

MISSOURI SUPERINTENDENTS' PERCEPTION OF A SENSE OF URGENCY TO
IMPROVE STUDENT ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

A Dissertation
presented to
the faculty of the Graduate School
University of Missouri-Columbia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

By
SUSAN GAUZY
Dr. Jerry Valentine, Dissertation Supervisor

May, 2010

The undersigned, appointed by the Dean of the Graduate Faculty, have examined a dissertation entitled:

MISSOURI SUPERINTENDENTS' PERCEPTION OF A SENSE OF URGENCY TO
IMPROVE STUDENT ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

presented by Susan Gauzy, a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Education, and hereby certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

Dr. Jerry Valentine, Major Advisor
Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

Dr. Carol Maher
Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

Dr. Jay Scribner
Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

Dr. Paul Pitchford
Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

Dr. Jeffery S. Brooks
Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*“Every man’s work, whether it be literature, or music,
or pictures, or architecture, or anything else, is always a portrait of himself.”
.....Anonymous*

To my advisor and mentor Dr. Jerry Valentine for your patience and guidance. I absolutely could not have finished this without your help. From that first meeting over 20 years ago, you have always demanded the best from me for the sake of student learning. I want to grow up to be just like you.

To Dr. Carol Maher for your constant encouragement. I completely relied on your honesty, sense of humor, and optimism to get me through this process. Your frank coaching about what’s important has made my professional and personal life richer.

To Dr. Jay Scribner for your support and suggestions.

To Dr. Paul Pitchford for your willingness to be a part of this process. Your support of Missouri’s educators is much appreciated.

To Dr. Jeffery Brooks for your willingness to join my committee on short notice.

To my children, Darcy, Travis, Tessa, and Catherine, who love the beauty of the written word, freedom, and music. I couldn’t be prouder or more blessed.

To Billie, the best secretary ever, for all your help.

To Keri, Gregg, Nichole, and Margo, for your support. You are the best group of professionals ever. Students benefit from you daily, including me.

To my mother, Grandma Bonnie and my grandson, Braden, the same thread of a magnificent tapestry weaving the past and the future together. I work hard to make you proud everyday.

To Michael, HOMH.

MISSOURI SUPERINTENDENTS' PERCEPTION OF A SENSE OF URGENCY TO
IMPROVE STUDENT ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Susan Gauzy

Dr. Jerry Valentine, Dissertation Supervisor

ABSTRACT

This exploratory study examined the relationship between superintendents' perceived sense of urgency and student academic performance. More specifically, the study examined the leadership of Missouri superintendents based upon a district's Annual Performance Report. The Missouri Annual Performance Report ranks districts from highest to lowest with the following designations: performance with distinction; full waiver; limited waiver; provisionally accredited; and, unaccredited. This study focused only on the sense of urgency in the districts performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, and performing with a limited waiver due to limited sample size in the lower levels of provisionally accredited and unaccredited. A total of 98 superintendents in Missouri were included in this study. Quantitative data were collected using survey responses. Superintendents responded to items about their perceptions of their own sense of urgency to improve student academic performance, the source of their urgency, their purposeful communication of urgency, their perceptions of change of urgency in district stakeholders, and the strategies used to communicate the urgency. Data from the surveys were analyzed using analysis of variance, analysis of covariance, and step-wise linear regression.

Superintendents in districts performing with a limited waiver reported a significantly stronger sense of urgency to improve student academic performance than did superintendents

in districts performing with distinction at the end of the first year in their position as superintendent. Superintendents in districts with a limited waiver also reported a significantly stronger sense of urgency to improve student academic performance than did superintendents in districts performing with distinction at the time of the survey.

Superintendents in districts with a limited waiver purposefully communicated significantly more often than superintendents in districts performing with distinction with boards of education. In addition, superintendents in districts with a limited waiver purposefully communicated significantly more frequently with all district teachers than superintendents in districts performing with distinction. Superintendents leading districts performing with a limited waiver and superintendents leading districts with a full waiver identified an impending crisis to communicate a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance significantly more often than superintendents leading districts performing with distinction.

Through regression analysis, Providing Opportunities for Success, Identifying an Impending Crisis, Setting Goals and Targets, and Utilizing Data were communication strategies significantly associated with the degree to which the sense of urgency to improve student academic performance increased throughout the district. Regression findings also implied that utilizing the communication strategy “providing opportunities for success” could increase the sense of urgency for boards of education, district administrators, building principals, teacher leaders, all district teachers and the media.

Throughout this study it was evident that superintendents leading districts with a limited waiver, which indicates lower student academic performance, reported a stronger sense of urgency to improve student achievement than did their counterparts in higher

performing districts. These superintendents purposefully communicated a sense of urgency more often and they used the communication strategy of “identifying an impending crisis” more frequently to increase a sense of urgency across their districts than did superintendents in districts with higher student performance. In addition, when superintendents utilize the communication strategy of “providing opportunities for success,” which includes actions such as articulating a vision and implementing a purposeful school improvement process, an increase in a sense of urgency to improve student achievement is more likely to occur.

Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
Table of Contents	vi
List of Tables.....	xi
Chapter 1: Background to the Study	1
Introduction	1
Statement of the Problem	12
Purpose of the Study	13
Research Questions	14
Null Hypothesis.....	15
Limitations	16
Definitions.....	17
Outline of the Study	18
Chapter 2: Review of Related Literature.....	19
Introduction.....	19
Forces for Change	20
Accountability.....	20
Moral/Ethical Responsibility.....	21
Roles, Responsibilities and Expectations of Superintendents.....	23
Teacher-Scholar	24
Expectation of instructional leadership	25
Manager.....	26

Expectation of managerial leadership	27
Democratic Leader	28
Expectation of distributive/participative leadership.....	29
Applied Social Scientist and Social Activist.....	31
Expectation of moral/ethical leadership.....	32
Communicator.....	33
Expectation of transformational/reform/change agent leadership	34
Multiple Blended Roles.....	35
Expectation of contingent leadership	35
Superintendent Impact on Student Academic Performance.....	37
Change to Improve Student Performance	41
Learning Organizations.....	41
Business Organization Change Models.....	42
Educational Change Models.....	46
Why Educational Reform Fails.....	51
Scale and Superficial Change.....	51
Complacency and the Status Quo.....	52
Leadership.....	53
Sustainable Leadership.....	54
Change and Sources of Urgency	55
Summary	58
Chapter 3: Method.....	60
Rationale.....	60

Statement of the Problem	61
Purpose of the Study	62
Research Questions	63
Null Hypothesis.....	63
Population.....	65
Procedures	66
Instrumentation.....	68
Data Collection.....	69
Data Analysis	69
Chapter 4: Presentation and Analysis of Data.....	71
Introduction	71
Study Design	72
Research Questions	76
Null Hypothesis.....	76
Descriptive Findings	77
Demographic Data.....	77
Degree of urgency	78
Source of urgency.....	79
Frequency of purposeful communication.....	82
Change in urgency.....	85
Communication strategies	87
Hypothesis Testing.....	88
Hypothesis One	90

Hypothesis Two.....	97
Hypothesis Three.....	107
Hypothesis Four	116
Hypothesis Five.....	124
Hypothesis Six.....	130
Summary of Findings.....	141
Hypothesis Testing.....	142
Chapter 5: Discussion of Findings	146
Introduction.....	146
Overview of the Study.....	148
Research Questions	150
Null Hypothesis.....	151
Summary of Findings	153
Descriptive Results.....	153
Degree of urgency	153
Source of urgency.....	154
Purposeful communication.....	154
Change in urgency.....	155
Utilization of strategies	155
Hypothesis Testing.....	156
Discussion of Findings.....	157
Differences in Degree of Urgency	157
Differences in Source of Urgency.....	159

Differences in Purposeful Communication.....	160
Differences in Change in Urgency.....	162
Differences in Utilization of Strategies.....	162
Relationships among Change in Urgency and Utilization of Strategies.....	164
Summary of the Relationship among Strategies and Change in Urgency.....	169
Implications.....	169
Implications for Practice.....	170
Implications for Preparation Programs.....	172
Implications for Future Research.....	173
Conclusions.....	173
References.....	175
Appendix A: Superintendents' Sense of Urgency Survey.....	184
Appendix B: IRB Approval Letter.....	202

List of Tables

1. Research Questions, Hypothesis, and Corresponding Survey Items.....	73
2. Descriptive Data for Degree of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance by District Level Achievement.....	80
3. Descriptive Data for Source of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance by District Level Achievement.....	81
4. Descriptive Data for Purposeful Communication of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance by District Level Achievement.....	84
5. Descriptive Data for Change in Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance by District Level Achievement.....	86
6. Descriptive Data for Specific Strategies Utilized to Communicate The Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance by District Level Achievement.....	88
7. Means for Degree of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance: Scores grouped by Districts Performing with Distinction, Full Waiver, or Limited Waiver (n = 98).....	91
8. Results of Post-Hoc Analysis of Variance of Superintendents' Degree of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance as grouped by Districts Performing with Distinction, Full Waiver, or Limited Waiver.....	92
9. Results of Post-Hoc Analysis for Analysis of Covariance of Superintendents' Degree of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance as grouped by Districts Performing with Distinction, Full Waiver, or Limited Waiver when Controlling for Socio-economic Status.....	93

10. Results of Post-Hoc Analysis for Analysis of Covariance of Superintendents' Degree of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance as grouped by Districts Performing with Distinction, Full Waiver, or Limited Waiver when Controlling for Socio-economic Status.....	94
11. Results of Post-Hoc Analysis for Analysis of Covariance of Superintendents' Degree of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance as grouped by Districts Performing with Distinction, Full Waiver, or Limited Waiver when Controlling for Socio-economic Status.....	95
12. Free/Reduced Lunch Means.....	96
13. Changes in the Degree of Urgency over Time by Levels of Free/Reduced Lunch.....	96
14. Means for Source of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance: Scores grouped by Districts Performing with Distinction, Full Waiver, or Limited Waiver (n = 98).....	99
15. Results of Post-Hoc Analysis for Analysis of Variance for Superintendents' Source of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance as grouped by Districts Performing with Distinction, Full Waiver, or Limited Waiver.....	101
16. Results of Post-Hoc Analysis of Analysis of Covariance for Superintendents' Source of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance as grouped by Districts Performing with Distinction, Full Waiver, or Limited Waiver when Controlling for Socio-economic Status.....	104

17. Means for Frequency of Purposeful Communication of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance: Scores grouped by Districts Performing with Distinction, Full Waiver, or Limited Waiver (n = 98).....	108
18. Results of Post-Hoc Analysis of Analysis of Variance for Superintendents' Frequency of Purposeful Communication of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance as grouped by Districts Performing with Distinction, Full Waiver, or Limited Waiver.....	110
19. Results of Post-Hoc Analysis for Analysis of Covariance for Superintendents' Frequency of Purposeful Communication to Improve Student Academic Performance as grouped by Districts Performing with Distinction, Full Waiver, or Limited Waiver when Controlling for Socio-economic Status.....	113
20. Means for Superintendents' Perceived Change of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance: Scores grouped by Districts Performing with Distinction, Full Waiver, or Limited Waiver (n = 98).....	117
21. Results of Post-Hoc Analysis of Analysis of Variance for Superintendents' Perceived Change of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance as grouped by Districts Performing with Distinction, Full Waiver, or Limited Waiver.....	119

22. Results of Post-Hoc Analysis of Analysis of Covariance for Superintendents’ Perceived Change in a Sense of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance as grouped by Districts Performing with Distinction, Full Waiver, or Limited Waiver when Controlling for Socio-economic Status.....	122
23. Means for Communication Strategies Utilized to Improve Student Academic Performance: Scores grouped by Districts Performing with Distinction, Full Waiver, or Limited Waiver (n = 98).....	126
24. Results of Post-Hoc Analysis of Analysis of Variance for Communication Strategies Utilized to Improve Student Academic Performance as grouped by Districts Performing with Distinction, Full Waiver, or Limited Waiver.....	128
25. Results of Post-Hoc Analysis of Analysis of Covariance for Superintendents’ Reported Use of Strategies to Communicate a Sense of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance as grouped by Districts Performing with Distinction, Full Waiver, or Limited Waiver when Controlling for Socio-economic Status.....	131
26. Linear Regression: Board of Education Change in Urgency with Strategies to Communicate a Sense of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance.....	134
27. Linear Regression: Individual Board Member Change in Urgency with Strategies to Communicate a Sense of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance.....	136

28. Linear Regression: District Administrators Change in Urgency with Strategies to Communicate a Sense of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance.....	137
29. Linear Regression: Building Principal Change in Urgency with Strategies to Communicate a Sense of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance.....	138
30. Linear Regression: Teacher Leaders Change in Urgency with Strategies to Communicate a Sense of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance.....	139
31. Linear Regression: All District Teachers Change in Urgency with Strategies to Communicate a Sense of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance.....	140
32. Linear Regression: Media Change in Urgency with Strategies to Communicate a Sense of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance.....	141
33. Relationships among Change in Urgency and Utilization of Strategies.....	165

Chapter 1

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction

On June 23, 2005 the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education released a news statement that read “State Denies Accreditation for Wellston School District; Prepares to Take Over Operation of the District.” The statement went on to outline the lapse of the district and its closure on July 1, 2005 as part of the action taken by the State Board of Education. According to Dr. Kent King, Commissioner of Education, the Wellston School District had “long-standing and deep-seated problems” (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2005).

