private organizations. Only boys went to school during this period; girls never attended school.

A state sponsored study in 1828 found that most voters could not read or write because they were unable to attend school. The New Jersey Constitution was amended in 1875 to include the requirements for a thorough and efficient free public education for all students.

During the 20th century, education was made compulsory for all children between the ages of 6 and 16. The Public School Act of 1975 clearly defined the requirements placed on school districts to educate students to function successfully in society. In 1984, school monitoring began to assure compliance with state and federal requirements. In the 1990s, it became mandatory for school districts to uphold Common Core State Standards.

Historical Perspective- School Board

At the heart of the American public school system is the relationship that exists between a school board elected by the community and the superintendent hired by the school board to carry out the mission of the school district (Bjork, 2005). Though school board and superintendent relations are contextual in nature, the historical ramifications are important (Thomas, 2001). Historically, the school board was established to fulfill several goals, which included acting in the public's interest rather than the selective interests of individuals or groups. Politics should not be a priority; rational thinking and educational focus should be the board's governing model. Policy is the domain of the school board and implementation is the domain of expert administrators (Zeigler, Jennings, & Peak, 1974).

The National School Boards Foundation states that a school board's primary fundamental goal must be to improve students' academic achievement. The National School Boards Association emphasizes the improvement of student achievement as a major goal for school boards (Speer, 1998). The specific role of the school board varies from state to state, yet "all

states dictate such matters as the corporate nature and size of local boards as well as the power delegated to them” (Russo, 1994, p.7).

The National School Boards Association (NSBA) provides guidelines regarding the role of school boards. These guidelines include the directive that the school board should establishment a long-term vision for the school system. The stated guidelines include the establishment and maintenance of a basic organizational structure for the school system, including employment of a superintendent, adoption of an annual budget, adoption of governance policies, and creation of a climate that promotes excellence. The NSBA calls for the establishment of systems and procedures that ensure accountability to the community, including fiscal accountability, accountability for programs and student outcomes, staff accountability, and collective bargaining. Advocacy on behalf of children and public education at the community, state, and national levels is the responsibility of all board members (Campbell & Greene, 1994).

School board members in the state of New Jersey are unpaid and have full-time jobs in addition to serving on the school board. Training for school board members is provided by the New Jersey School Board Association (NJSBA), which includes “a full roster of training programs addressing the basic responsibilities of school board membership, as well as specialized training in policy-making, community relations, labor relations and school law.” (Campbell & Greene, 1994. p. 1).

School boards are often composed of political factions that place the superintendent in a difficult position. Board members who have little interest in the general needs of the community and focus instead on a particular problem or objective affiliate themselves with a pressure group. Their election is intended to advance the agenda of this group. A board member may have “an ax to grind,” such as seeking revenge against one or more school officials (Kowalski, 1999). He or

she must decide whether to align with one of the factions or to remain neutral. According to Kowalski (1995), personal relationships become the focal point for power relationships.

Smoley (1999) states that a school board member's lack of role clarity leads to a misunderstanding of that role. He stipulates that the expectation of the community and state requirements may not be in agreement with the primary responsibilities of a board member. Smoley (1999) also states that a board member's response to local pressures or lack of understanding of responsibilities may lead to poor decision-making practice.

Being a school board member rapidly becomes a part of the member's identity, and working for a school district becomes a part of a member's life. The main goal of a school board is to make decisions in the best interest of all the children in the district. In joining a school board, a member becomes part of a team whose shared responsibility is to make sure every child reaches his or her full potential (Mayer, 2011).

School board members tend to rely on the expertise of the superintendent when making educational and local district decisions. If their relationship is adversarial, it will become evident in poor decisions and possibly the removal of the superintendent. If their relationship is one of trust and respect, the district and the superintendent can flourish with growth and vision.

Being a school board member is a unique experience that can be very rewarding in that it allows a person to be part of an important institution. Local school boards are a form of democracy or more technically, a form of representative government (but on a human scale). Decisions about educating a community's children are made at the local level (Mayer, 2011). This involvement at the local level provides community members the opportunity to be actively involved in their school districts and children's education.

Historical Perspective of Superintendent of Schools

“Plato believed that a statesman acted unilaterally and paternalistically to control and direct critical social functions. Hamilton viewed a statesman as a true politician who juggled the interests of the common people and the interests of the economic elite while remaining an aristocrat” (Bjork & Kowalski, 2005). Bjork and Gurley (2003) identified the role of a democratic leader as a statesman. Callahan (1966) identified superintendents as statesman. Bjork and Gurley (2003) clarified that the American superintendent’s role was one of political strategist.

The local superintendent’s position developed in the mid-1800s. Conflict quickly arose with local political organizations fearing the superintendent’s power in local politics. This created a limited identified role for the superintendent (Kowalski, 1999). The position mirrored the development of grade level assignments to students and the replacement of one-room schoolhouses. The superintendent’s was not a position of authority but one of student involvement. The superintendent’s major responsibility was to write a course of study for all schools in the district. Spring (1994) wrote:

The development of the role of the superintendent was important in the evolution of the hierarchical educational organization. The primary reason for creating the position was to have a person work full-time at supervising classroom instruction and assuring uniformity in the curriculum. (p. 5)

Over time (1700-1900), the responsibilities of the superintendent changed to one of teacher-scholar, who was identified as the education professional or the instructional leader to administrative chief also known as the authoritarian manager or the specialist in scientific management. Lastly, the superintendent was known as the negotiator/statesman; i.e., the person responsible for generating support from diverse groups and resolving conflict (Cuban, 1976). In

their extensive study of superintendency in the 21st century, Glass, Bjork, and Brunner (2000) noted the importance of the challenges associated with the roles of the superintendent:

The 21st century will result in challenges for superintendents that resemble those of their predecessors in the 19th century. Thirty years of continuous criticism of public education from the public from the political right; parsimonious legislatures; and emergence of vouchers, charter schools, home schooling, and privatization have all created a climate where strong and knowledgeable education leaders will have to resist efforts to funnel tax dollars away from public education. The dream of Horace Mann, and other founders of the concepts of public education will be seriously challenged in the 21st century. (p. 6)

The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) and the National School Boards Association (NSBA) identified the role of the superintendent as a service role in support of the board and its school system governance role. Marlowe (2001) suggests that the superintendent and school board act as a unit, speak as one, and do nothing unless the superintendent and the whole board agree. This validates the AASA/NSBA's superintendent's assigned role of leadership and advisor to the board. Superintendents need to show that they are learners and invite the school board members to join together in the desire to acquire knowledge (McAdams, 2003).

The superintendent should keep all board members informed about school operations and programs and should communicate the needs of the school system to the board. Vail (2001) noted that superintendents must do what they say they will do and be equitable and fair in decision-making. Presenting policy options along with specific recommendations to the board when circumstances require the board to adopt new policies or review existing policies builds a strong relationship between the two stakeholders. This relationship enables the development of board policy and informs the board of the administrative procedures needed to implement board policy.

Fulbright and Goodman (1999) suggest that superintendents should fulfill their role in accordance with the following guidelines:

1. For all recommendations and presentations to the board, communicate honestly and directly;
2. Provide valid research to support the recommendations;
3. Identify the primary stakeholders; and
4. Predict as well as possible the level of community and parent involvement, initial cost, long-term cost, expected results and evaluation criteria.

It is obvious that the school board and superintendent are deeply intertwined. A successful relationship must be immediately established and carefully maintained. Once a superintendent is hired, he or she must focus on building a strong foundation. Treating the school board members as equals is the first step towards building this relationship. Superintendents are advised to provide adequate processing time for school board members to save considerable effort later on in the decision-making process (Kowalski, 1999).

While many elements contribute to an effective relationship, the reason most often cited for poor relationships is the problem of role confusion (Price, 2001). Although school boards are legal entities, and although their official authority is limited to matters within their jurisdiction, superintendents are likely to discuss school boards from a sociopolitical rather than legal perspective (Blumberg, 1985). Expectations superintendents establish for school board members are usually based on an intricate mix of ethical, moral, social, and political standards (Kowalski, 1999).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of the relationship between the school board and the superintendent. It is difficult in present times to provide effective leadership and

continuity of programming. This situation can be further exacerbated by a contentious relationship between the board and the superintendent. The following questions guided this study to help understand the full extent of the relationship between the school board and superintendent.

Research Questions

1. In what way does the relationship between the school board and superintendent impact the school climate and culture?
2. What are indicators of a strong working relationship between the school board and superintendent?
3. How does is this relationship related to a superintendent's longevity?

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is that it could be used to establish guidance and protocol for the future of school boards and superintendents. By addressing the identified research questions, the objective is to clearly identify a relationship that will contribute to school districts that have a solid working relationship between the two constituents. This study hopes to identify the characteristics of a functional, productive relationship and the results of that relationship. By identifying these positive characteristics, the study further hopes to clarify what type of climate would be exhibited in a successful school. Finally, the study will attempt to identify the characteristics that would foster a long, healthy relationship between a school superintendent and a school board.

Limitations

The ability of school boards and superintendents to exhibit control over their local education system depends on research that identifies the characteristics of a successful relationship and links it to characteristics of successful schools. Limitations of this study may

become evident in the survey process. The length of the survey may deter the sample population from completing and returning the survey. The time of year may also impact the sampling response. Election time, introduction of a new superintendent, and the end of the school year will all have to be considered when collecting data. Great attention will be given to the development of the survey instrument that will be used in this study. The validity of this research is limited to the reliability of the design of the survey. It is also limited to the integrity of the respondents and to their understanding of the questions. This doctoral candidate has an extensive background in the New Jersey educational system as both a teacher and an administrator. To date, this candidate has not served as a superintendent or school board member, which may impact the analysis and understanding of this study, and could, in turn, result in researcher bias in the study's findings.

Summary

School districts are complicated organizations that are unique in their functions. School boards and superintendents are a large part of the external structure, creating a framework for the culture and climate of the school district. When the relationship between the two stakeholders is strained, programs often fail, morale is weakened, and mistrust builds; these characteristics present major obstacles to establishing long-term goals and achieving the intended outcomes (Norton, Webb, Dulgosh, & Syboutts, 1996). This study examines the relationship between these two entities and identifies the extent of the relationship. The significance of this study is that it may be used to establish direction and protocol for the future of school board members and superintendents. By addressing the identified research questions, the objective is to clearly identify a relationship that will contribute to successful school districts and to create a solid working relationship between the two constituents. This study hopes to identify the characteristics of a functional, productive relationship and the results of that relationship. By

identifying these positive characteristics, the study further hopes to clarify what type of climate would be exhibited in a successful school. Finally, the study will attempt to identify characteristics of a relationship that would foster a long, healthy relationship between a school superintendent and a school board.

The characteristics of a strong relationship have been identified by McCurdy (1992) and have been listed in Table 1 in this study. Characteristics that have been noted are open communication, a trusting relationship, sharing of information, avoiding surprises, a board that is informed and finally, clearly identified role expectations.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter offers a review of the literature that examined the strategies employed to develop a successful relationship between school board members and the school superintendent. Gee (2005) noted that today's leaders know the focus is not on control and top-down management, but on shared power and new skills and abilities. The characteristics of an effective school board are discussed. The need for an effective partnership between these two stakeholders is highlighted and the characteristics of a successful and effective superintendent are explored.

The role of the relationship between the school board and the school superintendent has been examined in a multitude of ways in academic literature. The importance of this relationship cannot be overstated. Reeves (2006) postulates that a superintendent's ability to work with the school board is critical to a superintendent's success. There are many embedded issues in superintendent/school board relations, and most people who are knowledgeable on the subject place the relationship or understanding of their individual roles as being among the most crucial issues (Sharp, 2003).

Eadie (2003) states that the role of the two stakeholders is high-impact governing. This relationship requires critical decision-making that will lead to the school's vision, fundamental purpose, operational priorities, and how well the institution performs educationally and financially. Escalante (2002) identified that a working superintendent/board relationship is not defined by a simple checklist of 'do's' and 'don'ts'. The relationship is far too complex and faces enormous obstacles.

Because most board members neither complete a course of study in school administration nor share the socialization experience of administrators, their perceptions of superintendent behaviors are likely to be formed by personal convictions. The board members' mental images of

what superintendents should do may not necessarily be consistent with the ideal role as described in textbooks (Kowalski, 1999). Dawson and Quinn (2004) note that school board members are so internally conflicted, so absorbed in the intricacies of operational details, and so politically involved that the superintendent is seen more as a distraction than as a leader of change.