Wellston School District, located in St. Louis County, was in the second year of unaccreditation as determined by the Missouri Department of Education’s Annual Performance Report (APR). Missouri’s accountability system measures school district performance through eleven indicators that include student achievement on Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) tests, attendance, career and college placement, and graduation rates. Of the 100 points possible on the APR, Wellston scored 23 in 2003 and 39 in 2004. School districts scoring below 46 were considered unaccredited.

According to Missouri mandate, two consecutive unaccredited years requires a district to be closed and taken over by the State Board of Education through the Missouri Department of Education (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2005). The State Board of Education’s decision to takeover Wellston School District was the most severe disciplinary action taken toward a school district in recent Missouri history.

On June 29, 2005 the Missouri State Board of Education appointed a “special administrative board” to take over the operation of Wellston School District. The elected school board members and the superintendent were replaced by the three person special administrative board that was appointed by the state. The state takeover also required the 70 employees to re-apply for their positions (National School Boards Association, 2005). At that time, Wellston was the only district in Missouri to be unaccredited for two consecutive years.

On December 17, 2009 the Missouri state Board of Education voted to disband the Wellston School District for the 2010-2011 school year. The district and its 550 students will be consolidated into the adjoining Normandy School District. Wellston had shown little academic gain and was in desperate financial status. The sanctions for poor student academic performance were carried out and became real for the Wellston School District (St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 2009).

Recently, St. Louis public school district was in the same situation. After two years of being unaccredited, the school district faced being taken over by the State Board of Education through the Department of Education and an appointed transitional panel. According to a news release from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education on February 15, 2007 the State Board of Education “voted to reinstate the transitional school district, a structure authorized by law in 1998.” This was the first step toward state intervention. On June 14, 2007 a circuit court ruling allowed the transitional school board to take over the operations of the district (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2007).

Poor student performance created the context for the serious difficulties both Wellston Public Schools and St. Louis Public Schools faced. The threat of state takeover became reality and the consequences of long-term problems within the systems are still unfolding. While there were complex contributing factors cited as the cause for poor student performance (ksdk.com, 2007), an important issue is the quality of leadership found within each school district. According to Dr. Kent King, Commissioner of Education, “constant turmoil in the leadership” was one reason for state intervention into the St. Louis Public Schools (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2007).

Obviously, Missouri public schools and their leaders are under pressure from local, state, and national governments and patrons to increase student achievement. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) signed into law by President George W. Bush January 8, 2002 legislated accountability through annual achievement tests for all public school students (United States Department of Education, 2005). At the state level, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) supervises student academic achievement through Annual Performance Reports (APR) that are mandated by the state legislature and made public each fall (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2005).

Therefore, local school boards are pressured through public accountability measures to guarantee student achievement or be targeted for improvement. School boards hire superintendents to provide the leadership necessary to ensure student academic success. In a survey done by Glass, Bjork, and Brunner (2000) superintendents indicated that school boards hired candidates to be both educational leaders and managers. Missouri school boards would be no exception. Indeed, districts across the state have been performing at high levels of student achievement. While Wellston School District was unaccredited in 2005 due to

two consecutive years of poor student performance, thirty-five school districts across the state completed the fifth consecutive year of “Performance with Distinction,” the highest level of performance possible in the state of Missouri.

In addition, ten of the high performing school districts spent at, or below, the state average per pupil expenditure of \$7,679. By comparison, Wellston spent \$11,027 per pupil. If funding and resources were a component in student achievement, Wellston School District should have out-performed other districts by a wide margin. This astounding comparison begs the question, “Why the difference?”

As indicated earlier, leadership and the capacity of leadership to impact the district regardless of the variables that influence achievement must be considered as a component. In particular, the superintendent’s sense of urgency and the ability to communicate that urgency to the district is a factor in improving student success (Schlechty, 2001). This study examines superintendents’ perceived sense of urgency to improve student academic performance; and the strategies used to communicate that urgency across the district.

For most of the twentieth century local school boards and their designated leader, the superintendent, were allowed to determine curriculum, instructional strategies, and student outcomes (Fowler, 2004). Mandatory requirements from state and federal governments encompassed resource areas such as per-pupil expenditure and teacher qualifications. However, in 1983 *The Nation at Risk* (National Commission of Excellence in Education) report created an environment of scrutiny for public schools. State and federal governments began to question the results of public education and began to demand accountability.

This movement led to standards-based reform at the state and federal levels and took the form of specific curriculum standards and standardized achievement tests to measure

student performance (Fowler, 2004). With the mandate in the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 100% of all students performing at proficiency by 2014, public school districts began to look for change initiatives that would provide increased student achievement. Accountability created the perceived need for reform in school districts (Browne-Ferrigno & Glass, 2005).

As a result, change and reform in public school districts became a prominent feature of the educational landscape (Murphy & Meyers, 2008). Many districts engaged in reform initiatives that promised to increase student achievement. According to Andy Hargreaves and Ivor Goodson (2006), recent reform efforts “include forcefully executed, closely aligned, and intensively applied large-scale” projects at the district level. These authors contended that educational change was affected by the “wider social, economic, and political landscape” (p. 8).

District level leadership was also affected by the same social, economic, and political forces. Bjork, Glass, and Brunner (2005) posited that the call for reform and restructuring of public education increased the demands on superintendents and made the position even more complex and difficult. Superintendents have been hired as “change agents capable of improving learning and teaching, increasing management efficiency, and effectively responding to community demands” (p.21). Petersen and Barnett (2005) contended that school superintendents are expected to “create improvement strategies and work with the board of education to accomplish these goals” (p. 113).

At the same time there has been growing pressure for moral leadership that provided social justice for disenfranchised minorities and low socio-economic populations (Fullan, 2003, Shields, 2006). Thomas J. Sergiovanni (2007) supported the notion that educational leadership must view schools as moral communities and proposed “leadership based on the

moral authority of ideas, values, and purposes rather than on the bureaucratic authority of hierarchies and the personal authority of personalities” (p. 54). The superintendency, however, is often filled with paradoxes that limit the realization of reform that lead to increased student achievement and ultimately social justice (Grogan, 2003).

According to Grogan (2003) the district superintendent’s position of recent times is filled with contradictions. The author contended that a modern superintendency requires the leader to be a change agent that reforms programs and staffing patterns, yet is relational and approachable. District leaders are expected to be child-centered, yet efficient and fiscally conservative. Grogan identified four “paradoxes of superintendency” that include the paradoxes of vision, successful reformers need not reform, public schools adopt private sector values, and decentralized authority and increased accountability (p. 23).

Grogan went on to state that for a superintendent to be hired, he or she must articulate a five year vision before knowing the district. Additionally, the superintendent must be viewed as a reformer when, in reality, he or she may not stay long enough to see the outcomes of the reform while balancing the pressure to adopt private sector practices in a public setting. And finally, Grogan posited “It is ironic that as superintendents become more accountable for student outcomes, they are pressed to decentralize authority and empower others” (p. 23). These contradictory expectations for the district leader make the position difficult in the best of circumstances.

Historically, superintendents were hired to fill the roles of teacher-scholar, manager, democratic leader, applied social scientist, and communicator according to Theodore J. Kowalski (2005). While each of these roles required leadership the *Nation at Risk* (National Commission of Excellence in Education, 1983) report generated a focus on the effectiveness

of public schools and, therefore, the leadership necessary to meet the ensuing accountability measures at the state and federal levels (Fowler, 2004). Accountability measures of student performance have created the expectation that superintendents will make high student achievement the priority of district goals.

As chief executive officers hired directly by school boards, district superintendents are expected to guarantee student achievement and are held responsible for student success (Leithwood & Prestine, 2002; Petersen & Barnett, 2005). Superintendent as instructional leader has become the expectation of school boards. Indeed, a focus on curriculum, instruction, and assessment by the district leadership is a response to accountability requirements and must include a clearly articulated instructional vision according to Petersen and Barnett (2005). Brunner, Grogan, and Bjork (2002) concurred stating that superintendents are expected to initiate school reforms and “must be willing to use their position to change school structures, practices, and relations with the broad community” (p.225).

There are, however, critics of public education who consider administrators part of the problem rather than part of the solution (Brunner, Grogan, & Bjork, 2002; Petersen & Barnett, 2005). William Bennett, former Secretary of Education, in *The Educated Child* (Bennett, Finn, and Cribb, 2000) stated that superintendents were a part of the “local blob” (p. 629) and hindered public education.

Leithwood and Prestine (2002) contended that school administrators play a crucial role in implementing policies and reform to improve student achievement. Administrative control over resources, staff, and school culture allows school leaders to enhance or hinder school initiatives. These authors stated that “administrative leaders who do not endorse a

given policy initiative have become adept at symbolic responses and superficial compliance” (p. 51). Therefore, the role of school leader carries powerful implications, which can be positive or negative, for student success.

Recent research by the Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning, regional education laboratory, refuted the notion that superintendents are an impediment to student success. In fact, Tim Waters and Robert Marzano (2006) contended the effect of the superintendent on student achievement is larger than the effect of comprehensive school reform programs. Their meta-analysis of research identified five superintendent responsibilities that have statistically significant correlations to student achievement. These responsibilities include the goal setting process, relationship with schools, board alignment, resource alignment, monitoring and evaluating, and goal adoption. According to the authors, these responsibilities are similar to the responsibilities of effective school-level leaders.

Fullan (2003) contended that educational change and reform are necessary in the current era of accountability. Fullan (2003) further contended that true change and reform must go beyond the level of prescribed practices and include a moral purpose. Specifically, the achievement gap must be closed. District leaders intending to close the achievement gap must possess the personal factors of “hope (unwarranted optimism), enthusiasm, and energy” (p. 93) to lead change.

Furthermore, Fullan (2006) stated that change is completely dependent upon motivation. Educational change might be motivated by a crisis such as community demand for better student performance. Or motivation to change might come from mandated state and federal standards, including consequences of school closure if performance does not improve. Or motivation for educational change might come from a moral purpose such as

closing the achievement gap. Murphy and Meyers (2008) contended that reform efforts could be motivated by policies implemented at the federal, state, city, and district level.

John P. Kotter in *Leading Change* (1996) indicated that long-lasting change and reform required an eight-step process. The steps included establishing a sense of urgency, creating the guiding coalition, developing a vision and strategy, communicating the change vision, empowering employees for broad-based action, generating short-term wins, consolidating gains and producing more change, and anchoring new approaches in the culture. Kotter was very specific about the need for these steps to occur in sequence. In particular, creating a sense of urgency was the beginning point for all significant reform.

Kotter contended that a leader-not a manager-was the driving force that created long-term change and that it was incumbent upon the leader to establish a sense of urgency for the organization. The author stated that the first step of establishing a sense of urgency was an enormous task but crucial to success. Without participants feeling a strong need for change, any reform withered and died. Fighting complacency was also an issue in reform movements according to Kotter (1996). Complacency came from a sense of well-being attached to past successes. Therefore, complacency was the antithesis of a sense of urgency.

In order to push up the level of a sense of urgency (Kotter, 1996) intentional action by the leader is required. According to the author “creating a strong sense of urgency usually demands bold or even risky actions that we normally associate with good leadership” (p. 43). It is difficult for leaders who have been with an organization for a long time to establish a sense of urgency because it creates potential blame on the leader for failing to lead the organization. Kotter states “It is not coincidence that transformations often start when a new

person is placed in a key role, someone who does not have to defend his or her past actions” (p. 43).

Kotter posited that there were a variety of techniques to raise the level of urgency. While these techniques are described in business terms, the translation to educational organizations is easily recognized. The techniques were as follows:

1. Create a crisis by allowing a financial loss, exposing managers to major weaknesses vis-à-vis competitors, or allowing errors to blow up instead of being corrected at the last minute.
2. Eliminate obvious examples of excess (e.g., company-owned country club facilities, a large air force, gourmet executive dining rooms).
3. Set revenue, income, productivity, customer satisfaction, and cycle-time targets so high that they can't be reached by conducting business as usual.
4. Stop measuring subunit performance based only on narrow functional goals. Insist that more people be held accountable for broader measure of business performance.
5. Send more data about customer satisfaction and financial performance to more employees, especially information that demonstrates weaknesses vis-à-vis the competition.
6. Insist that people talk regularly to unsatisfied customers, unhappy suppliers, and disgruntled shareholders.
7. Use consultants and other means to force more relevant data and honest discussion into management meetings.

8. Put more honest discussions of the firm's problems in company newspapers and senior management speeches. Stop senior management "happy talk."
9. Bombard people with information on future opportunities, on the wonderful rewards for capitalizing on those opportunities, and on the organization's current inability to pursue those opportunities (p. 44).

Each of these techniques transfers to the educational realm. They are pertinent to the superintendent's effort to ramp up the level of urgency. Superintendents could identify an impending crisis such as district takeover by state officials. They could eliminate programs and positions not considered necessary; set goals that require change and reform; hold more people accountable for student success; and utilize data for honest discussions. They could use consultants and stakeholders to provide external feedback on performance and/or bombard people with information about opportunities for success.

Kotter (1996) warns that waiting for an actual crisis to present itself would probably be too late to create long-term change and reform. A real crisis can "cause a lot of damage" (p. 45). According to the author "if at all possible, help people see the opportunities or the crisis-like nature of the situation without inducing crippling losses" (p. 46).

In 2008 Kotter published *a sense of urgency* which further outlined components necessary in increasing true urgency. The author contended that there is one tactic and four strategies that can be used. In particular, leaders must be careful of presenting information to increase urgency that is "all head and no heart" (p. 45). While an intellectual presentation of facts and data are helpful in establishing urgency, Kotter stated "Underlying a true sense of urgency is a set of feelings: a compulsive determination to move, and win, now" (p. 45). Therefore, it is imperative for the leader to aim for the heart as well as the mind.

According to Kotter (2008) the strategy for increasing a true sense of urgency is to “create action that is exceptionally alert, externally oriented, relentlessly aimed at winning, making some progress each and every day, and constantly purging low value-added activities-all by always focusing on the heart and not just the mind” (p. 60). In addition, bringing the outside in, behaving with urgency every day, finding opportunity in crisis, and dealing with “NoNos” are tactics that can be used to create a strong sense of urgency in organizations. Actions, not words, are critical to the implementation of the strategy and tactics.

Therefore, district leaders intent upon implementing change in the organization must create and establish a strong sense of urgency among the district’s members to begin and maintain reform at the beginning of the process. According to Brunner (2000), exploring the experiences of superintendent practitioners can provide insight into best practice and educational opportunities for aspiring superintendents. Knowing the motivational factors that cause superintendents to create a sense of urgency in their districts and, therefore, create initiatives for change that improves student achievement can provide valuable knowledge of leadership in education.

Statement of the Problem

The impact of district level leadership can have a positive effect on student academic success (Waters & Marzano, 2006). Standards-based reform created an era of accountability that placed new pressures on district leaders and school boards to guarantee student achievement. Change and reform movements have become common in the field of education in attempts to improve student learning. Key to successful change in organizations is the establishment of a sense of urgency (Kotter, 1996 and 2008). Yet, little empirical insight is

available about the factors that cause superintendents to lead districts through the reform and change process to improve student academic success. In particular, the source of school superintendents' sense of urgency to improve student academic success and the techniques employed to heighten the urgency across the district have not been adequately studied.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between superintendents' perceived sense of urgency and student academic performance. More specifically, the study will examine the leadership of Missouri superintendents in districts which have been designated as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver using the data from the Annual Performance Report to sort the districts. The analysis will determine (a) if differences exist among superintendents' sense of urgency to improve student academic performance when their districts are sorted as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver as designated by Missouri's annual performance report; (b) if differences exist among superintendents' source of sense of urgency to improve student academic performance among superintendents when their districts are sorted as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver as designated by Missouri's annual performance report; (c) if differences exist among superintendents' attempts to communicate a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance when their districts are sorted as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver as designated by Missouri's annual performance report; (d) if differences exist among superintendents' perception of change in the sense of urgency across the district when their districts are sorted as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited

waiver as designated by Missouri's annual performance report; (e) if differences exist among superintendents' use of strategies to communicate a sense of urgency across the three groups; and (f) if any relationships exist between superintendents' strategies commonly associated with communicating urgency and the change in the sense of urgency across the district as perceived by the superintendent.

Research Questions

The following research questions were examined during the completion of this study:

- (1) What, if any, differences are there in the superintendent's sense of urgency to improve student academic performance and district achievement?
- (2) What, if any, differences are there in the superintendent's source of urgency to improve student academic performance and district achievement?
- (3) What, if any, differences are there in the superintendent's attempts to communicate urgency to improve student academic performance and district achievement?
- (4) What, if any, differences are there in the superintendent's perception of change in urgency to improve student academic performance across the district and district achievement?
- (5) What, if any, differences are there in the superintendent's use of strategies to communicate urgency to improve student academic performance and district achievement?
- (6) What, if any, relationships exist among the strategies used by the superintendent to communicate urgency and the change in perceived urgency across the district?

Null Hypothesis

The following hypotheses were tested in this study:

H₀₁: There are no significant differences in superintendents' perceived sense of urgency to improve student academic performance as measured by the items of the "degree of urgency" scale among superintendents when their districts are sorted as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver as designated by Missouri's annual performance report when controlling for socio-economic status as measured by district percent of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch.

H₀₂: There are no significant differences in the superintendents' reported source of urgency to improve student academic performance as measured by the items in the "source of urgency" scale when their districts are sorted as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver as designated by Missouri's annual performance report when controlling for socio-economic status as measured by district percent of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch.

H₀₃: There are no significant differences in the superintendents' reported frequency of purposeful communication of a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance among superintendents when their districts are sorted as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver as designated by Missouri's annual performance report when controlling for socio-economic status as measured by district percent of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch.

H₀₄: There are no significant differences among superintendents' perceived change in the sense of urgency to improve student academic performance across the district as reported on the "change in urgency" scale when their districts are sorted as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver as designated by Missouri's annual performance report when controlling for socio-economic status as measured by district percent of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch.

H₀₅: There are no significant differences in superintendents' reported use of strategies to communicate a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance among superintendents when their districts are sorted as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver as designated by Missouri's annual performance report when controlling for socio-economic status as measured by district percent of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch.

H₀₆: There are no significant predictive linear relationships between the superintendent strategies commonly associated with communicating urgency and a change in the sense of urgency to improve student academic performance across the district as perceived by the superintendent.

Limitations

The following are the limitations of the study:

1. The population was limited to superintendents who hold a valid superintendent's certificate in the state of Missouri and who served as district superintendent during the 2008-09 school year.

2. The findings of this study are limited to the validity and reliability of the instrument used.
3. The findings of the study are subject to the same limitations as other studies utilizing survey methods: (a) the criteria for inferring cause-and-effect relationships cannot be easily established; (b) surveys tend to be highly standardized; and (c) surveys are susceptible to reactivity, which introduces systematic measurement error (Singleton, Straits, & Straits, 1993).
4. The findings of this study are exploratory and based upon the perceptions of superintendents.
5. As a study using respondent perceptions, the findings of this study are subject to the validity of the perceptions reported by the superintendents.

Definitions

Sense of Urgency: A powerful desire to move, and win, *now* that encompasses the recognition of opportunities and hazards and action which is alert, fast moving, and focused on important issues (Kotter, 2008); knowing that the price of failing to change is much greater than the price of changing (Reeves, 2009).

Effectiveness: For the purposes of this paper, effectiveness is measured by high or improving student academic performance (Waters and Marzano, 2006).

Annual Performance Report: Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education annually evaluates the performance of all public school districts through this report. Performance determines the accreditation level of a school district. Each year districts earn points by meeting pre-determined progress standards. The points range from 14 (highest score) to 0.

Performance with Distinction: Districts are designated as accredited and performing with distinction (13-14 points).

Full Waiver: Districts are designated as accredited and performing with a full waiver (12 points).

Limited Waiver: Districts are accredited and performing with a limited waiver (9-11 points).

Provisionally Accredited: Districts are provisionally accredited (6-8 points).

Unaccredited: Districts are unaccredited (5-0 points). Districts that are unaccredited for more than two consecutive years face state take-over (DESE, 2008).

Outline of the Study

Chapter 1 contains background information and includes a rationale for the study. Research questions, hypotheses, limitations, and definitions appropriate to the study are also presented in the chapter. Chapter 2 is a review of the literature relevant to the study. Chapter 3 describes the design of the study, including procedures for collecting and analyzing the quantitative data. Chapter 4 contains the presentation and quantitative analysis of the data. Chapter 5 includes a discussion of the findings, implications for practice, research and description of future research.

CHAPTER 2

Review of Related Literature

Introduction

The role of school superintendent as change agent plays a significant part in the function of the position today. Reform initiatives require leadership skills that include an understanding of the processes involved in organizational change. In particular, possessing a sense of urgency that can be translated into a vision and action plan is necessary in school improvement practices. However, this sense of urgency has not been fully examined in the context of school leadership.

A review of pertinent literature is a necessary preface to study the factors that create a sense of urgency to improve student performance for school superintendents. This chapter begins with an overview of the major forces that bring pressure to the superintendency to improve student academic performance. Next, a description of the context within which superintendents work is presented. The current roles and expectations of the superintendent position are included. Additionally, the responsibilities and practices of effective superintendents with a positive impact on student achievement as identified by Waters and Marzano (2006) are discussed. Next, the business/organizational change processes identified by Collins (2001), Kotter (1996), and Bolman and Deal (2006) are outlined followed by comparisons with educational change processes. An overview of factors responsible for the failure of school reform follows and, finally, the impact and process of creating a sense of urgency is reviewed.

Forces for Change

Accountability

American public schools were highly respected internationally until the 1980s. Prior to the Reagan Administration policy was primarily generated at the local level by school boards. When state legislatures became involved law was shaped in part by educators, then considered experts. Public schools were rarely criticized and supported financially (Fowler, 2004).

In the 1980s a shift in the view and support of public schools occurred due to economic, demographic, and ideological changes. Ideologically, educational politics shifted from equal access for all to excellence and accountability (Fowler, 2004). This ideological shift was partially created by the economic need to fund the rising cost of education caused by an increasingly diverse population. Accountability was the result of educational reform initiatives driven by the ideology of the conservative right or “new right” (Leithwood, 2001, p. 217). Political policies designed to increase the accountability of schools provided one of “the most powerful influences on the nature” (p. 227) of the work of educational leaders.

The widening gap between the wealthiest and poorest citizens also put pressure on schools to close this gap through high quality education (Fowler, 2004). Therefore, guaranteeing results manifested itself in a variety of accountability measures at the state and federal level. For district superintendents this meant an increased need to be involved in the policy agendas of state and national government.

Educational reform and the coinciding demand for accountability have dominated education policy for more than 20 years (Elmore, 2007). This consistent, intense focus on

any policy issue was rare. Most policy issues have a life span of three to five years.

However, political interest in public education accountability was continuous since the early 1980s.

The role of governments--federal, state, and local--went from providing fiscal resources to monitoring and sanctioning schools based on student performance.

Accountability became the primary reason for school reform. Elmore (2007) stated “The Bush administration, with its centerpiece No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law, has presided over the largest single expansion of federal authority into state and local decisions in the history of the country” (p. 2).