Rapid turnover in the superintendency is often attributed to poor relationships between a superintendent and his or her school board members (Weller, Brown, & Flynn, 1991). Critical reform efforts, such as a collaborative vision and long-range planning, are made more difficult by political battles and frequent changes in the superintendent. Poor relationships diminish the effectiveness of both superintendents and school boards (Danzberger, 1992).

Building and nurturing a board member team focused on moving the district forward effectively and efficiently must be the centerpiece of the superintendent's daily work (Townsend, 2007). Research literature focused on district leadership indicates that the relationship between the superintendent and the board of education has a significant impact on the quality of a district's educational program (Peterson & Fusarelli, 2001). Both board members and administrators are under pressure from the public to provide quick fixes for educational problems, which can cause stress (Delisio, 2006). Examining the growth of this relationship and the history of the school board and superintendent may help develop effective schools.

Although aspiring superintendents typically learn many strategies and leadership skills through daily operations of schools, rarely do they learn how to work with school board members (Townsend, 2007). Traditionally, the superintendent's role has been characterized as an implementer of policies set by the board of education (Konnert & Augenstein, 1995).

In general, new superintendents find they don't quite know how to prioritize their work and ensure that board members actually become an important part of their work. It is not uncommon for new superintendents to complain that they cannot get their work done because

their board members and related board meeting tasks take up too much of their time (Carver, 2000). Unfortunately, Carver (2000) has highlighted a major obstacle in the development of a strong working relationship between the two stakeholders. He notes that working with school board members can be harmful to one's health, as the longevity of superintendents may show. Carver states that boards are identified as being "the least disciplined, least rational, and the most disorganized elements in any school system." (Carver, 2000)

Veteran superintendents remind newly appointed superintendents that the board is their work, and that only an effective board-superintendent governance team can move the district forward to meet district goals (Townsend, 2007). Reeves (2006) states that the key to a successful relationship is the development of a good trusting relationship from the beginning.

Historically, the school board was established to act in the public interest rather than the selective interests of individuals or groups. They were intended to govern rationally rather than politically. Policy is the domain of the school board and implementation is the domain of expert administrators (Zeigler, Jennings, & Peak, 1974). The policies established by a school district are the foundation of the governing role of the school board and sets the parameters in which school boards work.

Since the early 1980s, educational policy has increasingly been focused on improving student performance. School governance in general, and school boards in particular, have often been viewed as either the means of implementing needed reforms or as roadblocks to said reforms (Feuerstein, 2009; Boyd, 2003).

Moody's (2007) research found that the first true legislation to recognize the school district and the school committee (school board) was enacted in Massachusetts in 1789, which was the same year that the United States Constitution was ratified. Following this legislation in 1789, most towns appointed school committees to organize, administer, and supervise schools.

Goodman and Zimmerman (2000) state that the current makeup of school governance – which uses local elections of school board members and the hiring of a school superintendent – is unique to America.

School Boards

Smoley (1999) states that the election or appointment of school boards is the best representation of community control in a democratic society. As elected officials, school board members represent the educational values and priorities of the members of the community. Mayer (2011) contends that joining a school board the community considers you a trustee or someone who will work to ensure the best possible education for every child in the district.

Houston and Eadie (2002) identify the school board as the “boss” of the superintendent. Yet the superintendent is the predominant partner in the relationship, he/she should be providing effective strategic and policy leadership to the board. The superintendent’s ability to serve as a board advisor should build a strong, coequal partner with the board (Houston & Eadie, 2002). School boards provide a forum for community members to be heard, key issues to be debated, and public votes to take place. In principle, school boards provide stewardship and direction for public education in the community (Goodman & Zimmermann, 2000).

In the 1999 publication, *Governing Public Schools: New Times, New Requirements*, Smoley questions the ability of school boards to be effective (1999). Smoley (1999) states that school board members may confuse their duties due to a divisive or fractured decision-making process or a lack of understanding of their role in relation to the superintendent (Smoley, 1999). Petersen & Fusarelli (2001) have suggested that school board members may know little about the underlying complex decisions that they will be required to address at each board meeting.

Mayer (2011) identifies 28 characteristics of ineffective school board members. He groups them into four categories: poor district teamwork, poor board teamwork, weak public

relations, and personal style. When demonstrating poor district teamwork, a school board member may humiliate a district employee in public, attack an administrator in print, or ask for complaints from teachers or staff. Poor board teamwork may be demonstrated when one board member disrespects another board member, builds hidden agendas, does not compromise, or comes unprepared to board meetings.

Poor public relations may be the result of arguing with a hostile speaker, developing a confidential relationship with a reporter, or signing a petition (Mayer, 2011). Lastly, personal style or decisions that may stand in the way of a school board members' effectiveness may be demonstrated by the inappropriate use of the district's credit card, accepting gifts, taking political stands, or by radiating negative energy (Mayer, 2011).

Townsend et al. (2007) identifies board members that do not accept the role of policymaker and community representative as a "rebel board member." The rebel board member demonstrates no respect for the rights of staff and fellow board members. This behavior upsets the dynamics of the group and requires the superintendent to act as a referee. Townsend et al. (2007) states that the rebel plays to the public's attention, engaging in gossip, rumors, and innuendos. This behavior creates an environment that is counterproductive to school districts.

Smoley (1999) identifies three reasons why school boards fail: conflict and misunderstanding between the board, superintendent, and the community; confusion or misunderstanding of a board members' role; and repeated errors.

The National School Board Foundation (NSBF) and The National School Boards Association (NSBA) identify the school board's primary functional goal as improving students' academic achievement (Speer, 1998). Superintendents and school boards must work together to improve schools and students' academic performance (Fusarelli, 2006).

In a study conducted by Henderson, Henry, Saks, and Wright (2001), it was reported that a board and superintendent must work together as a leadership team for the district, modeling to the staff and community a shared commitment to continuous academic improvement. Townsend et al. (2007) state that in order to avoid conflict and have the team work effectively, there must be an understanding of policies, legal and ethical responsibilities, and respect for confidentiality. Without this understanding, extreme conflict may develop.

Mayer (2011) reinforces the importance of the school board and superintendent's role by stating that it is impossible to talk about the one without the other. It is also important to note that the school board chooses, directs, and evaluates the superintendent (Smoley, 1999). The school board is a governing body that has the responsibility of creating vision and direction, setting policy, providing resources, and monitoring the results of student achievement initiatives for its district, with the superintendent's expertise (Henderson, Henry, Saks, & Wright, 2001).

Mayer (2011) states that effective school boards require effective school board members. The National School Boards Association states counts 14,890 school boards in the United States, which are made up of 95,000 school board members (Mayer, 2011). Townsend et al. (2007) state that a school board, as a whole, must look at itself critically, examine its own performance, model responsibility, and hold itself accountable for its actions.

Characteristics of an Effective School Board

Smoley (1999) states that decision-making is the core of a school board member's responsibility. With this power comes the responsibility of making the best decisions possible for the district. Houston and Eadie (2007) identify an effective board as one that takes ownership of its governing work and has a close and productive relationship with the school superintendent.

In 1993, Smoley (1999) completed the School Board Effectiveness Project. From that project, he identified characteristics of effective school boards. These characteristics included

making rational decisions by using data and full discussion. Board members should work as a cohesive group and exercise their authority in moderation, standing firm when necessary. Board members should know their community and follow existing procedures. Smoley (1999) stated that they should work towards improvement and their actions should match the district's short- and long-term plans.

The Center for Public Education (2011) clearly identifies the characteristics of an effective school board. These characteristics are demonstrated by commitment to a vision of high expectations for student achievement and quality instruction. School boards should show clear goals toward that vision for all stakeholders, including the community.

Smoley (1999) identifies the school board as the bridge between the community and its school. An effective school board has strongly held beliefs about what is possible for students and their ability to learn and of the system and its ability to teach all children at the highest levels. A demonstration of accountability and spending less time on operational issues and more time focused on policies to improve student achievement give the local community confidence in a school board (Smoley, 1999). Developing a collaborative relationship with staff and the community and establishing a strong communication structure to inform and engage both internal and external stakeholders in setting and achieving district goals are indicative of a school board that is effective (Mayer, 2011).

The Center for Public Education (2011) also identifies the effective use of data by a school board as a sign of informed decision-making. School boards that analyze and use data – even when the information is not supportive of current practices – to drive continuous improvement are seen as savvy. The alignment and efficient use of resources (such as professional development) to meet district goals demonstrates a board's ability to be effective.

Smoley (1999) identifies the need for a school board to balance the role of authority and the role of supporting the superintendent. Leading as a united team with the superintendent, each from their respective roles, with strong collaboration and mutual trust, demonstrates to the community how an effective board balances the identified roles. The Center for Public Education (2011) states that effective school boards take part in team development and training, sometimes with their superintendents, to build shared knowledge, values, and commitments to their improvement efforts.

Smoley (1999) identifies a school board's authority as being delineated and executed through agenda setting, planning, and decision-making. This use of authority is a defining characteristic of an effective school board. With these delineations in place, the superintendent will try to lead the board in the right direction. This leadership can cause stress on their partnership, this can negatively affect morale, which weakens their effectiveness and possible lead to failure (Thomas, 2001). Glass (2001) finds that the superintendent is thought to be the educational professional and that his/her recommendations to the board are made with the best interest of the district in mind. When the board is identified as ineffective, Houston and Eadie (2002) identify the superintendent as the board's scapegoat for their lack of effectiveness.

Superintendent of Schools

Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, and Ellerson (2010) note that in America, public education is constantly changing and evolving. They associate changes in requirements that began in the early 1980s as well as the No Child Left Behind policy in 2002 as major contributing factors to the educational framework and to the superintendent's job description.

Moody (2007) identified the first superintendent as being appointed in 1873 in Buffalo, New York. This person was known to receive a salary. In 1839, cities in Kansas were employing superintendents that received salaries (Norton, Webb, Dlugosh, & Sybouts, 1996).

In a study conducted by Spring (1994), the role of the superintendent was found to be important in the evolution of the hierarchical education organization. The primary reason for creating the position was to have a person working full-time at supervising classroom instruction and assuring uniformity in the curriculum. The superintendent's role was the key in communicating the elements of the common curriculum and in providing the supervision to ensure its implementation (Spring, 1994).

Traditionally, the superintendent's role has been characterized as an implementer of policies set by the board of education (Konnert & Augenstein, 1995) The superintendent of a school district sets the direction and tone while responding to the often competing demands of the board of trustees, administrators, teachers, parents, students, and the community (Spring, 1994).

The local superintendent's position developed between 1837 and 1950. The majority of major cities named a school superintendent to manage their schools by the late 1800s (Andero, 2000). Superintendents were identified to provide staff development, teacher supervision and authority over the school's principals (Kowalski, 2005). Unfortunately, this position was noted to cause disagreement and turmoil (Moody, 2007). The earliest relationships between the superintendents and school boards has been identified as easily broken and the foundation of that relationship has been a factor in the quality and efficacy of the superintendent's time in the position (Moody, 2007).

Kowalski (2013) quotes historical reforming figures Joseph Mayer Rice (1893) as stating that the importance of the position of district superintendent cannot be overstated, Charles Thwing (1898) as stating that the district superintendent renders a service far greater than any other citizen, and Andrew Draper (1895) as asking the school boards to give superintendents the power to hire staff and manage finances.

Kowalski et al. (2010) state that the school superintendent's position is an increasingly diverse one. The superintendent is responsible for student progress and for student achievement. This responsibility takes place while trying to balance the diversification of their students and staff. There is also an explosion of technology and digital demands; increasing expectations and involvement from the federal government, the media, and board members; and community relations. These newly identified requirements placed on a school district has shifted from changes created within a district and individual schools to changes mandated by state departments of education (Wills & Peterson, 1992).

Bjork (2005) identified the teacher-scholar role as one of implementing state curriculum and supervising teachers. This involved improving learning and teaching by working closely with school administrators and teachers. Glass et al. (2000) stated in their ASSA report that school boards see the role of educational leader as one of the superintendent's primary jobs. Kowalski and Bjork (2004) state that new assessment requirements, new programs, and changes in curriculum priorities have changed the role of the superintendent as educational leader. With a greater focus on curriculum and instruction, long-term planning, collaborative decision-making and an increase in demand for student achievement, the role of the superintendent has changed (Short & Scribner, 2000).

Kowalski et al. (2010) further define the superintendent's chief administrator role as being that of a business manager. The authors (2010) state that this identified role became prevalent after 1910 and remains a focus of school boards' expectations for superintendents. Glass et al. (2000) identify the managerial leader role as the primary role assigned by board members.