Therefore, social, economic, and political forces manifested themselves in demands for accountability in public education. The single most pressure for educational change and reform was accountability. Petersen and Barnett (2005) contended that the “current climate with its emphasis on accountability has placed an enormous amount of political pressure on schools to demonstrate effective leadership at the district level” (p. 111).

Moral/Ethical Responsibility

Gail Furman in the 2002 University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) Presidential Address asked the important question “What is leadership for?” Furman suggested that in educational organizations leadership must be focused on moral responsibility. Educational leadership must include leadership for ethical schools, leadership for social justice, leadership for democratic community, leadership for learning in all children, and leadership for school improvement.

Social needs prompted the demand for educational change (Fullan, 2006). The income gap in the United States created social consequences that included injustice, poor

health of lower income citizens, and the long-term demise of economic growth. Educational reform was aimed at closing the income gap, creating a more productive labor force and sustaining economic development. Closing the achievement gap would close the income gap. Fullan (2003) stated “this is not just a matter of education policy and practice but also of social and economic policies, all devoted to the same end: improving the social environment as the route to greater prosperity, economically as well as for our health and well-being” (p. 15). Therefore, educational reform had a moral purpose which included providing a better life for citizens.

The identification of an achievement gap ethically required reform. Sherman and Grogan (2003) proposed that superintendents who do not take action to close the achievement gap are “unethical leaders” (p. 231). In a study of superintendents in Virginia, these authors found that district leaders recognized a discrepancy between the scores of minority and white students. However, few superintendents actually worked to close the gap. The lack of action did not meet the expectation of ethical leadership.

Moral leadership and purpose must be utilized to provide learning opportunities for all students. Why we educate is the moral backbone of leadership. Whether a leader believes that education is to provide for personal or public good, or to create a just society, or to socialize the populace will influence the decisions of that leader. Therefore, “what one believes about the moral purposes of education will determine how one enacts leadership, to what one devotes energy and resources, and will shape one’s answers to the other fundamental questions” (Shields, 2006, p. 67).

Shields (2006) contended that there has been “undue reliance on rational and technical approaches to education that has resulted in a narrow, managerial approach to

educational leadership” (p. 63). Moral leadership would go beyond the typical and “help leaders to offer more inclusive, more deeply democratic, and ultimately, more successful approaches to educating students to take their places in the ongoing dialogues of our global society.”

As presented, the era of accountability and the demand for moral leadership has placed pressure on school boards and superintendents to improve academic performance for all students regardless of economic status or ethnic background. This pressure has created an environment where change and reform are necessary to achieve high levels of student learning. Therefore, superintendent as change agent is one of many roles of the superintendency whose responsibilities include the expectation of high academic performance for all students.

Roles, Responsibilities and Expectations of Superintendents

The role and nature of the school superintendent’s position has changed and evolved over the past 150 years since the position’s inception in the 1830s. During the infancy of the profession from 1830-1850, the superintendency was a weak position often filled by volunteer clerks. C. Cryss Brunner, Margaret Grogan, and Lars Bjork (2002) stated that “superintendents were to serve by accommodating the practical education needs, views, and wishes of the local community and by supporting the common good of the nation” (p. 214).

According to Theodore J. Kowalski (2005) the superintendent’s job has been “incrementally becoming more extensive, complex, and demanding” (p.1). Kowalski contended that the superintendency could be described historically by five role conceptualizations that are pertinent today. These roles were superintendent as teacher-scholar, manager, democratic leader, applied social scientist, and communicator.

Teacher-Scholar

From 1850-1900 the role of teacher-scholar evolved from that of clerk to the board of education to the point where superintendents were hired to ensure the delivery of curriculum and teacher quality (Bjork, Glass, & Brunner, 2005; Kowalski, 2005). Superintendents fought to gain more power in their positions to include managing the finances of the district and hiring teachers (Brunner, Grogan, and Bjork, 2002). The ultimate goal was to produce well-educated citizens who were an asset to the nation's citizenry. Superintendents as teacher-scholars fulfilled this goal.

The superintendent's role as teacher-scholar today includes a variety of skills and functions. Superintendents must possess knowledge and skill in pedagogy, educational psychology, curriculum, instructional supervision, staff development, educational philosophy and history. Superintendents believe school boards expected their primary role to be educational leader (Bjork, Kowalski, and Browne-Frerrigno, 2005).

In the era of school accountability, the superintendent as instructional leader has gained new importance (Bjork, Glass, & Brunner, 2005, Petersen & Barnett, 2005). Schools held accountable for student achievement by the No Child Left Behind Act must have leadership that understands curriculum scope and sequence and assessment as well as instructional practices. The educational leader is expected to improve instruction and student learning, monitor and improve assessment practices, and supervise and improve instructional programs. Therefore, the role and responsibility of public school superintendents evolved to include being held accountable for student performance (Leithwood & Prestine, 2002; Petersen & Barnett, 2005). This created a context where instructional leadership was a priority role and expectation of the superintendent.

Expectation of instructional leadership. The superintendent as “teacher of teachers” was the fundamental expectation of the position since the early 1990s and the reform movement. As Chief Academic Officer, superintendents focused on core curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Superintendents who did not make student achievement the primary focus of their work would not stay superintendent for long (Petersen & Barnett, 2005).

Superintendents had influence and impact on creating school districts where student achievement was high. Superintendents as instructional leaders provided an instructional vision that was clearly communicated and visibly provided coordination and socialization of those responsible for achieving the vision. The superintendent spent time “monitoring and evaluating instructional and curricular program implementation” (Petersen & Barnett, 2005, p. 118) to focus on teaching and learning. In addition educational leaders focused on “teaching others about the budget process, leading the district in a strategic planning process; regularly visiting schools and classrooms” (p. 124).

Grogan (2003) agreed that the superintendency required a focus on teaching and learning. This author posited a new set of roles for the superintendent. Superintendents, according to Grogan, must be able to work through others, be comfortable with contradiction, appreciate dissent, develop a critical awareness of how children are being served, and adopt an ethic of care. This also meant that superintendents should consider all student populations while leading teaching and learning as well as being involved in all district instructional decisions (Sherman & Grogan, 2003).

Manager

Under the influence of business principles for scientific management, the role of the superintendent as manager became the primary focus in the early 1900s through 1930 and beyond (Bjork, Kowalski, & Browne-Ferrigno, 2005; Browne-Ferrigno & Glass, 2005; Brunner, Grogan, & Bjork, 2002). The role of the superintendent “was changing from that of a scholar to that of a businessman” (Brunner, Grogan, & Bjork, 2002, p. 218). Districts that were run with efficiency and effectiveness became the priority.

This remains an important component of school district leadership today. School superintendents must be both effective leaders and effective managers (Kowalski, 2005; Browne-Ferrigno & Glass, 2005). Superintendents as managers must have knowledge and skill in the areas of school law, personnel administration, finance/budgeting, facility development/maintenance, collective bargaining/contract maintenance, and public relations (Bjork, Kowalski, & Browne-Ferrigno, 2005).

Fiscal and staffing issues have created a context that requires the district leader to focus on the efficient management of resources. The period of slower economic growth since 1975 created a reluctance to pay taxes. Citizens attempted to reduce spending on public services, including public education. At the same time the cost of educating more and more children growing up in poverty also increased. Therefore, the financial burden to school districts became greater (Fowler, 2004).

In addition, there have been two major changes in school finance over the past 20 years. One was increased state funding that is tied to increased accountability for the use of those funds. The second change was the push for equity and adequacy in the distribution of

state funds to districts. School leaders must consider how to increase resources and effectively utilize those resources (Lugg, Bulkley, Firestone, & Garner, 2002).

At the same time leaders in public education found teacher shortages shaping the landscape of school districts. While the teacher shortage was created by retirement and growing student populations, the quality of teachers was also a critical issue (Lugg, Bulkley, Firestone, & Garner, 2002). The NCLB Act mandated highly qualified teachers with full state certification required superintendents to focus on teacher selection. School leaders' decision-making processes were shaped by both the quality and quantity of teachers available (Lugg, Bulkley, Firestone, & Garner, 2002; Peterson & Barnett, 2005).

Expectation of managerial leadership. Managerial leadership in education consisted of the typical organizational and transactional duties that allow an organization to function smoothly and included ensuring that tasks and projects were completed (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 2000). School boards and constituents expected superintendents to run an efficient and effective school system. The day to day operations of the system were dependent upon the management skills of the district leader. Effective management of school districts included the details of running an organization such as “busses run on schedule, bills paid on time, personnel hired and trained appropriately, student reports delivered regularly, students accounted for, work performance evaluated” (Browne-Ferrigno & Glass, 2005, p. 143). District superintendents were expected to function as the CEO and “must achieve high standards of productivity through less-hierarchically structured organizations” (p. 139).

Democratic Leader

As a public employee the superintendent was dependent upon the patrons of the school district for support. Therefore, superintendent as democratic leader involved in politics is incumbent in the position and became prominent from 1930 through the mid 1950s (Bjork, Kowalski, & Browne-Ferrigno, 2005; Bjork & Gurley, 2005). Superintendents were “expected to be more responsive to community members (including school boards), legislation and other political pressures” (Brunner, Grogan, & Bjork, 2002, p. 221).

In response to a public outcry that public education was not performing adequately, state level government became highly involved in policy making (Lugg, Bulkley, Firestone, and Garner, 2002, Fowler, 2004). Federal involvement also increased with the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act. According to Kowalski (2005), “Policy and politics are inextricably joined in a democracy, a reality that promotes democratic administration. Perhaps more so now than in the past, ideological and moral differences among community factions require facilitation and conflict management.” Bjork and Gurley (2005) concurred with Kowalski and stated that today’s superintendent must be politically astute, guided by moral values, and capable of effective communication while working with a variety of political groups.

The tone of politics in the United States also changed. Polarized, partisan politics became increasingly harsh. Included in this change was the emergence of traditional conservatives such as the Religious Right. In particular, the Religious Right was skeptical of government and government initiatives of which public schools were a part. Therefore, district superintendents have had to deal with aggressive political groups with strong ideas about public education (Fowler, 2004).

The political context was also impacted by macropolitics and micropolitics. Macropolitics consisted of federal, state, and local governments and the accompanying interests and policies of each. Within macropolitics, special interest groups found within the local community shaped the political landscape. Superintendents have been faced with the internal politics of school staff and groups (micropolitics) wanting to shape school policy and practice (Bjork & Gurley, 2005).

Superintendents were no longer bureaucratic leaders but public leaders. While a bureaucratic leader could rely upon positional authority to make decisions, public leaders had to utilize persuasion and coalition building. Superintendents as democratic leaders must have an understanding of community relations, collaborative decision making, politics, and governance (Fowler, 2004; Bjork, Kowalski, & Browne-Ferrigno, 2005).

In addition, school districts and school leaders faced changing demographics. Enrollments grew and the student population was more diverse. Many youngsters were limited in English proficiency. At the same time childhood poverty continued to grow with young children being the largest group living in poverty in the United States (Lugg, Bulkley, Firestone, & Garner, 2002; Fowler, 2004).

Demographic changes also brought new constituents into school districts. New constituent groups required superintendents to become even more politically astute and capable of working with a variety of governmental agencies and special interests. This context created instability in the local landscape and made the superintendency complex and difficult (Bjork & Gurley, 2005).

Expectation of distributive/participative leadership. To deal with the changing landscape of communities, superintendents were expected to utilize “collaboration,

community, cooperation, teams and relationship-building” as opposed to past notions of “control, power, authority and management” (p. 226) according to Brunner, Grogan, and Bjork (2002). This created new opportunities for superintendents to practice distributive leadership where shared decision-making and problem-solving involved a variety of stakeholders.

The role of superintendents shifted from the bureaucratic forms of manager and supervisor to collaborator. This collaborative approach allowed democratic leadership to embrace the ethical standards of constitutional values, public interest, citizenship, and social equity (Sherman & Grogan, 2003). Participatory leadership lent itself to the concept of “power with/to” as described by Brunner (2000). Rather than the standard view of a leader’s use of power to maintain authority over subordinates, “power with/to” promoted the idea that empowering stakeholders to make decisions in collaborative settings was an emerging practice of effective leaders. Participatory leadership embodied “power with/to.”