The expectation that a superintendent would serve as a negotiator or statesman became prevalent in the 1930s when funds were scarce and superintendents needed to advocate for those

scarce funds (Bjork & Kowalski, 2005). Glass et al. (2000) state that the role of negotiator is in demand today, as community-based interest groups vie for board members' allegiance and influence.

Bjork and Kowalski (2005) note that a superintendent who is effective at communicating with a wide range of stakeholders can provide leadership in learning outcomes, create a culture of improving schools, and use current data to solve problems, making him or her an ideal candidate for any school board. These characteristics form the foundation for a strong relationship between a school board and a school superintendent.

According to Carlson (2010), the concept of equal treatment can be an especially difficult issue for new superintendents, as they tend to over-communicate with the board president and under communicate with the other members. The appearance of an alliance between the superintendent and school board president often contributes to the superintendent's perceived lack of trustworthiness in the eyes of the school board. School board members have doubts about the accuracy of the information they receive from administrators (Kowalski, 1999).

Superintendents who are seen as disconnected and condescending when dealing with school board members tend to develop a weak relationship with the board (Kowalski, 1999). Other problems attributed to superintendents include failure to maintain confidentiality, failure to lead and manage, lack of accessibility, failure to communicate and failure to comply with ethical and moral standards (Kowalski, 1999). Reeves (2006) note that learning about board relationships is critical to a superintendent's success.

Eadie (2003) states that it is the superintendent's responsibility to empower the board; without empowering the board, the superintendent is wasting a valuable resource. A superintendent that does not use every opportunity to develop feelings of ownership in board members is further limiting his or her resources.

Characteristics of an Effective Superintendent

Houston and Eadie (2002) state that a superintendent must bring the “right attitude” when he or she approaches work with the school board. Superintendents must also have in-depth knowledge and skills in order to function in the leadership role of governance and make governance one of the highest priorities. Townsend et al. (2007) note that a strong governance team is critical to student outcomes and district progress. Reeves (2006) states that the superintendent is responsible for getting the board to work together and to work effectively.

Houston and Eadie (2002) state that in order to be effective, superintendents should treat their school board as a valuable asset to be used in leading their districts- not as a detriment that needs to be managed and controlled. Superintendents must acknowledge the social, fiscal and educational challenges facing school districts. These challenges increase the risk of conflict between the board and superintendent, meaning the relationship between the two stakeholders can promote effective school governance than any other factor (Kimball, 2005).

Townsend et al. (2007) state that superintendents must work to create a partnership with board members. This partnership should be forged by the superintendent’s respect for individual board members’ opinions and a strong communication system that shares individual interests and goals for the district. Eadie (2003) states that a strong partnership should start with the acknowledgement that an effective superintendent is a board’s highest priority. Once a board is given true ownership of district responsibilities, a sense of commitment will develop that will survive turbulent times and cement the partnership between the two constituents.

Kowalski et al. (2010) study found that superintendents identify themselves as having significant influence on a school board. They also found that to be effective with the school board, superintendents must focus on their ability to communicate. Superintendents should determine how that communication is being interpreted and how that communication is affecting

their relationships. Eadie (2003) states that a superintendent should build communication by breaking down “interpersonal barriers” and by securing an emotional bond that binds the board and superintendent. Strong communication by the superintendent provides him/her the opportunity to allow the board “ego-satisfying” involvement. Townsend et al. (2007) postulate that through communication, a superintendent will be able to glean a board member’s strengths, motivations, knowledge, and skills.

Townsend et al. (2007) notes that a superintendent should prepare every board member for the role and responsibilities that will be bestowed upon him or her. This preparation will create a confident and effective board member.

Summary

While many elements contribute to an effective relationship between the school board and school superintendent, the reason most often cited for poor relationships is the problem of role confusion (Price, 2001). McCurdy (1992) cites role conflict as a factor in superintendent turnover. Cases of fragmented school boards and revolving door superintendents abound, but we also see engaging examples of school board-superintendent relationships that work, surviving dynamic changes in the school districts and communities in which they function and still managing to keep the commitment intact even though the honeymoon may be over (Steinberger, 1994).

A report by the New England School Development Council (NESDC) calls for school boards and superintendents to better define their roles and then work together towards common goals. Carter (2000) states that role confusion or ambiguity may be a result of a district’s culture, if that culture accepts a lack of definition of these roles. School boards, for example, should focus more on setting policy and leave management issues – such as contracts, personnel matters, and transportation – to superintendents (Delisio, 2006).

One of the best ways for a superintendent to establish and maintain a relationship with a school board is through ongoing and frequent communication. Board members appreciate being kept in the loop, and it is always better to hear the information from the superintendent than to hear it from someone in the community (Carlson, 2010).

The need for communication goes both ways; Kowalski (2013) notes that board members should divulge information to the superintendent so that the administrator can take the appropriate action. When board members interfere with the superintendent's ability to make informed decisions, conflict is sure to result. Kowalski (2013) goes on to state that board members are obligated to represent the school community objectively and rationally rather than politically; i.e., they are not there to serve one person's or group's agenda.

Kowalski (1995) states that most superintendents are dismissed due to complex political issues such as unrealistic expectations for radical institutional change and political changes relative to the composition of the school board. Examining the status of board-superintendent relationships only once a year may be insufficient; checkups every three or four months are more advisable (Castallo, 1992). Kowalski (2013) notes that one school board elections may jeopardize a superintendent's job security. To increase job security, Eadie (2007) reinforces the importance of a relationship that is open, interactive, and collaborative.

Moody (2007) notes that board members and school superintendents must acknowledge that team building and collaborative effort are ongoing processes that require continuous commitment from both stakeholders. This commitment will be reflected in a relationship that will be rewarded by improvement in student learning and superintendent longevity. McCurdy (1992) provides a list of factors that are involved in building and maintaining strong board-superintendent relationships. These are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Factors That Build and Maintain Strong Board-Superintendent Relationships

<u>Factor</u>	<u>Behaviors That Build and Maintain Board-Superintendent Relationships</u>
Open Communication	No secrets. The superintendent and board need to share information with each other immediately. The superintendent or board cannot control the information for manipulative reasons. Keeping no secrets creates an environment of honest sharing.
Trust	If a trust relationship exists, school boards are more willing to permit wide discretionary powers for the superintendent. This helps avoid superintendents creating their own feelings of insecurity, exposing themselves to more scrutiny, and getting second-guessed by boards, and eliminates a climate of suspicion.
Information as a Source of Power	Both the board and the superintendent have access to vital information, often times separately. Both parties must refrain from choosing to withhold or shape the information as power. This becomes a cornerstone of mutual trust.
Avoid Surprises	Surprises should not happen if both parties communicate. Occasional mistakes will occur, however. The bigger concern should be the reasons behind the surprise and the frequency of those incidents. The most critical item is to avoid surprises at board meetings.
Keeping Boards Informed	How can superintendents practically keep boards informed? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Ask the board if they are getting the information in the form and manner they want. 2) Ask the board how they want to communicate with the superintendent. Think about the role of the board president in conveying the information. 3) Communicate to all board members the same information so there is no suspicion of favoritism or undue influence. 4) Boards and superintendents should agree on how board members request information.
The Impact of Roles	If communication is shared as a basis for true collaboration, roles become less important. It is suggested that role expectations be in writing in board policies and even in the superintendent's contract at the time of hiring. Each year during the superintendent's evaluation, the roles should be reviewed.
Source: McCurdy, 1992, p. 93-101	

Chapter 3

Methodology

Chapter 2 examined the research literature that defines and investigates the effectiveness of a school board and the superintendent. The literature review also identified areas that both the board and superintendent can examine in order to strengthen their relationship and effectiveness as a governing body. This chapter provides information on methodology, participants and setting, instrumentation, reliability and validity, data collection and analysis, and ethical considerations.

The literature review identified skills that are important to the foundation of the relationship between the two stakeholders (Kliensmith, 2005). The intent of this research was to acquire data from both school board members and superintendents in order to influence future relationships in a positive manner. The following questions guided this study in an attempt to understand the influence of the relationship between the school board and superintendent.

Research Questions

1. In what way does the relationship between the school board and superintendent impact the school climate and culture?
2. What are indicators of a strong working relationship between the school board and superintendent?
3. How does this relationship relate to a superintendent's longevity?

Research Design

This study implemented survey methodology to provide descriptive statistics. Salkind (2007) explains that, "descriptive statistics are used to organize and describe the characteristics of a collection of data" (p. 8). The survey instrument was developed by the researcher because the current literature reviewed demonstrated that no instrument existed that would capture the

data under consideration for this study. Johnson and Christensen (2012) identify surveys or questionnaires as a, “self-report-data-collection instrument that each research participant fills out as part of a research study” (p. 162). They continue to identify surveys as a method for gathering information concerning research participant’s thoughts, feelings, attitudes, beliefs, values, perceptions, personalities, and behavioral intentions. Johnson and Christensen (2012) state that surveys are a versatile tool available to researchers. Researchers are able to design a survey’s content and organization to meet the needs of the research objective. This quantitative survey used techniques as defined by Johnson and Christensen (2012). When developing the questions to be included in the survey, Johnson and Christensen (2012) prioritize the following:

Principle 1. Ensure that the survey questions match research objectives.

Principle 2. Understand research participants.

Principle 3. Use familiar and natural language.

Principle 4. Write items that are clear, precise, and relatively short.

Principle 5. Do not use leading questions.

Principle 6. Avoid questions that address multiple issues.

Principle 7. Avoid using double negatives.

Principle 8. Choose open-ended or closed-ended questions.

Principle 9. Use mutually exclusive and exhaustive response categories for closed-ended questions.

Principle 10. Determine response categories.

Principle 11. Develop a survey that is easy for the participant to use.

These principles were used to develop the 20 close-ended survey questions that would be presented to stakeholders, i.e., the superintendents and school board members in New Jersey School Districts.

The data collected for the study came from a selected sample of school board members and superintendents in New Jersey. The goal of this quantitative study was to add to the current literature concerning the effectiveness of a well-developed relationship between the school board and school superintendent in school districts in New Jersey. The results from this study may serve as a tool for aspiring and currently serving school board members and school superintendents, emphasizing the importance of effective relationships between the major stakeholders of a school district.

Description of Participants

Superintendent participants of this study were current, recently retired, or current interim superintendents in school districts in New Jersey. Superintendents in multiple counties in New Jersey received surveys via SurveyMonkey email. Superintendents in New Jersey serve in districts that are identified as either a kindergarten through eighth grade district or a kindergarten through twelfth grade district. The New Jersey Department of Education stated that there were 590 operating school districts within the State during the 2012-2013 school year.

The school board members who participated in the survey process were identified as current school board members serving in New Jersey School Districts. Each board consists of nine members. Board member surveys were sent via SurveyMonkey email. (See Appendix A.)

Each superintendent and school board member was sent a letter explaining the nature of the proposed study and a copy of the survey instrument. (See Appendix B.) Additionally, a web-based version of the survey was provided to each of the identified participants. The completed surveys served as the basis of this study and the data was statistically analyzed to produce data for further research.

As reported by the New Jersey Department of Education, “more than 1.3 million students in grades pre-K through 12 attend public school each day. Educating our young people is the

responsibility of more than 100,000 employees in 590 school districts.” (p. 5) There are 21 counties in New Jersey, each varying in the number of high schools, middle schools, and elementary schools it has.

Survey

Survey questions were developed to gather information from both the school superintendents and school board members. The questions were developed to create an instrument that does not promote a bias towards any specific agenda. The survey questions were developed to be closed-ended, multiple-choice questions. Johnson and Christensen (2012) state that surveys (questionnaires) are used to get participants to respond to standardized items, to confirm research with specific variables, and to test hypotheses.

A fully anchored scale was used to analyze participants’ responses. Johnson and Christensen (2012) identify a fully anchored scale as having “all points anchored with descriptors” (p. 172). The survey that participants responded to had the following anchors: 1 strongly agree, 2 agree, 3 disagree, and 4 strongly disagree. The questions measured knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors about school board functions and the school board’s relationship with the school superintendent.

The advantages to using survey questions are numerous. Surveys are easy to code, easy to enter into a database, easy to present, provide quick turnaround and enhanced reliability, incur less research bias, and provide a high degree of anonymity.

The disadvantages to using survey questions must also be noted. The disadvantages of surveys are that developing questions and response categories for them is harder, they may force invalid responses, they have less depth and substance, and respondents are not able to explain, qualify, or clarify answers.

Before developing the survey protocol, the focus was on the clearly identified goals and objectives of the survey. Multiple resources were consulted during survey development. A clearly defined participant population allowed for specificity of the questions. Being aware of the length of the protocol was important to ensure the completion and the return of the surveys from the participants.

Patton (2001) states that quantitative studies often use purposeful or criterion-based sampling; i.e., a sample that has the characteristics relevant to the research questions. Quantitative research typically starts with a specific group or type of individual (Patton, 2001). Creswell (2007) suggests that researchers utilize one of the various types of sampling strategies, such as criterion-based sampling or critical case sampling, in order to obtain qualified candidates. For this quantitative research, criterion-based sampling was employed. The criteria for participating in the survey were certification as a school administrator or a school board member.

Data Analysis

Bernhardt (2004) states that once data is organized, elementary analysis begins to answer preliminary questions about the respondents using descriptive statistics; i.e., mean, median, mode (central tendencies), and standard deviation. Table 2 defines the descriptive data that was used to analyze this research data.

Table 2

Bernhardt's Definition of Descriptive Data Terms

Maximum	A maximum is the highest score.
Minimum	A minimum is the lowest score.
Mean	A mean is the average score in a set of scores. One calculates the mean, or average, by summing all the scores and dividing by the total number of scores.
Median	A median is the score that splits a distribution in half: 50% of the scores fall above and 50% fall below the median.
Mode	The mode is the score that occurs most frequently in a scoring distribution.
Standard Deviation	The standard deviation is a measure of variability in a set of scores. The standard deviation indicates how far away scores are from the mean.
Source: Bernhardt, 2004, p. 120-122.	

Procedures

The names and email addresses of school board members and superintendents were obtained from the official list of the New Jersey Department of Education and individual New Jersey School District websites. Surveys were sent anonymously to the two stakeholders via SurveyMonkey email. Surveys were returned to SurveyMonkey, which is an online, cloud-based company, founded in 1999 by Ryan Finley. (See Appendix A.)

All data were entered into a computer and processed anonymously. Data were reported in aggregate form. This process allowed the research to be reported in a way such that the individual participants would not be identified.

Informed Consent

Use of the required St. Peter's informed consent paperwork was provided to each participant as required by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). This was consolidated with the Generic Sample Consent form. (Appendix F)

The following information was included on the consent form:

- Purpose of the research along with a description of the procedures to be followed and the length of time it will take the participants to complete the study
- A description of any physical or psychological risks or discomforts the participants might encounter
- A description of any alternate procedure or treatment that might be advantageous to the participants
- Names of the people that the participants can contact with questions about the study or the research participants' rights
- A statement of the amount and schedule of payment if the participants are to be paid for participation (Johnson & Christensen, 2010).

In order to ensure the participants' confidentiality, a letter introducing the study and encouraging participation was sent to each participant. The following was included in the letter:

- A statement of the extent to which the results would be kept confidential
- A statement indicating that participation was voluntary and that the participants could withdraw and refuse to participate at any time with no penalty (Johnson & Christensen, 2010).

Chapter 4

RESULTS

This chapter presents the data from a quantitative methods study intended to identify the role of the relationship between the school board members and the school superintendent. The relationship is defined by how well they work together, communicate with each other, and develop common goals. Various aspects of this relationship are reviewed in this chapter, including how the relationship impacts the overall climate and culture of a school district, the impact the relationship has on the working relationship of the two stakeholders, and how this relationship impacts the longevity of the superintendent in his or her position as the school leader.

This chapter presents the school districts by the New Jersey counties that were surveyed. There are 21 counties in the state of New Jersey and 591 operating school districts. The New Jersey Department of Education noted that in 2013-2014, there were 2,505 schools in the state of New Jersey. Response rates from surveys returned by school board members ($n = 35$) and school superintendents ($n = 36$) were documented and will be discussed in this chapter. This chapter will also present the results determined by the analysis of the data and comparison of survey information. Data will be presented from the returned surveys of both the school board members and school superintendents. Data will be represented by range of scores, minimum score, maximum score, median, mean, and standard deviation. The data will be divided into three sections to correspond with each research question. The frequency of responses for each question was also documented and will be discussed. Question analysis will be included in the data discussion.

Response Rate

The participants in this study were selected from a targeted population of New Jersey school superintendents and school board members in eight counties including Atlantic County, Bergen County, Essex County, Hudson County, Ocean County, Passaic County, Somerset County, and Sussex County. Surveys were sent to 90 Superintendents via SurveyMonkey to their district email account. Superintendents returned (n = 36) completed surveys via SurveyMonkey. This is a response rate of 38 %.

Surveys were also sent to New Jersey school board members via SurveyMonkey to their district email accounts. A total of 146 surveys were sent to 31 school district school board members, averaging 4.7 per district. School board members returned (n = 35) completed surveys via SurveyMonkey. This is a response rate of 24.6%.

When researching the response rate of online surveys, the website Fluidsurveys.com (2014) found that “When surveying the general public, a response rate of 24.8% looks great when compared to the telephone surveying standard of around 8-12%.” Surveys that are distributed within an organization, such as an individual school building or district, tend to have a higher rate of response than surveys that are sent to the general population. It has been noted that a 30-40% response rate from a survey that is collected from a common population, such as a school building, is acceptable and a response rate of 10-15% from an external survey is considered an acceptable rate.

Research Findings

The following tables use descriptive statistics to identify the relationship between the school board members’ and superintendents’ responses to each of the twenty questions. Each question’s response had a range in scores from 1 indicating strongly disagree to 4 indicating strongly agree. Each question’s data was statistically calculated to identify minimum score; this

score identified the lowest rating by each stakeholder. A maximum score was calculated to indicate the highest rating given by each stakeholder. Also calculated were the median, mean, and standard deviation, which are presented in table format. The respondents were able to rate each question on a fully anchored rating scale. Respondents were to indicate strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), agree (3), strongly agree (4).

Research Question 1

In what way did the relationship between the school board and superintendent impact the school climate and culture?

Table 3 represents the information from the school board member respondents. Questions one, two, three, seven, ten, eleven, and thirteen address a district's climate and culture as it is impacted by the relationship between the school board members and school superintendents. Table 3 documents the minimum, maximum, median, mean, and standard deviation scores of the school board member respondents.

The term "school culture" generally refers to the beliefs, perceptions, relationships, attitudes, and written and unwritten rules that shape and influence every aspect of how a school functions. Hoy and Miskel (1996) describe school climate as a relatively enduring quality of the entire school that is experienced by participants, describes their collective perceptions of behavior, and affects their attitudes and behavior in the school. Ostroff and Rothausen's (1997) study demonstrated that the fit between people and organization influence both individual outcomes and organizational outcomes.

Question one addressed the involvement of both stakeholders in decisions that were made by the school board and superintendent that were important to the future of education in the district. School board members responded to question one with a minimum score of 3.00 (n = 3),

a maximum score of 4.00 (n = 30), a median score of 4.00, a mean score of 3.83, and a standard deviation of 0.37. (See Appendix C.)

When looking at the individual surveys (see Appendix C.), six school board members of n = 36 or 16.67% responded with a rating of (3) - agree with question one. The remaining respondents, 83.33% or 30 of n = 36 responded with a rating of (4) - strongly agree. This confirmed that the majority of school board members feel that they, along with the superintendent, are involved in decisions that are important to the future of education in their school districts. This would indicate that the school board members felt valued in the decision-making process. This would promote a positive climate in a district.

Question two asked if the school board and superintendent advocated the same actions, thereby presenting common values. School board members responded to question two with a minimum score of 2.00 (n = 1) and a maximum score of 4.00, (n = 8), a median score of 3.00, a mean score of 3.19, and a standard deviation of 0.46. Surveys indicate that 1 out of n = 36, or 2.78% responded with a rating of (2) disagree with this question, 27 of n = 36 or 75% responded with a rating of (3) agree, and 8 of n = 36 or 22.22% responded with a rating of (4) strongly agree. The majority, 35 of n = 36 respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the school board members and the superintendent advocate the same actions, thereby presenting common values. This affirmation of common values between the two stakeholders promotes a positive climate and culture in school districts.

Question three addressed organizational priorities by asking if priorities were clearly set by both the school board and the superintendent. School board members responded to question three with a minimum score of 2.00 (n = 3) and a maximum score of 3.00, (n = 17), a median score of 3.00, a mean score of 3.36, and a standard deviation of 0.63. Individual surveys showed that 3 out of n = 36 respondents, a percentage of 8.33, responded with a rating of (3) disagree

with question three. The remaining respondents responded as follows: 17 of n = 36, or 47.22% with (3) agree, and 16 of n = 36 or 44.44% with (4) strongly agree with question three. Question three states that the school board and the superintendent set clear organizational priorities. Both stakeholders responded positively to this question, indicating support for a positive relationship between the stakeholders.

Question seven asked if the board was involved in decisions that were important to the future of education in the district. School board members responded to question seven with a minimum score of 1.00 (n = 1) and a maximum score of 4.00, (n = 24), with a median score of 4.00, a mean score of 3.58, and a standard deviation of 0.68. Respondents to question seven were more diverse in their responses. One respondent out of n = 36 (2.78%) responded with a rating of (1) strongly disagree to this question. One respondent out of n = 36 (2.78%) responded with a rating of (2) disagree, 10 out of n = 36 (27.78%) with a rating of (3) agreed, and 24 out of n = 36 (66.67%) responded with a rating of (4) - strongly agree to question seven. This question identified the board's involvement in decisions that were important to the future of education in the district. Although there were two outliers that did not feel that school board members were involved in decisions that were important to the future of education in the district, the majority agreed with the importance of their involvement.

Question ten asked if the board appeared unaware of the impact its decisions would have on the school community. School board members responded to question ten with a minimum score of 1.00 (n = 7) and a maximum score of 4.00, a median score of 2.00, a mean score of 2.14, and a standard deviation of 0.75. Respondents to question ten were diverse in their answers. Seven of the respondents of n = 36, 19.44%, responded with a rating of (4) strongly disagree with this question, 18 of n = 36 or 50 %, responded with a rating of (2) disagree, and 10 of n = 36 respondents (27.78%) with a rating of (3) agree with this question. The remaining one

respondent (2.78%) responded with a rating of (4) strongly agree with question ten; i.e., at times, the board has appeared unaware of the impact its decisions will have on the school community. This response by the school board indicates that they majority (69.44%) are aware of their impact their decisions have on the school community.

Question eleven asked if the board conducted an explicit examination of its roles and responsibilities. School board members responded to question eleven with a minimum score of 1.00 (n = 1) and a maximum score of 4.00 (n = 6), a median score of 3.00, a mean score of 2.94, and a standard deviation of 0.66. In response to question eleven, “this board has conducted an explicit examination of its roles and responsibilities,” 23 of n = 36 (63.89%) responded with a rating of (3) agree with this question. Six of n = 36 (16.67%) responded with a rating of (4) strongly agree with this question, 2.78% or one of n = 36 responded with a rating of (1) strongly disagree, and six of n = 36 (16.67%) responded with a rating of (2) disagree. This school board response indicates that the majority of members (80.56%) feel that they examine their roles and responsibilities.

Lastly, question 13 asked if the board often acted independently of the superintendent’s recommendations. School board members responded to question 13 with a minimum score of 1.00 (n = 12) and a maximum score of 3.00 (n = 2), a median score of 2.00, a mean score of 1.72, and a standard deviation of 0.56. A total of 94.44% or 34 of n = 36 respondents responded with a score of (1) strongly disagree or (2) disagree with this question. The remaining two of n = 36 respondents (5.56%) responded with a rating of (3) agree. Disagreeing with the question, board members often act independently of the superintendent’s recommendation, supports a culture of commitment to each other. This commitment supports a positive climate and culture in the school community.

Table 3

School Board Members' Responses to Research Question 1:

In what way does the relationship between the school board and superintendent impact the school climate and culture? (Appendix C)

School Board Member Responses	Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. The board and superintendent are involved in decisions that are important to the future of education in the district.	3.00 n = 6	4.00 n = 30	4.00	3.83	0.37
2. Usually the board and superintendent advocate the same actions, presenting common values.	2.00 n = 1	4.00 n = 8	3.00	3.19	0.46
3. Clear organizational priorities are set by the board and the superintendent.	2.00 n = 3	4.00 n = 16	3.00	3.36	0.63
7. The board is involved in decisions that are important to the future of education in the district.	1.00 n = 1	4.00 n = 24	4.00	3.58	0.68
10. At times the board has appeared unaware of the impact its decisions will have on the school community.	1.00 n = 7	4.00 n = 1	2.00	2.14	0.75
11. This board has conducted an explicit examination of its roles and responsibilities.	1.00 n = 1	4.00 n = 6	3.00	2.94	0.66
13. The board often acts independently of the superintendent's recommendation.	1.00 n = 12	3.00 n = 2	2.00	1.72	0.56

Table 4 and Appendix C represent the information from the superintendent respondents. Questions one, two, three, seven, ten, eleven and thirteen address a district's climate and culture as it is impacted by the relationship between the school board members and school superintendents. Table 4 documents the minimum, maximum, median, mean, and standard deviation scores of the superintendent respondents.