Thomas J. Sergiovanni in *The Lifeworld of Leadership* (2000) contended “leadership based on shared ideas are more powerful and enduring than leadership based on personality and interpersonal skills” (p. 168). A moral leader engages in collaboration and encouragement to improve quality of life. Leaders should facilitate decision-making based on the democratic notion of direct representation and allow stakeholders to be involved in the process. School superintendents are expected to possess the political acuity needed to work collaboratively with all stakeholders to guarantee success for all students and therefore, the common good (Bjork & Gurley, 2005).

Applied Social Scientist and Social Activist

Since the 1950s the use of scientific inquiry for problem-solving has been taught to aspiring superintendents with the hope that the method would be applied in practice (Fusarelli & Fusarelli, 2005). As educational administration began to be considered an academic discipline, the infusion of the social sciences such as psychology, sociology, social psychology, political science, and economics became the theory behind the practice of district level leadership.

During the 1970s superintendents began to be held accountable for the achievement of all children including those considered “at-risk” (Brunner, Grogan, & Bjork, 2002). Soon after, a movement from work that required physical labor to work that required intellectual ability created a need for graduates with a new set of skills. The economy dictated, to some degree, the type of product public education produced and in turn, the type of leadership necessary to produce employable graduates (Lugg, Bulkley, Firestone, & Garner, 2002).

Leithwood and Prestine (2002) agreed that economic contexts influenced public and policymaker views of public education. With pressure to compete in a global competitive economy, governments insisted that public schools produce graduates that capable of enhancing the nation’s economy. This resulted in many attempts at school reform.

The No Child Left Behind Act put even more pressure on district leaders to guarantee high achievement by all youngsters regardless of ethnicity or poverty level. Currently, superintendents are expected to solve the social problems of their students and the students’ community (Fusarelli & Fusarelli, 2005). This requires background in and an understanding of the social sciences as well as becoming an activist in the community. District leaders must have an understanding of quantitative and qualitative research, the

behavioral sciences, and measurement and evaluation (Grogan, 2003; Bjork, Kowalski, & Browne-Ferrigno, 2005). Superintendents must be able to manage and utilize a variety of information that includes data, standardized test scores, and statistics on school violence and drop-out rates to address the issues within their district and community.

Fusarelli and Fusarelli (2005) contended that superintendents as social scientists and social activists are not an option but a moral imperative. “Because superintendents are ultimately charged with the responsibility for educating all children, this advocacy responsibility falls squarely on their shoulders. If not them, whom?” (p. 200) asked these authors.

Expectation of moral/ethical leadership. Inherent in the superintendency is the moral obligation to guarantee high student achievement and academic success. Superintendents must lead districts with a focus on educational success for all students. District leaders “must lead school districts in creating shared visions that nurture students of all races and socioeconomic levels” (Sherman & Grogan, 2003, p. 224). School leadership requires decision-making that entails moral dimensions. Making the right choice often includes “value judgments about the right thing to do in the face of more than one desirable choice” (Goldring & Greenfield, 2002, p.3).

Therefore, the superintendent as applied social scientist is expected to research, analyze and solve social problems (Kowalski, 2005). Superintendents are expected to “use scientifically based research to determine what works and what does not,” “to assume the role of public advocate and activist,” and “to discern quality studies from those that are poorly designed and/or advocacy-driven from those with limited empirical basis or those

utilizing substandard research designs and methods” (Fusarelli and Fusarelli, 2005, p. 188) all in the hope of providing high quality education for all students.

Communicator

The Information Age of the mid-1970s and beyond required that all organizational leaders be consummate communicators (Bjork, Kowalski, & Browne-Ferrigno, 2005; Kowalski, 2005). The era of accountability, reform, and restructuring required leaders to utilize communication in every interaction, not just in specific, isolated situations.

Superintendents were bombarded by demands and information from community groups, state and federal departments, parents, teachers, and board members. Vast amounts of information must be distilled for inclusion and utilization in school settings (Petersen & Barnett, 2005).

Therefore, the superintendent as communicator was an important role for district leaders. Communication influenced the culture and productivity of the organization. School superintendents must be proficient in verbal and written communications, media relations, listening skills, and public speaking. This is particularly true when working with the many political constituencies found in school communities (Bjork & Gurley, 2005; Bjork, Kowalski, & Browne-Ferrigno, 2005; Kowalski & Keedy, 2005).

Kowalski and Keedy (2005) took the notion of superintendent as communicator one step further. Prior to 1980 a classical model of communication was used by superintendents that was basically focused on efficiency and was impersonal in nature. During the 1980s the need for a different type of communication evolved. The reform movement required communication that was multi-layered rather than one-way. Superintendents had to engage in relational communication which occurred at a variety of levels to enhance problem-solving and decision-making.

Expectation of transformational/reform/change agent/ leadership.

Transformational leadership practices are seen as a response to accountability in the era of reform where superintendents are expected to be change agents that lead districts to meet the student achievement measurements of the standards-based movement. The superintendent as change agent required transformational leadership. A transformational leader promoted change by convincing followers of a need for a moral, positive outcome (Leithwood, 2001).

Transformational leaders intend to change the organization for the better and, therefore, use their power and influence to accomplish positive change (Leithwood & Duke, 1999). Transformative leadership can best be described as the use of moral power to change educational outcomes. A transformational educational leader “is attempting to level the playing field, to provide all students with equal opportunities to succeed, to have a broad range of choice and future opportunities” (Shields, 2006, p.78). Therefore, transformative educators provided hope and optimism for the future by providing change in small and incremental steps.

While the notion of transformational leadership was first presented by James McGregor Burns in 1978 and further refined by Bass in 1985, Yukl (2002) presented guidelines for transformational leadership that included “articulate a clear and appealing vision; explain how the vision can be attained; act confidently and optimistically; express confidence in followers; use dramatic, symbolic actions to emphasize key values; lead by example; and empower people to achieve the vision” (p.263). The vision of the leader must be attainable and that the leader must explain how the vision can be reached.

Superintendents as transformational leaders are expected to create a commitment to a vision that allows the educational organization to extend the capacity for performance (Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach, 2000; Yukl, 2002). The school leader is expected to create positive morale and move teachers to higher levels of expertise and performance (Leithwood, 2001). Transformational leaders must inspire a sense of urgency, motivate followers to action, and depend upon an emotional response. Research indicates that a transformational leader has a positive impact on follower performance (Yukl, 2002).

Multiple Blended Roles

George J. Petersen and Bruce G. Barnett (2005) suggested that while some roles have dominated time periods, the superintendency actually required multiple blended roles. According to Kowalski (2005) the superintendent as communicator, applied social scientist, democratic leader, manager, and teacher-scholar are all expectations of the district leader position. Blending these roles is commonly practiced by modern district leaders. The degree to which a superintendent practiced each role depended upon the context of the community and the needs of the district (Petersen & Barnett, 2005).

Expectation of contingent leadership. Contingency leadership theory posited that contextual situations cause leaders to appear and many individuals possess leadership abilities that are manifested in a specific event (Davis, 2003). Leadership is dependent upon specific situations, "...outstanding leadership is exquisitely sensitive to the context in which it is exercised" (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 2004, p. 4). Contingency leadership is described in terms of what leaders do in response to situations and problems throughout the life of the organization.

Bensimon, Neuman and Birnbaum (1989) also contended that leadership in organizational settings is dependent upon the setting and the participants in the organization. Indeed, “leadership is to a great extent in the eye of the beholder” (p. 26). The ability of superintendents to apply a variety of leadership theories and roles can lead to effectiveness. However, ineffective leaders often focused on one theory or role rather than applying two or more models when leading the organization.

The role of the educational leader is a result of the community in which the school exists and is shaped by laws, policies and regulation. Unique contexts create options for a variety of leadership styles that are reflected in roles and decision-making. School systems might become bureaucratic and centralized, or more autonomous, or move towards being immersed in the needs and activities of the community working for social justice. The leader’s response to the setting determines the direction of the school. However, all settings are impacted by national, regional, and local demands for high student performance (Petersen & Barnett, 2005).

In summary, the pressure of accountability and the moral obligation to close the achievement gap permeates the field of public education. While there are various roles, responsibilities, and expectations for superintendents that have evolved over time, the current context for district leadership is defined by the academic success of students. Superintendents must manage schools effectively and efficiently, utilize physical and fiscal resources, provide a highly qualified staff, and guarantee a safe hospitable learning environment while graduating students with proficient skills and knowledge. The ultimate measure of superintendent effectiveness is student academic performance as measured by local, state,

and federal standards. All other roles and responsibilities are important only as they support and relate to student achievement.

Superintendent Impact on Student Academic Performance

The current expectation of improved and high student achievement in the context of accountability defines superintendent effectiveness. If district leaders are to be evaluated by the success of their students, there is a need to identify specific characteristics and practices of superintendents of districts with high student achievement. In a meta-analysis, Waters and Marzano (2006) found superintendent effectiveness can be achieved through specific responsibilities and practices. According to these authors “when district leaders effectively address specific responsibilities, they can have a profound, positive impact on student achievement in their districts” (p. 9). Student achievement improves under the guidance of instructional leaders at the building and district level. Effective leaders “are directly involved in instructional policy through communication, staff development, establishing incentives for use of new instructional strategies, and displaying knowledge of curricular materials” (Andrews & Grogan, 2002, p. 240).

As an example, Leithwood and Prestine (2002) described a case study of an Illinois public school district where leaders at the central office level played an important role in improving student achievement. First, leaders got the attention of the faculty and staff by using data of student performance to identify a need. Then, the district’s employees were exposed to research-based best practices and provided the training necessary to utilize the practices in the classroom. This process was spear-headed by the district’s leadership and led to improvement.

In their meta-analysis Waters and Marzano (2006) cited collaborative goal setting, non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction, board support and alignment of district goals, monitoring achievement and instruction goals, and the use of resources to support the goals for instruction and achievement as specific practices of superintendents in districts with high student achievement. Embedded in the practices are a variety of leadership skills that requires the multiple blended roles. Multiple blended roles include teacher-scholar, manager, democratic leader, applied social scientist, and communicator and are necessary for the completion of these responsibilities (Kowalski, 2005; Petersen & Barnett, 2005).

Effective superintendents are responsible for providing a process for goal-setting. In order to fulfill this responsibility the process must encompass the practice of including the stakeholders that will be involved in the implementation of the goals. The goal-setting must be collaborative in nature and best practice requires the board and administration to identify joint objectives. District goals need to support student achievement and not past accomplishment (Waters & Marzano, 2006). Superintendents must employ the roles of communicator and democratic leader in this collaborative setting (Kowalski, 2005).

Once a collaborative process is in place the next superintendent responsibility requires the outcome to be non-negotiable goals for student achievement and classroom instruction (Waters & Marzano, 2006). An effective superintendent must assume the role of teacher-scholar to lead a district in the areas of student learning and instruction (Kowalski, 2005). Superintendent as instructional leader will engage stakeholders in setting achievement goals that are attainable and expected. Superintendents who are effective establish a “common framework for classroom instructional design and planning, common

instructional language or vocabulary, and consistent use of research-based instructional strategies in each school” (Waters & Marzano, 2006, p. 12).

However, it should be noted that Waters and Marzano (2006) caution that strong leaders focused on goals that do not support student achievement “can have a minimal or even negative effect on student performance” (p. 17). Therefore, the importance of the role of teacher-scholar is imperative to the success of effective superintendents as measured by student achievement.

Districts with good student performance are led by school boards who support the identified student achievement and classroom instructional goals. It is the responsibility of the superintendent to convince the board that the non-negotiable goals are valid and necessary to student success. In particular the practice of working with the board president to identify potential conflict within the district and the political climate of the community is an important practice of effective district leaders. Superintendents who are effective also provide professional development for board members to enhance the understanding of curriculum and instruction issues (Waters & Marzano, 2006). Board training to support the non-negotiable goals helps align the board and administration.

Another important responsibility of an effective superintendent is monitoring achievement and instructional goals (Waters & Marzano, 2006). The superintendent as applied social scientist is particularly necessary to fulfill this responsibility. The practice of utilizing scientific method to gather and analyze data as an indicator of student success (Kowalski, 2005) is incumbent in this process. This practice includes “annually evaluating principals, reporting student achievement data to the board on a regular basis, ensuring that

the curricular needs of all student populations are met, and observing classrooms during school visits” (p. 15).