School superintendents responded to question one with a minimum score of 3.00 (n = 4) and a maximum score of 4.00 (n = 31), a median score of 4.00, a mean score of 3.89, and a standard deviation of 0.32. Individual surveys indicated 100% agreement to this question, 4 out of n = 35 (11.43%) responded with a rating of (3) agree, and 31 out of n = 35 (88.57%) responded with a rating of (4) strongly agree. This clearly indicate that superintendents felt that school board members, with the superintendents, were involved in decisions that are important to the future of education in the school district. (See Appendix D.)

School superintendents responded to question two with a minimum score of 2.00 (n = 3) and a maximum score of 4.00 (n = 8), a median score of 3.00, a mean score of 3.14, and a standard deviation of 0.54. Three superintendents of n = 35, (8.57%), responded with a rating of (2) disagree with this question, 68.57% or 24 of n = 35 responded with a rating of (3) agree, and 22.86% or 8 of n = 35 responded with a rating of (4) strongly agree with this question. A large majority of superintendents, 91.43%, agree that the school board members and superintendents advocate for the same actions, presenting common values.

School superintendents responded to question three with a minimum score of 2.00 (n = 3) and a maximum score of 4.00 (n = 14), a median score of 3.00, a mean score of 3.31, and a standard deviation of 0.62. Respondents to this question responded as follows: 3 respondents out of n = 35 (8.57%) responded with a rating of (2) disagree, 18 out of n = 35 (51.43%) with a rating of (3) agree, and 14 out of n = 35 (40.00%) responded with a rating of (4) strongly agree. This response indicates a 91.43% agreement that school board members and superintendents have clear organizational priorities.

School superintendents responded to question seven with a minimum score of 1.00 (1) and a maximum score of 4.00 (22), a median score of 4.00, a mean score of 3.57, and a standard deviation of 0.65. Survey results recorded the following responses: there was one outlier (2.86%)

out of n = 35 that responded with a rating of (4) strongly disagree, 12 out of n = 35 (34.29%) responded with a rating of (3) agree, and 22 out of n = 35 (62.86%) responded with a rating of (4) strongly agree. Superintendents agreed that board members were involved in decisions that were important to the future of education in the school district 97.15% of the time.

School superintendents responded to question ten with a minimum score of 2.00 (n = 16) and a maximum score of 4.00 (n = 5), a median score of 3.00, a mean score of 2.69, and a standard deviation of 0.71. Superintendents responded with a rating of (2) disagree with this question at a rate of 45.71%, or 16 out of n = 35, which was the majority of the respondents. The remaining superintendents responded as follows: 14 out of n = 35 (40 %) with a rating of (3) agree and 5 out of n = 35 (14.29%) responded with a rating of (4) strongly agree. These results confirm that superintendents do not feel that the school board members were unaware of the impact their decisions would have on the school community.

School superintendents responded to question 11 with a minimum score of 1.00 (n = 2) and a maximum score of 4.00 (n = 7), a median score of 3.00, a mean score of 2.74, and a standard deviation of 0.85. This question resulted in a more diverse response. When looking at the individual surveys, 2 out of n = 35 (5.88%) responded with a rating of (1) strongly disagree, 12 respondents out of n = 35 (35.29%) responded with a rating of (2) disagree, 13 respondents out of n = 35 (38.24%) responded with a rating of (3) agree, and the last group of 7 respondents out of n = 35 (20.59%) responded with a rating of (4) strongly agree. The majority of superintendents (73.53%) indicated that the board examined its roles and responsibilities.

School superintendents responded to question 13 with a minimum score of 1.00 (n = 18) and a maximum score of 3.00 a median score of 1.00, a mean score of 1.57, and a standard deviation of 0.65. When responding to this question, 18 respondents out of n = 35 (51.43%) responded with a rating of (1) strongly disagree, 14 respondents out of n = 35 (40%) responded

with a rating of (2) disagree, 3 respondents out of n = 35(8.57%) responded with a rating of (3) agree. A large majority of superintendents (91.43%) disagreed that school board members acted independently of their recommendations.

Table 4

*Superintendents' Responses to Research Question 1:
In what way does the relationship between the school board and superintendent impact the school climate and culture? (Appendix E)*

Superintendent Responses	Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. The board and superintendent are involved in decisions that are important to the future of education in the district.	3.00 n = 4	4.00 n = 31	4.00	3.89	0.32
2. Usually the board and superintendent advocate the same actions, presenting common values.	2.00 n = 3	4.00 n = 8	3.00	3.14	0.54
3. Clear organizational priorities are set by the board and the superintendent.	2.00 n = 3	4.00 n = 14	3.00	3.31	0.62
7. The board is involved in decisions that are important to the future of education in the district.	1.00 n = 1	4.00 n = 22	4.00	3.57	0.65
10. At times the board has appeared unaware of the impact its decisions will have on the school community.	2.00 n = 16	4.00 n = 5	3.00	2.69	0.71
11. This board has conducted an explicit examination of its roles and responsibilities.	1.00 n = 2	4.00 n = 7	3.00	2.74	0.85
13. The board often acts independently of the superintendent's recommendation.	1.00 n = 18	3.00 n = 3	1.00	1.57	0.65

Table 5
Mean and Standard Deviation Comparison to Research Question 1

Question	School Board Members Mean Score	Superintendent Mean Score	Mean Comparison	School Board Members Standard Deviation	Superintendent Standard Deviation	Standard Deviation Comparison
1	3.83	3.89	0.06	.37	.32	0.05
2	3.19	3.14	0.05	.46	.54	0.08
3	3.36	3.31	0.05	.63	.62	0.01
7	3.58	3.57	0.01	.68	.65	0.01
10	2.14	2.69	0.55	.75	.71	0.04
11	2.94	2.74	0.2	.66	.85	0.19
13	1.72	1.57	0.15	.56	.65	0.09

Table 6
Comparison of Responses to Individual Questions for Research Number 1 (Appendix B & Appendix D)

Questions	School Board Strongly Disagree	Superintendent Strongly Disagree	School Board Disagree	Superintendent Disagree	School Board Agree	Super Agree	School Board Strongly Agree	Super Strongly Agree
1	0	0	0	0	6	4	30	31
2	0	0	1	3	27	24	8	8
3	0	0	3	0	17	18	16	14
7	1	1	1	0	10	12	24	22
10	7	0	18	16	10	14	1	5
11	1	2	6	12	23	13	6	7
13	12	18	22	14	2	3	0	0

Comparison of School Board Members' and Superintendents' Responses to Research Question 1-
Table 6 (*Appendix B & Appendix D*):

The data in Table 6 demonstrates a comparison of responses between the school board members and the superintendents for questions aligned to Research Question number 1 these are identified as survey questions 1, 2, 3, 7, 10, and 11.

Question one addressed the involvement of school board members and superintendents in decisions that were made that were important to the future of education in the district. Both groups of respondents strongly agreed that both the school board members and the superintendents were involved in the decisions that were important to the future of education in the school district. With both stakeholders in agreement, this promotes a strong climate in a school district by supporting ongoing communication and commitment to the decision-making process.

School board member and superintendent respondents were in agreement with question two. This question asked if the school board and superintendent advocated for the same actions, thus presenting common values. Eight school board members and eight superintendents strongly agreed with this question. The large majority of stakeholders, 27 out of $n = 36$ school board members and 24 out of $n = 35$ superintendents, agreed with question two. Of the school board members that responded, there was one outlier; this respondent disagreed with the idea that the two stakeholders advocated for the same actions. Three superintendents also disagreed with this question.

Question three had a majority of stakeholders in agreement or in strong agreement that priorities are set by both the school board members and superintendent. There were three school board members that disagreed with this question. When both stakeholders set common priorities, district goals are more likely to be implemented.

Respondents to question seven agreed or strongly agreed that the school board is involved in decisions that are important to the future of education in the district. One school board member strongly disagreed and one disagreed with this question. One superintendent strongly disagreed. This question specifically asked about school board members' involvement. This may have elicited a different response from school board members who felt disenfranchised.

When asked if school board members appeared to be unaware of the impact their decisions had on the school community, respondents were diverse in their opinions, which ranged from strongly disagreeing to strongly agreeing. Question ten had the following responses: seven school board members out of $n = 36$ strongly disagreed, whereas no superintendent strongly disagreed, 18 board members out of $n = 36$ disagreed, and 16 out of $n = 35$ superintendents disagreed. These respondents felt that the school board knew of the impact their decisions had on the school community. Ten out of $n = 36$ school board members and 14 out of $n = 35$ superintendents agreed that the school board was unaware of the impact its decisions had on the school community. School board members had one outlier and five superintendents strongly agreed that the school board was unaware of the impact their decisions had on the school community.

Question eleven also had a wide spread in responses. This question asked if the school board conducted an explicit examination of its roles and responsibilities. One school board member out of $n = 36$ and two superintendents out of $n = 35$ strongly disagreed with this question. Six school board members and twelve superintendents disagreed that the school board examined its roles and responsibilities. The majority of school board members agreed or strongly agreed that school board members examined their roles and responsibilities. Superintendents were split in their responses, 13 out of $n = 35$ agreed and seven out of $n = 35$ strongly agreed.

Overall, 14 superintendents disagreed and 20 agreed with question eleven. Seven school board members disagreed to 29 agreeing that they examined their roles and responsibilities.

Question 13 asked if the school board often acted independently of the superintendent's recommendations. The large majority (34 total) of school board members strongly disagreed (12) or disagreed (22) that school board members acted independently of the superintendent's recommendations. Two school board outliers agreed. In comparison, 32 superintendents strongly disagreed (18) or disagreed (14) with question 13. There were three outlier superintendents who agreed.

Research Question 2

What were the indicators of a strong working relationship between the school board and the superintendent?

Table 7 represents the information from the school board member respondents. Questions number 4, 5, 9, 12, 15, 16, and 17 explore the indicators of a strong working relationship between the school board members and school superintendents. Table 6 documents the minimum, maximum, median, mean, and standard deviation scores of the school board member respondents.

Question four asked if the relationship with the superintendent was built on trust. School board members responded to question four with a minimum score of 1.00 (n = 1), a maximum score of 4.00 (n = 20), a median score of 4.00, a mean score of 3.51, and a standard deviation score of 0.65. When looking at the individual surveys, 1 out of n = 35 (2.86%) responded with a rating of (1) strongly disagree, 14 out of n = 35 respondents (40%) responded with a rating of (3) agree, 20 out of n = 35 (57.14%) responded with a rating of (4) -strongly agree.

Question five asked if the superintendent effectively communicated with the board. School board members responded to question five with a minimum score of 1.00 (n = 1), a

maximum score of 4.00 (n = 15), a median score of 3.00, a mean score of 3.00, and a standard deviation of 0.67. School board member respondents were divided as to the superintendent's effective communication with the school board. One respondent out of n = 36 (2.78%) responded with a rating of (1) - strongly disagree with this question, one respondent out of n = 36 (2.78%) responded with a rating of (2) disagree, 19 respondents out of n = 36 (52.78%) responded with a rating of (3) agree, and 15 respondents out of n = 36 (41.67%) responded with a rating of (4) strongly agree.

Question nine asked if the values of the district were key factors in reaching a conclusion on a problem. School board members responded to question nine with a minimum score of 2.00 (n = 3), a maximum score of 4.00 (n = 12), a median score of 3.00, a mean score of 3.25, and a standard deviation of 0.60. No respondent strongly disagreed that the values of the district were key factors in reaching a conclusion on a problem. Three out of n = 36 (8.33%) responded with a rating of (2) disagree with this question. The remaining respondents, 21 out of n = 36 (58.33%) responded with a rating of (3) agree and 12 out of n = 36 (33.33%) responded with a rating of (4) strongly agree.

Question 12 asked if the superintendent rarely reports concerns of the school district to the board. School board members responded to question 12 with a minimum score of 1.00 (n = 21), a maximum score of 3.00 (n = 5), a median score of 1.00, a mean score of 1.56, and a standard deviation score of 0.72. The majority of school board respondents disagreed that the superintendent rarely reported concerns of the school to the board. The following survey responses were recorded for question 12: 21 respondents out of n = 36 (58.33%) responded with a rating of (1) strongly disagree, 10 respondents out of n = 36 (27.78%) responded with a rating of (2) disagree, and 5 respondents out of n = 36 (13.89%) responded with a rating of (3) agree.

Question 15 asked whether if a decision was made, all board members worked together to see that it was accepted and carried out. School board members responded to question 15 with a minimum score of 1.00 (n = 1), a maximum score of 4.00 (n = 10), a median score of 3.00, a median score of 1.00, and a standard deviation score of 0.67. School board members had a diverse reaction to this question. One respondent out of n = 36 (2.78%) responded with a rating of (2) disagree that once a decision is made, all board members work together to see that it is accepted and carried out. The remaining respondents answered the question as follows: three out of n = 36 (8.33%) responded with a rating of (2) disagree, 22 out of n = 36 (61.11%) responded with a rating of (3) - agree, and 10 out of n = 36 (27.78%) responded with a rating of (4) - strongly agree that board members worked together to see that decisions were accepted and carried out.

Question 16 asked if half of the board's time was spent in discussions of issues of importance to the school district's long-range future. School board members responded to question 16 with a minimum score of 2.00 (n = 4), a maximum score of 4.00 (n = 13), a median score of 3.00, a mean score of 3.20, and a standard deviation score of 0.58. When looking at the individual surveys, 3 out of n = 36 (8.57%) responded with a rating of (2) disagree, 22 out of n = 36 (62.86%) responded with a rating of (3) agreed, 10 out of n = 36 (28.57%) with a rating of (4) strongly agree that more than half of their time is spent in discussions of issues of importance to the school district.

Question 17 asked if the superintendent worked to keep the board informed about important trends within the district. School board members responded to question 17 with a minimum score of 2.00 (n = 4), a maximum score of 4.00 (n = 13), a median score of 3.00, a mean score of 3.25, and a standard deviation of 0.64. The majority of school board member respondents felt that the superintendent worked to keep the board informed about important

trends in the district. When looking at the individual surveys, 4 out of n = 36 (11.11%) responded with a rating of (2) disagree, 19 out of n = 36 (52.78%) responded with a rating of (3) agree, 13 out of n = 36 (36.11%) responded with a rating of (4) strongly agree.

Table 7
*School Board Members' Responses to Research Question 2:
 What are indicators of a strong working relationship between the school board and superintendent? (Appendix C)*

School Board Member Responses	Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
4. The board's relationship with the superintendent is built on trust.	1.00	4.00	4.00	3.51	0.65
	n = 1	n = 20			
5. The superintendent effectively communicates with the board.	1.00	4.00	3.00	3.33	0.67
	n = 1	n = 15			
9. Values of the district were key factors in reaching a conclusion on a problem.	2.00	4.00	3.00	3.25	0.60
	n = 3	n = 12			
12. The superintendent rarely reports concerns of the school district to the board.	1.00	3.00	1.00	1.56	0.72
	n = 21	n = 5			
15. Once a decision is made, all board members work together to see that it is accepted and carried out.	1.00	4.00	3.00	3.14	0.67
16. More than half of the board's time is spent in discussions of issues of importance to the school district's long-range future.	2.00	4.00	3.00	3.20	0.58
	n = 3	n = 10			
17. The superintendent works to keep the board informed about important trends within the district.	2.00	4.00	3.00	3.25	0.64
	n = 4	n = 13			

Table 8 represents the information from the superintendent respondents. Questions 4, 5, 9, 12, 15, 16, and 17 explore the indicators of a strong working relationship between the school board members and school superintendents. Table 7 documents the minimum, maximum, median, mean, and standard deviation scores of the school board member respondents.

Superintendents responded to question four with a minimum score of 2.00 (n = 1), a maximum score of 4.00 (n = 26), a median score of 4.00, a mean score of 3.71 and a standard deviation of 0.51. This question asked if the board's relationship with the superintendent is built on trust. When looking at the individual surveys, 1 out of n = 35 (2.86%) responded with a rating of (2) - disagree, 8 out of n = 35 (22.86%) responded with a rating of (3) agree. The remaining superintendents 26 out of n = 35 (74.29%) responded with a rating of (4) strongly agree.

Superintendents responded to question five with a minimum score of 1.00 (n = 1), a maximum score of 4.00 (n = 19), a median score of 4.00, a mean score of 3.53, and a standard deviation of 0.55. This question addressed the superintendent's ability to effectively communicate with the board. One superintendent out of n = 35 (2.94%) responded with a rating of (2) disagree, stating that superintendents do not effectively communicate with the school board members. The remaining superintendents recorded their responses as follows: 14 respondents out of n = 35 (41.18%) responded with a rating of (3) agree and 19 respondents out of n = 35 (55.88%) responded with a rating of (4) strongly agree.

Superintendents responded to question nine with a minimum score of 2.00 (n = 3), a maximum score of 4.00 (n = 10), a median score of 4.00, a mean of 3.53, and a standard deviation score of 0.55. When looking at the individual surveys, superintendents' responses were recorded in the following categories: 3 respondents out of n = 35 (8.57%) responded with a rating of (2) disagree, 22 respondents out of n = 35 (62.86%) responded with a rating of (3) agree, and 10 respondents out of n = 35 (28.57%) responded with a rating of (4) strongly agree.

This confirms that the majority of superintendents feel that the values of the district were key factors in reaching a conclusion concerning a problem.

Superintendents responded to question 12 with a minimum score of 1.00 (n = 21), a maximum score of 4.00 (n = 3), a median score of 1.00, a mean score of 1.57, and a standard deviation score of 0.87. Superintendent responses to this survey question indicated that the majority of superintendents strongly disagree with this question. When looking at the individual surveys, 21 respondents out of n = 35 (60.00%) responded with a rating of (1) strongly disagree, 11 respondents out of n = 35 (31.43%) responded with a rating of (2) disagree, and 3 respondents out of n = 35 (8.57%) responded with a rating of (4) strongly agree.

Superintendents responded to question 15 with a minimum score of 2.00 (n = 10), a maximum score of 4.00 (n = 7), a median score of 3.00, a mean score of 2.91, and a standard deviation score of 0.69. Question 15 asked if, once a decision is made, all board members work together to see that it is accepted and carried out. When looking at the individual surveys, 10 superintendents out of n = 35 (28.57%) responded with a rating of (2) disagree, 18 respondents out of n = 35 (51.43%) responded with a rating of (3) agree, and 7 out of n = 35 (20%) responded with a rating of (4) strongly agree.

Superintendents responded to question 16 with a minimum score of 1.00 (n = 1), a maximum score of 4.00 (n = 4), a median score of 3.00, a mean score of 2.69, and a standard deviation score of 0.71. This question had the most diverse responses. When looking at the individual surveys, one respondent out of n = 35 (2.86%) responded with a rating of (1) strongly disagree, 13 respondents out of n = 35 (37.14%) responded with a rating of (2) disagree, 17 respondents out of n = 35 (48.57%) responded with a rating of (3) agree, and four respondents out of n = 35 (11.43%) responded with a rating of (4) - strongly agree.

Superintendents responded to question 17 with a minimum score of 3.00, a maximum score of 4.00, a median score of 4.00, a mean score of 3.59, and a standard deviation of 0.49. This question asked superintendents to comment on their own responsibilities, i.e., “the superintendent works to keep the board informed about important trends within the district.” All superintendents agreed (41.18%) or strongly agreed (58.82%).

Table 8
*Superintendent’s Responses to Research Question 2:
 What are indicators of a strong working relationship between the school board and superintendent? (Appendix E)*

Superintendent Responses	Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
4. The board's relationship with the superintendent is built on trust.	2.00 n = 1	4.00 n = 26	4.00	3.71	0.51
5. The superintendent effectively communicates with the board.	1.00 n = 1	4.00 n = 19	4.00	3.53	0.55
9. Values of the district were key factors in reaching a conclusion on a problem.	2.00 n = 3	4.00 n = 10	4.00	3.53	0.55
12. The superintendent rarely reports concerns of the school district to the board.	1.00 n = 21	4.00 n = 3	1.00	1.57	0.87
15. Once a decision is made, all board members work together to see that it is accepted and carried out.	2.00 n = 10	4.00 n = 7	3.00	2.91	0.69
16. More than half of the board's time is spent in discussions of issues of importance to the school district's long-range future.	1.00 n = 1	4.00 n = 4	3.00	2.69	0.71
17. The superintendent works to keep the board informed about important trends within the district.	3.00 n = 14	4.00 n = 20	4.00	3.59	0.49

Table 9

Mean and Standard Deviation Comparison of School Board Members' Responses to Research

Question 2:

What are indicators of a strong working relationship between the school board and superintendent?

Question	School Board Member Mean Scores	Superintendent Mean Scores	Mean Comparison	School Board Member Standard Deviation	Superintendent Standard Deviation	Standard Deviation Comparison
4	3.51	3.71	0.2	.65	.51	0.14
5	3.33	3.53	0.2	.67	.55	0.12
9	3.25	3.53	.28	.60	.55	0.05
12	1.56	1.57	0.01	.72	.87	0.15
15	3.14	2.91	0.23	.67	.69	0.02
16	3.20	2.69	0.51	.58	.71	0.13
17	3.25	3.59	0.34	.64	.49	0.15

Table 10:

*Comparison of Frequency to Individual Questions School Board Member's Responses to Research Question 2:
What are indicators of a strong working relationship between the school board and superintendent? (Appendix B & Appendix D)*

Questions	School Board Strongly Disagree	Superintendent Strongly Disagree	School Board Disagree	Superintendent Disagree	School Board Agree	Super Agree	School Board Strongly Agree	Super Strongly Agree
4	1	0	0	1	14	8	20	26
5	1	0	1	1	19	14	15	19
9	0	0	3	3	21	22	12	10
12	21	21	10	11	5	0	0	3
15	1	0	3	10	22	18	10	7
16	0	1	3	13	22	17	10	4
17	0	0	4	0	19	14	13	20

Comparison of School Board Members' and Superintendents' Responses to Research Question 2
Table 10 (Appendix B & Appendix D):

The data in Table 9 demonstrates a comparison of responses between the school board members and the superintendents for survey questions aligned to Research Question 2 - these are identified as questions 4, 5, 9, 12, 15, 16, and 17.

Question four addressed whether or not the school board members' and superintendents' relationship was built on trust. Both groups of respondents, 20 of the school board members out of n = 36 and 26 of the superintendents out of n = 35 strongly agreed, with a rating of (4). In the rating category of agree (3), 14 of the school board members and 8 of the superintendents agreed. There were two respondents who disagreed; one school board member who strongly disagreed (1) and one superintendent who disagreed (2). With the majority of both stakeholders in

agreement that their relationship was built on trust, this would promote a strong working relationship.

School board member and superintendent respondents were in agreement with question five. This question asked if the superintendent effectively communicated with the school board. The large majority of both stakeholders agreed with question five; 34 school board members agreed (19 agreed and 15 strongly agreed) and 33 superintendents agreed (14 agreed and 19 strongly agreed). Of the school board members that responded, one respondent strongly disagreed with the idea that the superintendent effectively communicated with the school board members and one disagreed. One superintendent also disagreed with this question.

Question nine had a majority of stakeholders in agreement or in strong agreement that the values of the district were key factors in reaching a conclusion to a problem. Of the n = 36 school board members that responded, 14 school board members responded in agreement and 20 strongly agreed, for a total of 34 in agreement. Of the n = 35 superintendents that responded, 8 superintendents were in agreement and 26 strongly agreed, for a total of 34 in agreement. Of the school board members that responded, there was one respondent that strongly disagreed with the idea that the values of the district were key factors in reaching a conclusion to a problem. One superintendent also disagreed with this question.

Respondents to question twelve disagreed or strongly disagreed that the superintendent rarely reported concerns of the school district to the board. Both 21 out of n = 36 school board members and 21 out of n = 35 superintendents strongly disagreed, 10 school board members disagreed, and 11 superintendents disagreed. Five school board members agreed and three superintendents strongly agreed. This supports the notion that superintendents communicate with their board members.

When asked if school board members worked together to see that a decision is accepted and carried out once it has been made (question 15), they gave the following responses: 32 out of n = 36 school board members agreed (22 agreed and 10 strongly agreed), and 25 out of n = 35 superintendents agreed (18 agreed and 7 strongly agreed). One school board member strongly disagreed and three disagreed to this question. Ten superintendents disagreed that the school board members worked together to see that a decision is accepted and carried out once it has been made.

Question 16 also had a widespread response. This question asked if more than half of the school board's time was spent in discussion of issues of importance to the district's long-range future. One out of n = 35 superintendent strongly disagreed with this question. Three out of n = 36 school board members and 13 superintendents disagreed that the school board spent the majority of their time discussing issues that were important to the district's long-range future. The majority of school board members agreed (22) or strongly agreed (10) with this question. Superintendents were split in their responses: 17 agreed and four strongly agreed.