Finally, effective superintendents as measured by high student achievement must guarantee adequate resources are available to accomplish the non-negotiable goals. Strong fiscal management is necessary to provide for student achievement. This includes the practice of providing professional development for all instructional staff in support of a common instructional model. The superintendent as manager is the primary role involved in fulfilling this responsibility (Brown-Ferrigno & Glass, 2005; Waters & Marzano, 2006).

Superintendents who accomplish these five responsibilities are responsible for what Waters and Marzano (2006) called “defined autonomy.” Defined autonomy allows individual schools and principals to direct their particular programs within the boundaries of attaining the non-negotiable goals. Some of the practices that help achieve defined autonomy include “hiring experienced teachers, promoting innovation, maintaining high expectations for school performance, and providing leadership of curriculum development” (p. 16). Therefore, effective superintendents practiced distributive leadership (Brunner, Grogan, & Bjork, 2002) within central office and within individual schools.

Research indicated that district level leadership must focus on student achievement whether for accountability or moral purpose or both. When student achievement goals were not met, reform was necessary. Subsequently, school district reform or change was a part of the current landscape of public education (Fullan, 2003). The focus on student achievement required school district administrators to lead change aimed at guaranteeing high academic achievement for all students. Educational change was the norm rather than the exception in public education.

Change to Improve Student Performance

Learning Organizations

The publicized failure of the nineteenth-century industrial age school model as first identified in *A Nation at Risk* (1983) created the surge of educational change that continues to the present (Senge, 2000). Attempts to improve schools were frequent and often named “school reform,” “effective schools” and “educational renewal.” Various authors addressed organizational change and described the processes required to change education and ultimately, improve student achievement.

Schein (1996) indicated change in organizations requires learning. Therefore, leaders of changing institutions must be engaged in the process of developing learning organizations. Senge (2000) contended that leaders of schools as learning organizations must engage in a learner-centered approach rather than an authority-centered approach in all aspects of the school. Change involved uncertainty and, therefore, inquiry. Looking for answers to problems required that learning became a part of the culture of the school for all stakeholders.

Ikujiro Nonaka and Hirotaka Tachuchi (1995) agreed that change and the process of learning involved with change create a continuous learning cycle. This continuous knowledge creation cycle is the foundation of effective organizations. Indeed, organizational health is measured by the ability to adapt to change. “All of this requires tremendous learning---how to collaborate, how to become more trusting and open in communications, how to deal with dependency in the new kinds of fluid hierarchical relationships, how to wield personal vs. positional power without losing the commitment of subordinates, how to design organizations with fluid boundaries, and so on” (Schein, 1996, p. 235).

While the notion of organizational learning is pertinent to educational institutions, Sergiovanni (2007) argued that many change initiatives are designed for the corporate world which consisted of formal institutions. According to this author, educational institutions are social organizations and resemble “communities, congregations, and families” (p.52). Therefore, the change processes of formal organizations that involve restructuring to include “downsizing, standards setting, accountability, and increased competition” (p.55) do not work in school reform initiatives.

Andy Hargreaves and Dean Fink (2006) agreed that reform based on quick returns did not create the type of educational reform needed for the long term improvement of schools. However, educators should learn from the business world’s successful practices. In particular, education would benefit from sustainable reform based on the behaviors of enduring, successful businesses.

Business Organization Change Models

One quintessential book on change in the business world is *Good to Great* by Jim Collins (2001). Collins describes the specific components required to move an organization from good to great. The transformation from good to great consists of three stages: disciplined people, discipline thought, and disciplined action. Each stage contains two key concepts which ultimately created the great organization.

In the disciplined people stage the key to changing organizations from good to great was called Level 5 Leadership. The Level 5 leader consists of “a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will” (Collins, 2001, p. 13). While being quiet, self-effacing, and sometimes shy, these leaders “are fanatically driven, infected with an incurable need to produce results” (p. 30). Level 5 leaders surrounded themselves with the right people

in the right positions to move toward greatness before identifying the vision or goal which Collins called First Who...Then What.

The next stage of moving from good to great, disciplined thought, consisted of Confront the Brutal Facts (Yet Never Lose Faith). This concept maintained that members of the organization must have unwavering faith in the promise of success while at the same time facing the truth of their situation day in and day out. Disciplined thought also contained the Hedgehog Concept. Great companies must possess the ability to be the best in the world at something and the Hedgehog Concept incorporated that notion within the thinking of the organization (Collins, 2001).

The last stage of moving a company from good to great was disciplined action. Disciplined action was based on disciplined people with disciplined thought creating a Culture of Discipline which did not require extensive bureaucracy or controls and allowed for high levels of entrepreneurship. The final concept in good to great organizations was the selection and implementation of technologies to speed and support the process of change and entrepreneurship that Collins (2001) called Technology Accelerators. Technology was not used to start a transformation but rather to enhance the change.

Finally, Collins' (2001) research suggested that moving from good to great was not the result of dramatic change programs or revolutionary restructuring. There was no miracle moment or flash of brilliance. Rather, great companies resulted from the relentless pursuit of the six concepts described previously: Level 5 Leadership, First Who...Then What, Confront the Brutal Facts (Yet Never Lose Faith), The Hedgehog Concept, A Culture of Discipline, and Technology Accelerators.

John P. Kotter, Professor, Harvard Business School, also provided a framework for change in business organizations. This author focused on an eight step process described in *Leading Change* (1996). The steps included establishing a sense of urgency, creating the guiding coalition, developing a vision and strategy, communicating the change vision, empowering employees for broad-based action, generating short-term wins, consolidating gains and producing more change, and anchoring new approaches in the culture.

The process had multiple steps that created enough motivation to overcome all obstacles. In addition, the process required the driving force of high-quality leadership. The sequence of the steps was critical to success. The purpose of steps one through four was to extinguish the status quo as acceptable and steps five through seven was to institute new practices. Step eight provided the mechanism for making the change a part of the new status quo. In particular, creating a sense of urgency was the beginning point for all significant reform (Kotter, 1996).

Establishing a sense of urgency consisted of examining the market and facing the current realities. This meant identifying and discussing crisis, a potential crisis, or an opportunity for growth. This process is much like Collins' "Confront the Brutal Facts" (2001) and was championed by the Level 5 leader.

When change or reform failed according to Kotter (2008) it is most often because the sense of urgency was not established and maintained throughout the remaining seven steps. Collins (2001) maintained that moving from good to great requires a similar "unrelenting pursuit of producing results now" (p. 30). Step two in the change process consisted of creating a guiding coalition of people who would work like a team and possess enough

power to move the transition forward (Kotter, 1996). This step is similar to Collins' stage two disciplined people or getting the "right people on the bus" (2001, p. 62).

Next in Kotter's process was developing a vision and strategy and then communicating the vision (1996). Steps three and four introduced the change. The guiding coalition is expected to model the behaviors necessary for change. The change strategies must be adhered to consistently. These steps resemble the Hedgehog Concept. The Hedgehog Concept identified the passion of the business. Great organizations adhere stringently to their Hedgehog Concept (Collins, 2001).

Steps five through seven in the Kotter (1996) transformation process introduced the new practices of the organization. Step five consisted of empowered action. Empowered action included getting rid of obstacles, changing systems and structures as well as encouraging risk-taking and creativity. Step six identified short-term wins as a catalyst for the increased improvement found in step 7. The *Good to Great* process recognized that disciplined people and disciplined thought led to disciplined action in companies moving from good to great. Disciplined action allowed employees freedom and responsibility to make changes within the framework of the Hedgehog Concept to improve the company (Collins, 2001).

Finally, Kotter (1996) maintained that step eight anchored the new approaches in the culture of the organization. Much like Collins' findings in *Good to Great* (2001) which indicated that the final process in transformation requires a change in the culture of the business, *Leading Change* (1996) also completed the process with the cultural change of the organization. As a part of the cultural change, Kotter's step eight included a process for ensuring leadership succession.

Lee G. Bolman and Terrance E. Deal in *The Wizard and the Warrior: Leading with Passion and Power* (2006) also outlined a process for successful change utilized by leaders from a variety of time periods and contexts. In the first step, leaders should provide “a wake-up call for the status quo and a vision of future success” (p. 210) followed by leading with symbolic language and events. The next step of the process focused on the change vision and a sense of urgency. Finally, leaders should be persistent, take risks, and model courage to effect change. The steps in this process are similar to that of Collins (2001) and Kotter (1996).

While Collins (2001), Kotter (1996), and Bolman and Deal (2006) outlined processes for change in organizations, the literature also contained change models specifically for education. These models consisted of similar components found in the business and organization processes.

Educational Change Models

Gene E. Hall and Shirley M. Hord in *Implementing Change; Patterns, Principles, and Potholes* (2006) asserted that professional learning communities were the ideal vehicles for the change processes necessary for school improvement. Professional learning communities have five dimensions that include shared values and vision, collective learning and application, supportive and shared leadership, supportive conditions, and shared personal practice. When these components are in place, change to improve student achievement is likely.

Implementing change required “patience and persistence” (Hall & Hord, 2006, p. 7) and was a process, not an event that often took three to five years. This is consistent with the findings of Collins (2001) who noted great businesses were not the result of a quick,

miraculous change but rather of persistent focus on improvement. In addition, Hall and Hord recognized that there are a set of specific actions or interventions that promote change and that on-going leadership is essential in long-term change. Collins (2001) and Kotter (1996) concurred that leadership is critical in making new practices a part of organizational culture.

At the same time “an organization does not change until the individuals within it change” (Hall & Hord, 2006, p. 7) and “facilitating change is a team effort” (p.12). These principles are consistent with Kotter’s (1996) and Collins’ (2001) notions that having a “guiding coalition” and “the right people on the bus” are imperative to organizational improvement. The actual change process is initiated by “change facilitators” who lead the organization through six functions or steps. The steps include developing, articulating, and communicating a vision; planning and providing resources; investing in professional learning; checking on progress; providing continuous assistance; and creating a context supportive of change.

When compared to the processes outlined by Kotter (1996), Collins (2001), and Bolman and Deal (2006) there is a major difference in the starting point of the improvement. The business organization models started with assessing the current realities and establishing an urgency for change; then a vision was developed. The process described by Hall and Hord (2006) indicated that developing a shared vision is the first step in the improvement process. It should be noted that these authors stated that school improvement is often mandated from external sources and perhaps precludes the need to establish urgency first.

Michael Fullan in *The New Meaning of Educational Change* (2007) described the educational change process as consisting of three phases; initiation, implementation, and institutionalization. The initiation phase occurred when “someone or some group, for

whatever reasons, initiates or promotes a certain program or direction of change” (p. 66).

Initiation included the decision to implement a change and the planning involved. There is the assumption, sometimes faulty, that the change is needed.

The second phase of the educational change process was implementation.

Implementation was making the change a part of actual practice. Factors that affected implementation included need, clarity, complexity, and the quality of the program. In particular, practitioners must see a need for the change and the details of the change clearly articulated (Fullan, 2007). These factors resembled Kotter’s (1996) process of establishing urgency and a vision for change but do not appear as the beginning steps of the process. Fullan agreed with Kotter that “early rewards and some tangible successes were critical incentives during implementation” (p. 89).

Institutionalization or continuation was the final phase of the change process according to Fullan (2007). This step was the most difficult and least likely to occur. For school reform initiatives to have long-term results, the “new” practices must become embedded into the culture of the organization. Continued financial support was critical to phase three as well as continuous leadership. Phase III resembled Kotter’s (1996) final step in the change process which was to anchor the new approach in the culture of the business.

In *Turnaround Leadership* (2006) Fullan identified elements that create successful change. While some elements were specific to education such as focusing on literacy, numeracy, and student well-being, other elements were also found in the work of Collins (2001) and Kotter (1996). In particular, leadership must be continuous and focused. While the initial leadership response to a school in crisis was to tighten control, over time the purpose of leadership was to create additional leaders that would guarantee consistent

improvement over time. The author stated “Staying the course is crucial because initial gains in a turnaround situation are fragile and unclear” (Fullan, 2006, p. 62).