Question 17 asked if the superintendent worked to keep the board informed about important trends within the district. The large majority agreed: 32 out of n = 36 of school board members strongly agreed (13) or agreed (19) that the superintendent worked to keep the board informed about important trends within the district. Four school board members disagreed. In comparison, 34 out of n = 35 superintendents strongly agreed (20) or agreed (14) with question 17 and believe that superintendents work to keep the board informed about important trends within the district.

Research Question 3

How does the relationship between the school board and the superintendent relate to a superintendent's longevity?

Table 11 represents the information from the school board member respondents. Questions 8, 14, 18, 19, and 20 explore the relationship between the school board members and school superintendents as it relates to a superintendent's longevity. Table 10 documents the minimum, maximum, median, mean, and standard deviation scores of the school board member respondents.

Question eight asked if the superintendent's recommendations were usually accepted with little questioning. School board members responded to question eight with a minimum score of 1.00 (n = 1), a maximum score of 4.00 (n = 3), a median score of 2.00, a mean score of 2.47, and a standard deviation score of 0.69. This question elicited a wide range of responses. When looking at the individual surveys, we found that one respondent out of n = 36 (2.78%) responded with a rating of (1) strongly disagree, 20 respondents out of the n = 36 (55.56%), responded with a rating of (2) disagree, 12 respondents out of n = 36 (33.33%) responded with a rating of (3) agree, and 3 respondents (8.33%) responded with a rating of (4) strongly agree.

Question 14 asked if the superintendent's ability to maintain a positive school climate impacted his or her term of employment. School board members responded to question 14 with a minimum score of 3.00 (n = 22), a maximum score of 4.00 (n = 14), a median score of 2.00, a mean score of 2.47, and a standard deviation score of 0.49. The school board members' response to this question confirms the importance of a superintendent's ability to maintain a positive school climate. All respondents feel that this ability impacts a superintendent's term of employment. When looking at the individual surveys, we found that 22 respondents out of

n = 36 (61.11%) responded with a rating of (3) - agree and 14 of the n = 36 (38.89%) responded with a rating of (4) strongly agree.

Question 18 asked if the superintendent's trustworthiness impacted his or her term of employment. School board members responded to question 18 with a minimum score of 3.00 (n = 19), a maximum score of 4.00 (n = 17), a median score of 3.00, a mean score of 3.47, and a standard deviation of 0.50. School board members also confirmed that a superintendent's trustworthiness impacts a superintendent's employment. When looking at the individual surveys, 19 respondents out of n = 36 responded with a rating of (3) agree and 17 respondents out of n = 36 responded with a rating of (4) strongly agree.

Question 19 asked if a superintendent's communication skills had an impact on his or her term of employment. School board members responded to question 19 with a minimum score of 3.00 (n = 20), a maximum score of 4.00 (n = 16), a median score of 3.00, a mean score of 3.44, and a standard deviation of 0.50. School board members identified that communication skills have an impact on a superintendent's employment. When looking at the individual surveys, 20 respondents out of n = 36 (55.56%) responded with a rating of (3) agree and 16 respondents out of n = 36 (44.44%) responded with a rating of (4) strongly agree.

Question 20 asked if the superintendent's leadership style, with the board, had an impact on his or her term of employment. School board members responded to question 20 with a minimum score of 3.00 (n = 19), a maximum score of 4.00 (n = 17), a median score of 3.00, a mean score of 3.47, and a standard deviation score of 0.50. All school board members agreed that a superintendent's leadership style, with the board, has an impact on a superintendent's longevity. When looking at the individual surveys, 19 respondents out of n = 36 (52.78%) responded with a rating of (3) agree and 17 respondents out of n = 36 (47.22%) responded with a rating of (4) strongly agree.

Table 11
School Board Member's Responses to Research Question 3: How does this relationship relate to a superintendent's longevity? (Appendix C)

School Board Member Responses	Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
8. Recommendations from the superintendent are usually accepted with little questioning.	1.00 n = 1	4.00 n = 3	2.00	2.47	0.69
14. The superintendent's ability to maintain a positive school climate impacts his or her term of employment.	3.00 n = 22	4.00 n = 14	3.00	3.39	0.49
18. The superintendent's trustworthiness impacts her or his term of employment.	3.00 n = 19	4.00 n = 17	3.00	3.47	0.50
19. The superintendent's communication skills have an impact on her or his term of employment.	3.00 n = 20	4.00 n = 16	3.00	3.44	0.50
20. The superintendent's leadership style with the board has an impact on his or her term of employment.	3.00 n = 19	4.00 n = 17	3.00	3.47	0.50

Table 12 represents the information gathered from superintendent respondents. Questions 8, 14, 18, 19, and 20 explore the relationship between the school board members and school superintendents as it relate to a superintendent's longevity. Table 11 documents the minimum, maximum, median, mean, and standard deviation scores of the superintendent respondents.

Superintendents responded to question eight with a minimum score of 1.00, a maximum score of 4.00, a median score of 3.00, a mean score of 2.83, and a standard deviation score of 0.74. Superintendents' responses to this question were diverse. This question asked if the recommendations from the superintendent were accepted with little questioning. When looking at the individual surveys, 1 respondent out of n = 3 (2.86%) responded with a rating of (1)

strongly disagree and 1 respondent out of $n = 35$ (28.57%) responded with a rating of (2) disagree, 18 respondents out of $n = 35$ (51.43%) responded with a rating of (3) agree, and 6 respondents out of $n = 35$ (17.14%) responded with a rating of (4) strongly agree.

Superintendents responded to question 14 regarding how the superintendent's ability to maintain a positive school climate impacts his or her term of employment, with a minimum score of 2.00 ($n = 1$), a maximum score of 4.00 ($n = 21$), a median score of 4.00, a mean score of 3.57, and a standard deviation of 0.55. When looking at the individual surveys, 1 respondent out of $n = 35$ (2.86%) responded with a rating of (2) disagree, 13 respondents out of $n = 35$ responded with a rating of (3) agree, and 21 respondents out of $n = 35$ (60%) responded with a rating of (4) strongly agree.

Superintendents responded to question 18 with a minimum score of 2.00 ($n = 1$), maximum score of 4.00 ($n = 26$), a median score of 4.00, a mean score of 3.74, and a standard deviation of 0.50. Question 18 asked if the superintendent's trustworthiness impacted her or his term of employment. When looking at the individual surveys, 1 respondent out of $n = 35$ (2.94%) responded with a rating of (2) disagree, and 7 respondents out of $n = 35$ (20.59%) responded with a rating of (3) agree, and 26 respondents out of $n = 35$ (76.47%) responded with a rating of (4) strongly agree.

Superintendents responded to question 19 with a minimum score of 3.00 ($n = 14$), a maximum score of 4.00 ($n = 20$), a median score of 4.00, a mean score of 3.59, and a standard deviation score of 0.49. Question 19 addressed the superintendent's communication skills and whether or not these skills impacted his or her term of employment. When looking at the individual surveys, 14 respondents out of $n = 36$ (41.18%) responded with a rating of (3) agree and 20 respondents out of $n = 36$ (58.82%) responded with a rating of (4) strongly agree.

Superintendents responded to question 20 – did the superintendent’s leadership style with the board have an impact on her or his term of employment – with a minimum score of 3.00 (n = 14), a maximum score of 4.00 (n = 21), a median score of 4.00, a mean score of 43.60, and a standard deviation score of 0.49. When looking at the individual surveys, 14 respondents out of n = 35 (40%) responded with a rating of (3) agree and 21 respondents out of n = 35 (60%) responded with a rating of (4) strongly agree.

Table 12
Superintendents’ Responses to Research Question 3: How does this relationship relate to a superintendent’s longevity? (Appendix E)

Superintendent Responses	Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
8. Recommendations from the superintendent are usually accepted with little questioning.	1.00 n = 1	4.00 n = 6	3.00	2.83	0.74
14. The superintendent's ability to maintain a positive school climate impacts his or her term of employment.	2.00 n = 1	4.00 N = 21	4.00	3.57	0.55
18. The superintendent's trustworthiness impacts her or his term of employment.	2.00 n = 1	4.00 n = 26	4.00	3.74	0.50
19. The superintendent's communication skills have an impact on her or his term of employment.	3.00 n = 14	4.00 n = 20	4.00	3.59	0.49
20. The superintendent's leadership style with the board has an impact on his or her term of employment.	3.00 n = 14	4.00 n = 21	4.00	3.60	0.49

Table 13
Mean and Standard Deviation Comparison of Research Question 3: How does this relationship relate to a superintendent's longevity?

Question	School Board Members Mean Score	Superintendent Mean Score	Mean Comparison	School Board Members Standard Deviation	Superintendent Standard Deviation	Comparison
8	2.47	2.83	0.36	.69	.74	0.05
14	3.39	3.57	0.18	.49	.55	0.06
18	3.47	3.74	0.27	.50	.50	0.00
19	3.44	3.59	0.15	.50	.49	0.01
20	3.47	3.60	0.13	.50	.49	0.01

Table 14
Comparison of Responses to Individual Questions to Research Question 3: How does this relationship relate to a superintendent's longevity? (Appendix B & Appendix D)

Questions	School Board Strongly Disagree	Superintendent Strongly Disagree	School Board Disagree	Superintendent Disagree	School Board Agree	Super Agree	School Board Strongly Agree	Super Strongly Agree
8	1	1	20	10	12	18	3	6
14	0	0	0	1	22	13	14	21
18	0	0	0	1	19	7	17	26
19	1	0	1	0	20	14	24	20
20	0	0	0	0	19	14	17	21

Question eight asked if superintendent recommendations were accepted with little questioning. This question generated a wide range of responses from both stakeholders. One school board member and one superintendent strongly disagreed, and 20 school board members and ten superintendents disagreed with this question. The respondents that agreed or strongly

agreed responded as follows: 12 school board members and 18 superintendents agreed, three school board members strongly agreed, and 6 superintendents strongly agreed. This spread in responses indicates that superintendent's recommendations are questioned. This may indicate that school board members may not have confidence in their superintendent's recommendations, 21 school board members disagreed with this question. This may impact a superintendent's job security.

Question 14 asked if the superintendent's ability to maintain a positive school climate had an impact on his or her job. The majority of stakeholders agreed with this question: 36 school board members agreed, (22 agreed and 14 strongly agreed) and 34 superintendents agreed (13 agreed and 21 strongly agreed). There was one outlier in the superintendent respondents who disagreed. This reinforced the importance of school climate and how school climate impacts a superintendent's job security.

Question 18 also recorded a majority in agreement. A total of 36 school board members agreed, (19 agreed and 17 strongly agreed) and a total of 33 superintendents agreed, (7 agreed and 26 strongly agreed) that a superintendent's trustworthiness impacted his or her term of employment. One superintendent disagreed with this question. Responses to this question confirmed that the ability to trust the superintendent is essential to his or her job security.

Question 19 identified a superintendent's communication skills as a valued job skill. The majority of school board members either agreed (20) or strongly agreed (16) with this question. Superintendents were similar in their responses: 14 superintendents agreed and 20 strongly agreed that communication skills were important.

Question 20 asked if a superintendent's leadership style with the board had an impact on job longevity. 100% of both respondents agreed with this question. Of the school board

members, 19 agreed and 17 strongly agreed; 14 superintendents agreed and 21 superintendents strongly agreed.

Summary of Findings

Examination of the data from the survey instrument completed by 36 school board members and 35 superintendents was analyzed using three research questions: In what way did the relationship between the school board and superintendent impact the school climate and culture? What were the indicators of a strong working relationship between the school board and superintendent? How did this relationship relate to a superintendent's longevity? This study was a quantitative study that used descriptive statistics to analyze the responses from both school board members and superintendents. The survey instrument consisted of 20 closed-ended questions that required the respondents to use a fully anchored rating scale of (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) agree, or (4) strongly disagree to answer each question.

The participants for this study were selected from a random population of New Jersey school board members and New Jersey superintendents. A total of 146 surveys were sent to school board members. School board members returned 36 completed surveys via SurveyMonkey or email. Surveys were sent to ninety superintendents via SurveyMonkey or email. Superintendents returned 35 completed surveys.