In districts that improved student achievement, district level leaders clearly understood that the intellectual and moral commitment for reform must begin at the top. These leaders also recognized and supported “cross-district lateral capacity development” (Fullan, 2006, p. 77). In order for true reform to occur sustainable leadership was critical at all levels. The Level 5 leadership identified in *Good to Great* (Collins, 2001) and the Guiding Coalition in *Leading Change* (Kotter, 1996) were both examples of the leadership elements noted by Fullan.

Richard F. Elmore (2007) in *School Reform from the Inside Out* took a different approach to educational change processes. While change has been continuous in schools, the type of change did not impact the basic knowledge of teachers and students or effect teaching and learning. In other words, while change to curriculum, schedules, assessment and almost every component of schooling occurred, very little change occurred to basic teaching practices.

Consequently, until effective teaching was an expected professional norm rather than an individual trait, educational reform was impossible according to this author. Reform processes were ineffective because they engage a small fraction of teachers who were intrinsically motivated to change. Current change strategies will never change the practices at the classroom level (Elmore, 2007).

Elmore (2007) went on to propose four transformational strategies to create change that would reach the classroom. First, he recommended the development and implementation of external structures to promote and support excellent teaching such as national teaching

standards. This strategy would provide teachers with expectation for excellence as well as examples to follow. In essence, this strategy would develop a vision for classroom teaching. Reform and change would be implemented to reach the vision of best practice.

The next strategy by Elmore (2007) proposed changing school organizational structures into small components that would motivate teachers to participate in excellent teaching when exposed to others modeling best practices. This type of reform required what Kotter (1996) identified as “empowering for broad-based action” and allowed for changing structures that undermined the vision.

Strategy three would challenge educators to find processes that would allow for the replication of teaching successes. Again, this strategy resembled Kotter’s (1996) step seven in the change process which is consolidating gains and producing more change. And finally, Elmore (2007) recommended that schools create organizational structures that would encourage new teaching practices and then support those practices over time. This final strategy is designed to “anchor the change” of best teaching practices into the culture of educational institutions. Making the new changes a part of the culture is the last step in Kotter’s (1996) process.

Phillip C. Schlechty in *Shaking Up the School House* (2001) also believed that schools are constantly changing. However, the changes rarely create improvement in student performance. School reform required “organizations where change is embraced as an opportunity rather than coped with as a problem” and “improvement must be continuous and must be embedded in all systems” (p. 3). In addition, educators must be ready to create change in unprecedented ways in an unprecedented social and technological environment.

Schlechty (2001) outlined an educational change process that included steps found in Kotter's (1996) description of the change process for businesses. The leader must start by "ensuring the support of others" (p. 166). This includes identifying a need for the change and establishing a sense of urgency about moving the change forward.

The next steps for the leader in Schlechty's (2001) process were to develop and communicate a shared vision that would inspire others to act. Since change causes confusion and uncertainty, it is imperative for the change process and the intended results to be clearly stated and easily understood by all the stakeholders. These steps helped guarantee the success of the transformation. Finally, school reform initiatives required incentives for change. "Incentives that bring positive recognition and honor to the recipient are especially powerful" (p. 173). Instilling a sense of collegiality among staff can help produce incentives and institutionalize the change.

Clear and specific processes for change exist in business and in education. However, long lasting change is elusive, rare, and often impossible. The literature provided an examination of the failure of reform.

Why Educational Reform Fails

Scale and Superficial Change

School reform has failed because there have only been superficial changes in schools such as schedule changes, school-based management, or professional development. The failure of school reform was based on the inability of the school organization to change at the systems level. Superficial change occurred frequently in schools at the project and program level but never really impacted the system and structure of the institution itself. "To a great extent, such superficial changes in schooling amount to little more than rearranging the deck

chairs on the *Titanic*—the action is earnest but does address the underlying problem. What is needed is substantive change in the structure and design of schooling, and educational leaders committed to equity and excellence must lead this effort” (Fusarelli & Fusarelli, 2005, p. 193).

The type of change has been first-order or superficial change due to the scale of the change attempt. Large-scale initiatives rarely impacted the classroom, instructor, or student level (Elmore, 2007; Fullan, 2007). Therefore, change that attempted to improve student learning has failed because it did not get into classrooms.

In *Professional Learning Communities at Work* (1998) DuFour and Eaker contended that the complexity of the change process made long term educational reform difficult, if not impossible, to accomplish. The authors went on to state that employees already “working within the system will always resist, always fight to preserve the system” (p. 50). Therefore, conflict is expected in any change process that leads to substantial reform.

Complacency and the Status Quo

DuFour and Eaker (1998) cited the work of John Kotter. Kotter (1996) identified common mistakes in the change process which included allowing too much complacency, failing to create a sufficiently powerful guiding coalition as well as underestimating and under-communicating the power of vision. These mistakes occur at the beginning of the process which is where the status quo is entrenched. Without removing the status quo, change cannot move forward.

Kotter (1996) went on to state that permitting structural and cultural obstacles to block the change process, failing to create short-term wins, declaring victory too soon, and neglecting to anchor changes firmly in the culture also sabotage reform. Even if some

change occurs it will slowly fade unless these issues are addressed. Long-lasting reform required a commitment to making the changes a part of the organizational culture.

Kotter (2008) thoroughly described the importance of a sense of urgency in the change process. A low sense of urgency and a high sense of complacency created failure up to 70% of the time. In particular, complacency is complicit in the success or failure of reform and was “very often invisible to the people involved” (p. ix). Organizational success created complacency and a false notion of prosperity even if the success was several years old or marginal.

In addition to complacency, Kotter (2008) went on to state that a false sense of urgency was also found in failed reform efforts. A false sense of urgency was characterized by frenetic activity spurred by anxiety, anger, and frustration without focus. Confusing a real sense of urgency with a false sense according to the author was a major dysfunction of organizations. Schlechty (2001) concurred that “fear and panic produce frenetic activity-activity that is without clear direction, activity that has little prospect of correcting the conditions that gave rise to the threat in the first place, though it consumes considerable energy and gives the illusion that “something” is being done” (p. 9).

While Kotter identified these items as contributing to the failure of reform efforts, in the book “*a sense of urgency*” (2008) he furthered the contention that all change begins with a sense of urgency and the single most important error made in the change process was not creating a strong enough sense of urgency. Therefore, momentum for change lacked the necessary support. Leadership, however, could create conditions that avoided the mistakes in the change process.

Leadership

The lack of leadership in the change process created failure in school reform efforts. Sustainable school improvement required a leader as change agent capable of creating and communicating a shared vision for the organization and capable of facilitating conversation and innovation that created trust (Hall & Hord, 2006; Schlechty, 2001; Sparks, 2007). An effective leader of school change must possess the skills of a transformational leader that included the ability to use charisma to communicate vision, trust, and empowerment of those involved in the change process. Effective leadership would also recognize and reconcile the competing value systems embedded in change as well as incorporate participation from constituents. Democratic leadership would be required to balance the competing values of all stakeholders (Carlson, 1996).

Sergiovanni (2007) posited that leadership for change required idea-based leadership. Idea-based leadership, according to this author, utilized moral authority based on shared values and commitments that translated to actions by all the members of the school community. Leadership built upon moral purposes would allow for effective school change and be based on democratic principles.

Sustainable Leadership

Another contributing factor to the failure of school reform was the lack of continuous leadership. The key to true school reform was sustainable “leadership that develops strategies for building capacity with a focus on results” (Fullan, 2006, p. 32). One frequent mistake that doomed long-term improvement was the lack of planned succession of leadership to maintain the direction of reform.

Superintendent stability was critical to high student achievement. In particular, “superintendents should note the importance of remaining in a district long enough to see the

positive impact of their leadership on student learning and achievement” (Waters & Marzano, 2006, p. 20). Short terms of tenure in urban areas created serious concerns for the ability to sustain student achievement (Fowler, 2004; Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000). Sustainable and continuous leadership was an important factor in long term improvement. A leader who would stay the course while urgently pressing for improvement was the most effective for continuous educational change (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006).

Change and Sources of Urgency

Long-term, systemic change can be supported by a strong sense of urgency which provides a glimpse of what the future may hold if reform is implemented. “Most educators simply do not seem to respond to warnings of impending doom” (DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p.53). A sense of urgency does not require panic or crisis but rather an intense and compelling sense of purpose (Sparks, 2007).

Kotter (2008) proposed the notion that change was no longer an episodic event in the life of organizations but rather a continuous component of success. In particular, an on-going sense of urgency was required due to the rate of change experienced at a global level. Kotter stated, “Put simply, a strong sense of urgency is moving from an essential element in big change programs to an essential asset in general” (p. xi). Change is continuous and will happen regardless (White, 2005).

There continues to be a sense of urgency for large-scale reform in education. The reasons include the need for global citizens that can work with diversity and solve complex problems. Embedded in this notion is the need for teaching skills that enable students to learn continuously throughout their lifetime to meet the needs of an ever-changing global

workplace (Fullan, 2007). Effective school leaders utilize change to the advantage of the organization (White, 2005).

While a sense of urgency is necessary in school reform, the source of the urgency can stem from a variety of areas. As the leader of change, a school superintendent can gain a sense of urgency through pressure from the local community. Through school board elections the public community has the opportunity to change the system. According to Thomas L. Alsbury (2003) “dissatisfaction from within the community can lead to school board member and superintendent turnover” (p.667). Therefore, the job security of the superintendent is dependent upon incorporating a sense of urgency into leadership behaviors if the community demands it.

Recognizing the potential of changing community values might also create an urgent need to change the district. The superintendent who can anticipate changes in community values can change policy, procedures, and performance to maintain employment. Often the defeat of an incumbent board member signals community dissatisfaction (Alsbury, 2003). Ultimately, a change in school board members can result in the release of the superintendent if the superintendent does not react promptly to changing community issues and concerns.

While a change in board members can signal the need for change by the superintendent, the relationship between the board of education and the district leader can also have an impact on the superintendent’s sense of urgency. Board relationships are critical to the success of superintendents as they meet the local, state, and national pressures for improving student achievement. Board approval of superintendent recommendations was dependent upon the perceptions of the superintendent’s trustworthiness, expertise, and compatibility with the board president (Petersen & Short, 2001).

Tom Corcoran, Susan H. Fuhrman, and Catherine L. Belcher (2001) related that even when school district reform is going well, superintendents can lose their positions as cited in a case study of three school districts. The three school districts launched reform measures to improve student achievement with the superintendents leading the initiatives. Within four years all three superintendents left the district under pressure from the board and local political leaders even though there was improved student achievement. Therefore, responding to a sense of urgency can create political pressure that costs a superintendent his position.

Superintendents' sense of urgency in the face of serious consequences from state and federal agencies due to low student performance would seem an obvious source. The consequences can range from published scores in the media to potential take-over of schools and districts. Therefore, a sense of urgency can stem from the external pressures of federal and state mandates to improve student achievement (Fowler, 2004).

Superintendents can also bring a sense of urgency for reform to their position by possessing a moral commitment to educate all students at a high level. Leaders of school reform possessed a moral purpose and practiced social justice. Leaders who supported school improvement acted with urgency and sustained the effort over time. Improved student achievement required patience and activism by the leaders (Fullan, 2003; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006).

This review of the literature on change processes indicated that the business and organizational change processes described by Kotter (1996), Collins (2001), and Bolman and Deal (2006) included establishing a sense for the change as one of the first steps of the reform. However, educational change often omits the establishment of a sense of urgency as

a specific step in the process. If successful transformations occur in business with that first step, would this not also be true for educational change? Scant research exists exploring this concept.

Summary

The superintendency as a leadership position has grown and evolved since the 1830s. Today's superintendent is expected to fill a variety of leadership roles that include teacher-scholar, manager, democratic leader, applied social scientist, and communicator. Each role is defined by knowledge and skills that a district level leader must possess to be successful. The knowledge and skill base has become increasingly more complex and extensive for superintendents. District level leaders utilized a blend of roles to meet the demands of the position. The review of literature indicated that the leadership of superintendents is dependent upon the context in which school districts operate. Multiple contextual components influence the skills and knowledge necessary to be successful as a district leader. In particular, accountability measures required superintendents to lead for reform.