The analysis of the data provided by the school board members and superintendents revealed that the majority of both stakeholders agreed that the relationship between the school board and superintendent has an impact on the school climate and culture. Table 5 documented the comparison of each question associated with research question 1, which asked about school climate. Respondents to question 1 agreed that involvement by both stakeholders in decision-making is important to the future of education in the district. The majority of respondents to question 2 agreed that when both stakeholders advocated the same actions, it presented common

values. The majority of respondents agreed that both stakeholders set clear organizational priorities. When asked if the board was involved in decisions that were important to the future of education in a district, stakeholders were more diverse in their responses. The majority did agree but a small percentage questioned the school board's involvement in important decisions. Seven school board members strongly disagreed that they were involved in the decision-making process. Five superintendents strongly agreed that the school board was involved in the decision-making process. This may indicate that some school board members feel that their decision-making skills are not valued, thus creating a negative climate when decisions are needed.

When stakeholders were asked if the school board conducted an explicit examination of its roles and responsibilities, they were not in agreement. When looking at the data, it is clear that the two respondent groups had a difference of opinion. This would seem to indicate there is a group of superintendents that question whether or not school board members examine their roles and responsibilities; it is not readily apparent why the superintendents felt this way. There were a smaller number of school board members who questioned their examination.

When asked if the school board members acted independently of the superintendent's recommendation, the majority of stakeholders disagreed. This indicated that the school boards respect the superintendent enough to respect his or her recommendation and act accordingly.

Table 5 shows a numerical representation of the responses to the survey instrument using the indicators to research question 1, which asked about school climate. A summary of the total number of respondents that agreed with the individual questions is as follows: question 1 – involvement in decision-making – received a total of 81 agreement responses, question 7 – board involvement in decisions that are important to the future – received a total of 68 agreement responses, question 2 – both stakeholders advocate the same actions – received 67 agreement responses, question 13 – the board acted independently of the superintendent – received 66

disagreement responses, question 3 – clear organizational priorities are set – received 65 agreement responses, question 11 – the board examined its roles and responsibilities – received 49 agreement responses, and question 10 – the board was unaware of its impact – received 30 agreement responses.

As Mayer (2011) stated, the success of a school district requires teamwork among board members and the superintendents. The large majority of responded to the survey instrument indicated that teamwork is taking place in the school districts in New Jersey. Poole (1985) explained that the climate in an organization develops as a result of collective perceptions of its members; this influences behaviors and attitudes. Respondents to this survey indicated that the participating stakeholders have a very similar perception of behaviors and attitudes, reinforcing a positive climate between school board members and superintendents in school districts in New Jersey.

Table 9 shows a numerical representation of the responses to the survey instrument using the indicators to research question 2, which asked about the working relationship between the two stakeholders. A summary of the total number of respondents that agreed with the individual questions is as follows: question 4- the board's relationship with the superintendent is built on trust – received a total of 68 agreement responses, question 5- the superintendent effectively communicates with the board received a total of 67 agreement responses, question 17- the superintendent kept the board informed of important trends – received 66 agreement responses, question 9 – district values were key in solving problems – received 65 agreement responses, question 12 – the superintendent rarely reported concerns to the school board – received 63 disagreement responses, question 15 – the board worked together to carry out decisions – received 57 agreement responses, and question 16 – the board spent half its time discussing important issues – received 53 agreement responses.

The respondents identified trust and communication as indicators of a strong working relationship between the school board members and superintendent.

Table 13 shows a numerical representation of the responses to the survey instrument using the indicators to research question 3, which asked if the relationship between the two stakeholders impacts the superintendent's longevity. A summary of the total number of responses that agreed with the individual questions is as follows: question 20 – a superintendent's leadership style has an impact on his or her term of employment – received a total of 71 agreement responses, question 14 – the superintendent's ability to maintain a positive school climate – received a total of 70 agreement responses, question 19 – the superintendent's communication skills impact his or her term of employment – received 70 agreement responses, question 18 – district values were key in solving problems – received 65 agreement responses, question 12 – the superintendent's trustworthiness impacts his or her employment – received 6 agreement responses, and question 8 – recommendations by the superintendent are accepted – received 39 agreement responses and 32 disagreement responses.

Respondents have identified leadership style, communication skills and being able to maintain a positive school climate as important qualities for securing longevity for a superintendent.

The findings in Chapter 4 were presented in both narrative form and in tables to highlight the collected data. This chapter will summarize the findings of the research, focus on the individual questions, highlight the information from the literature review as it pertained to this study, and provide conclusions. Implications for entities involved with school board members, school superintendents, and educational leaders will be discussed, recommendations will be offered, and suggestions for future studies will be presented.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

Summary

The current educational environment is very challenging; it creates an environment prone to conflict, lack of trust, and differing priorities. In this current and changing educational environment, school boards must be successful at governing at high levels, while navigating an array of thorny strategic and operational agendas (Eadie, 2003). The National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) stated that public schools were coming under attack from the right, left, top, and bottom. No Child Left Behind (United States Department of Education (USDOE), 2002) has also increased the demands for accountability on district leaders, adding another layer of challenges. Usdan and colleagues support this concept of conflict and increased demands,

District leaders were in an arena that was perpetually besieged by a potpourri of often conflicting forces: state laws and regulations, federal mandates, decentralized school management, demands for greater accountability, changing demographics, the school choice movement, competing community needs, limited resources, partisan politics, legal challenges, shortages of qualified teachers and principals, and general lack of respect for the education profession. (Usdan, McCloud, Podmostko, & Cuban, 2001)

School board members and superintendents are especially susceptible to these challenges as they are seen as responsible for important decisions that impact many people. Maduakolam and Bailey (1999) identified the superintendent's leadership skills as paramount to school reform, as successful change could not be realized without strong leadership. Developing a successful relationship between the two stakeholders is vital to maintaining a positive school climate, a functioning working relationship, and the long-term employment of the

superintendent. Krysiak's, (2002) research found that when both stakeholders worked as a team, they were able to address both local and state demands for higher test scores, increased accountability, greater individualized instruction, and lower property tax costs. Research has shown that a poor working relationship between the superintendent and the school board is not conducive to school improvement (Danzberger, Kirst, & Usdan, 1992). Further research in this area would benefit both stakeholders' understanding of characteristics of a strong and successful relationship.

Developing and maintaining a relationship that promotes a positive school climate and a positive, functioning working relationship is critical to the success of the team, i.e., the school board members and the superintendent. The school superintendent and the school boards must emphasize how they can work to complement each other (Bryant & Houston, 2002). The ultimate goal for the superintendent is to be able to maintain an open relationship with the board members while fulfilling his or her responsibilities in the position of superintendent (Krajewski & Travino, 2004).

It may not be possible for all board members and superintendents to maintain an optimal relationship. Therefore, it will be beneficial to identify the characteristics of a positive relationship between the school board members and the superintendent. This quantitative descriptive study explored the attributes and strategies used to develop an effective school board/superintendent relationship. This information has provided a better understanding of the impact that this relationship has on the overall climate of a school district, the development of the working relationship between the two stakeholders and finally, the impact this relationship has on the longevity of the school superintendent. Data was collected and analyzed to determine the impact of the relationship between the school board and superintendent. This study should

provide valuable information for current and future school board members and superintendents in the state of New Jersey.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of the relationship between the school board members and the school superintendent. The aspiration of this study is to provide research-based information that can provide school board members and superintendents with information that will help them maintain a better relationship when working together to maintain a school district. While reviewing the relevant literature about the role of the relationship between the school board and superintendent, a good relationship between the two stakeholders was identified as critical to their success. Glass (1992) reported that when a superintendent was fired or encouraged to terminate his/her contract it was due to a deterioration of the relationship with the board. Personal relationships become stressed when board members have personal agendas that may be in conflict with the good of the district (Glass, 1992). Metzger (1997) found that the conflicting political agendas cause a breakdown this important relationship. A good relationship between the two stakeholders is the most attractive element of a superintendency (Cox & Malone, 2001).

Descriptive statistics were generated using a 20-question survey that was analyzed, and statistical differences were identified. 146 surveys were sent to school board members in the state of New Jersey. Ninety surveys were sent to New Jersey school superintendents. 35 school board members and 35 superintendents returned completed surveys; these returned surveys were used to generate data to be analyzed in this research study.

Key Findings

Data from research question 1 indicated that both school board members and superintendents considered shared involvement in decision-making, common values, and clear

organizational priorities to be responsible for creating a positive school climate. A small number of school board member respondents indicated that the school board member's decision-making input was not valued.

Data from research question 2 indicated that both the school board members and superintendents felt that a relationship built on trust was important to a good working relationship. The superintendent's ability to communicate and to keep the school board members informed about important trends were also signs of a good working relationship. Other signs of a good working relationship identified by the data were: using district values to reach conclusions on a problem, the superintendent reporting concerns to the school board, and school board members working together to accept and carrying out decisions.

Data from research question 3 indicated that the school board members and superintendents felt that a superintendent's longevity was affected by a superintendent's leadership style, communication skills, the ability to maintain a positive school climate, trustworthiness, and by making reliable recommendations.

The findings indicate that the respondents considered communication of information in a timely manner, as well as shared equally between the stakeholders, feeling valued in the decision making process, as well as role identification as important attributes to a good climate and culture in a school district. When both stakeholders are able to set common priorities, district goals are more likely to be implemented, supporting a strong climate. The findings also indicate that when common values are not in place this had a negative impact on the school climate. The findings also indicated that trust was the foundation of a strong working relationship. This was based on the team building, consensus building and inclusive decision-making. These findings are supported in McCurdy's (1992) research from the literature review. Communication, trust,

understanding information is power, boards being informed, and understanding roles were all central themes of McCurdy's (1992) research.

The findings concerning superintendent longevity identified the importance of the superintendent's ability to maintain a positive school climate, trustworthiness, leadership style, and his/her communication skills. The findings revealed without these necessary skills a superintendents' tenure will be short the position.

Limitations

As with any study, this study may have limitations that may have impacted the findings. First the population was limited to school board members and superintendents within the state of New Jersey. Different states may define the functioning of the school board and superintendent differently; and this may impact a survey participant's response. Although respondents were randomly selected, the responses were voluntary; respondents may have different motivations for returning the survey. Lastly, the surveys were sent via email using SurveyMonkey and district email accounts, only tapping respondents who had the technical skills to access the survey.

There is also the possibility that two respondents from the same district or two superintendents from different districts may have discussed the survey prior to completing the survey. This type of collaboration could have influenced the responses provided by the respondents. This has the potential to skew the research.

Recommendations for Future

This researcher attempted to create a comprehensive well-designed study that would result in data that would provide stakeholders with valuable information on how to improve and define the relationship between the school board members and superintendent. This relationship is paramount to the successful, positive functioning of a school district. There remains a need to

conduct further research to further the understanding of the characteristics of a strong working relationship between the two stakeholders. With this purpose in mind, the following recommendations for future research are suggested:

1. Further research using case studies is defensible as a basis for examination into how decision-making, common values, organizational priorities, and superintendent skills are defined by both stakeholders. This study may lend itself to identifying “best practices” in making decisions, developing common values, setting organizational priorities, and supporting superintendents in skill development. These identified best practices may be integrated into professional development for both stakeholders.
2. A future study that expands the geographic boundaries would provide validation of this study and also provide additional data not included in this study.
3. The relationship between school board members and superintendents continues to develop within an increasingly stressful environment. More research is required to address and include these new stresses to meet the ever-increasing challenges in the educational setting.
4. In the State of New Jersey school boards can be appointed or elected. Research into the attitudes and functioning of the two different school board types may provide valuable information to the state and local school districts.

Research is the key to success in education. Through the collection of current data, this research study provides a description of the importance of the relationship between the school board and superintendent. This research should be beneficial to professional administrators and to school board members as they build capacity in serving their local school districts in New Jersey.

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Comment [3]: This link does not work. Also, if this is an article, the title should not be capitalized, you should add the name of the journal (in italics) and the volume, issue, and page numbers. If this is a book, please add the location and name of the publisher, separated by a colon. (E.g., "New York, NY: Smith Publishers.")

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If it's an article, please italicize the name of the journal and add the volume, issue, and page numbers.

Comment [5]: This link does not work.

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If it's an article, please italicize the name of the journal and add the volume, issue, and page numbers.

Comment [.7]: Please check to ensure that this is the correct name of the publisher (The abbreviation "Co." is not usually followed by "Inc." as they are almost synonymous (i.e., "company" and "incorporated").

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Comment [.9]: Why is there an italicized title AFTER the title of this book? Please check that you have the correct information for this entry.

Comment [.10]: Please check to ensure that this article is only one page long. If it is longer, please add the second number in the page range.

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If it's an article, please add the name of the journal (in italics), plus the volume, issue, and page numbers.

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If it's an article, please add the name of the journal (in italics), plus the volume, issue, and page numbers.

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