District level leadership is bounded by expectations incumbent within the position. Superintendents are expected to be an instructional leader and practice moral, transformational, managerial, and distributive leadership. The expectations are aimed at the goal of high student achievement and are embedded in the accountability era. According to the literature, superintendents can have a positive effect on student achievement. Research indicated that when superintendents fulfilled responsibilities such as setting non-negotiable instructional goals and monitoring student performance a positive correlation in student achievement was possible.

The literature also indicated that organizational change and educational improvement are important to increased student achievement. Effective educational reform required strong, consistent leadership that could cause change at the most basic level--the classroom. For the reform to be successful, leaders must provide vision and a sense of urgency followed by monitoring and support.

A sense of urgency was described in the literature as sustained effort and activism to improve student achievement (Fullan, 2003; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). Urgency did not require panic or crisis but rather an intense and compelling sense of purpose which provided momentum for change (Kotter, 2008; Sparks, 2007; Schlechty, 2001). Utilizing a sense of urgency to create change required leaders to be persistent, take risks, and model courage (Bolman & Deal, 2006).

The source of a sense of urgency might come from pressure from the community, state and federal mandates with negative consequences, or a strong moral purpose. However, there was little in the literature to indicate how and why superintendents gained a sense of urgency for reform and their subsequent actions to communicate the need to improve student academic success.

Chapter 3

METHOD

Rationale

School administration has always been demanding; however, today's superintendency is more demanding than ever. The pressure exerted by state and federal mandates and public outcry to improve public education for all participants has created an environment of accountability and moral indignation when student academic success is viewed as substandard. The role of superintendent as change agent and leader of school reform to improve student academic success is pervasive and an expectation of school boards and communities (Grogan, 2003). At the same time, the superintendent is expected to be "an ethical and considerate problem-solver, one who has the interest of the children uppermost in his or her mind at all times" (p. 16).

In addition, the superintendent is expected to be an efficient and competent manager of a multi-faceted organization, while simultaneously dealing with the external and internal influences that pressure district leaders to create and maintain school systems which guarantee high quality education (Petersen & Barnett, 2005). The specter of state or federal take over of low-performing schools districts as well as the media release of school achievement scores puts the superintendent in the unenviable position of the personification of public education's successes and failures.

The pressure to guarantee high student academic performance comes from the internal source of school boards and communities; from the external source of state and federal mandates (Petersen & Barnett, 2005), and from personal moral commitment (Grogan, 2003). This pressure to improve student achievement creates an environment for change and

reform. District superintendents find themselves surrounded by the opportunities and challenges of leading change while maintaining the other roles and responsibilities of the superintendency.

The process of organizational change begins with establishing a sense of urgency for reform according to Kotter (1996 and 2008). A major factor in the failure of reform is not establishing a strong sense of urgency in the beginning of the process. Therefore, district level superintendents must possess a sense of urgency and communicate that urgency throughout the district to successfully initiate the change process. Understanding the source of urgency and the superintendent's tactics for communicating urgency for change will provide insight into the change process in education.

Statement of the Problem

Standards-based reform created an era of accountability that placed new pressures on district leaders and school boards to guarantee student achievement. Change and reform movements have become common in the field of education in attempts to improve student learning. Key to successful change in organizations is the establishment of a sense of urgency (Kotter, 1996 and 2008). District level leadership can have a positive effect on student achievement (Waters & Marzano, 2006). Yet, little empirical insight is available about the factors that cause superintendents to lead districts through the reform and change process to improve student academic success. In particular the source of school superintendents' sense of urgency to improve student academic success and the techniques employed to heighten the urgency across the district have not been adequately studied.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between superintendents' perceived sense of urgency and student academic performance. More specifically, the study will examine the leadership of Missouri superintendents in districts which have been designated as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver using the data from the Annual Performance Report to sort the districts. The analysis will determine (a) if differences exist among superintendents' sense of urgency to improve student academic performance when their districts are sorted as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver as designated by Missouri's annual performance report; (b) if differences exist among superintendents' source of sense of urgency to improve student academic performance among superintendents when their districts are sorted as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver as designated by Missouri's annual performance report; (c) if differences exist among superintendents' attempts to communicate a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance when their districts are sorted as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver as designated by Missouri's annual performance report; (d) if differences exist among superintendents' perception of change in the sense of urgency across the district when their districts are sorted as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver as designated by Missouri's annual performance report; (e) if differences exist among superintendents' use of strategies to communicate a sense of urgency across the three groups; and (f) if any relationships exist between superintendents' strategies commonly associated

with communicating urgency and the change in the sense of urgency across the district as perceived by the superintendent.

Research Questions

The following research questions were examined during the completion of this study:

- (1) What, if any, differences are there in the superintendent's sense of urgency to improve student academic performance and district achievement?
- (2) What, if any, differences are there in the superintendent's source of urgency to improve student academic performance and district achievement?
- (3) What, if any, differences are there in the superintendent's attempts to communicate urgency to improve student academic performance and district achievement?
- (4) What, if any, differences are there in the superintendent's perception of change in urgency to improve student academic performance across the district and district achievement?
- (5) What, if any, differences are there in the superintendent's use of strategies to communicate urgency to improve student academic performance and district achievement?
- (6) What, if any, relationships exist among the strategies used by the superintendent to communicate urgency and the change in perceived urgency across the district?

Null Hypothesis

The following hypotheses were tested in this study:

H_{01} : There are no significant differences in superintendents' perceived sense of urgency to improve student academic performance as measured by the items of the

“degree of urgency” scale among superintendents when their districts are sorted as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver as designated by Missouri’s annual performance report when controlling for socio-economic status as measured by district percent of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch.

H₀₂: There are no significant differences in the superintendents’ reported source of urgency to improve student academic performance as measured by the items in the “source of urgency” scale when their districts are sorted as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver as designated by Missouri’s annual performance report when controlling for socio-economic status as measured by district percent of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch.

H₀₃: There are no significant differences in the superintendents’ reported frequency of purposeful communication of a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance among superintendents when their districts are sorted as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver as designated by Missouri’s annual performance report when controlling for socio-economic status as measured by district percent of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch.

H₀₄: There are no significant differences among superintendents' perceived change in the sense of urgency to improve student academic performance across the district as reported on the “change in urgency” scale when their districts are sorted as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a

limited waiver as designated by Missouri's annual performance report when controlling for socio-economic status as measured by district percent of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch.

H₀₅: There are no significant differences in superintendents' reported use of strategies to communicate a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance among superintendents when their districts are sorted as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver as designated by Missouri's annual performance report when controlling for socio-economic status as measured by district percent of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch.

H₀₆: There are no significant predictive linear relationships between the superintendent strategies commonly associated with communicating urgency and a change in the sense of urgency to improve student academic performance across the district as perceived by the superintendent.

Population

This study examined school district superintendents' perceptions of their level of urgency, the source of the urgency, and the strategies they employed to increase a sense of urgency across the district. The criteria required the superintendents to have been in their current position for no more than three years. Longer time in the position could impact the responses. In addition, the superintendent's district must be of K-12 configuration and designated as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver during the 2008 performance cycle as measured by Missouri's Annual Performance Report.

This researcher identified 205 superintendents in the state who met the previously described criteria and invited those superintendents to participate in the study. The superintendents' perceptions of a sense of urgency were collected using the Superintendents' Sense of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance Survey. A total of 98 superintendents responded to this survey. There were 59 superintendents from districts performing with distinction, 16 superintendents from districts performing with a full waiver, and 23 superintendents from districts performing with a limited waiver that responded to the survey.

Procedures

To accomplish the purpose of this study, the following procedures were followed: For all statistical tests, the level of significance was set at $\alpha = .05$.

1. Significant differences in superintendents' sense of urgency to improve student academic performance as measured by the "degree of urgency" scale in the Superintendent's Sense of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance Survey were analyzed when the districts were sorted by performing with distinction, performing with full waiver, and performing with limited waiver as designated by Missouri's Annual Performance Report while controlling for socio-economic status as measured by the district percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch.
2. Significant differences in superintendents' source of urgency to improve student academic performance as measured by the "source of urgency" scale on the Superintendent's Sense of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance Survey were analyzed when the districts were sorted by performing with

- distinction, performing with full waiver, and performing with limited waiver as designated by Missouri's Annual Performance Report while controlling for socio-economic status as measured by the district percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch.
3. Significant differences in superintendents' reported frequency of purposeful communication of urgency to improve student achievement as measured by the "frequency of communication" scale on the Superintendent's Sense of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance Survey were analyzed when the districts were sorted by performing with distinction, performing with full waiver, and performing with limited waiver as designated by Missouri's Annual Performance Report while controlling for socio-economic status as measured by the district percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch.
 4. Significant differences among superintendents' perceived change in the sense of urgency to improve student academic performance across the district as reported on the "change in urgency" scale on the Superintendent's Sense of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance Survey were analyzed when their districts were sorted as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver as designated by Missouri's annual performance report when controlling for socio-economic status as measured by district percent of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch.
 5. Significant differences among superintendents' utilization of strategies to communicate a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance across the district as reported on the "communication strategies" scale on the

- Superintendent's Sense of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance Survey were analyzed when the districts were sorted as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver as designated by Missouri's annual performance report when controlling for socio-economic status as measured by district percent of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch.
6. Linear relationships between the superintendent's strategies commonly associated with communicating urgency and a change in the sense of urgency to improve student academic performance across the district as perceived by the superintendent were analyzed using linear regression analysis.

Instrumentation

District performance level was identified using the data gathered through Missouri's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Annual Performance Report. The Annual Performance Report is a compilation of performance factors to measure student academic success at the district level. The district performance measures include student performance on the annual Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) test, student performance on the ACT, student enrollment in advanced courses and in career education courses, college placement, career education placement, graduation rate, and attendance rate.

Superintendents' perceptions of a sense of urgency to improve student performance, the superintendent's sources of urgency, the superintendent's frequency of communicating urgency, the change in the sense of urgency across the district, and the strategies used to communicate urgency were measured by the Superintendent's Sense of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance Survey. Survey items were developed utilizing concepts

found in the work of Fowler (2004), Alsbury (2003), Fullan (2003), Sergiovanni (2007), Petersen and Short (2001), Waters and Marzano (2006), and Fussarelli and Fussarelli (2005). A copy of the survey is provided in Appendix A. The survey consists of 35 Likert-type items that are represented on a 7-point continuum.

The statistical tests were completed using the theoretical scales presented in the original survey. Prior to the use of the survey for study data collection, a pilot test of the instrument was conducted with superintendents who did not meet qualifying criteria for participation in the study.

Data Collection

A roster of 205 superintendents with three years or less in their current district was identified as possible participants. Surveys were sent electronically with personal follow-up phone calls to encourage non-respondents. There were 98 complete surveys returned of which 59 were from districts whose academic designation was performance with distinction, 16 from districts with a full waiver, and 23 from districts with a limited waiver.

Data Analysis

Individual superintendent responses to the survey were the unit of analysis for this study. Those survey scales and items were used for hypothesis testing. Statistical procedures for this study varied according to the hypothesis being tested. The level of significance for all statistical test was set at $\alpha = .05$.

H_{01} , H_{02} , H_{03} , H_{04} , H_{05} , and H_{06} were analyzed using an Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) with the covariates of district percentage of students qualified for free/reduced lunch. H_{06} was analyzed using linear regression of the independent variables, the actions utilized by the superintendents to communicate a sense of urgency, against the dependent

variables, the changes in the sense of urgency across the district as perceived by the superintendent. All data analyses were performed using PASW version 18.0 (SPSS).

Chapter 4

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

For much of the last four decades the pressure on school superintendents to improve student academic performance has continuously increased. Missouri public schools are no exception. The current educational environment includes media coverage of district student achievement as measured by the federal standards found in No Child Left Behind (2001). In particular adequate yearly progress (AYP) is published in newspapers. One example is the article printed in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch (2009, August 13) where district scores were ranked from highest to lowest. On the one hand public schools may well be performing at the highest levels as measured by state assessments ever but few, if any, will meet the 100% required in 2014.

Another requirement of No Child Left Behind (2001) is that districts must send a letter to all parents stating that adequate yearly progress has not been met and that the district is “in improvement” status. The message implies that public education is failing and the district is responsible. As the chief executive officer of the district, the superintendent is the person held most accountable for the status by the public and potentially the school board. The pressure to improve student academic performance is enormous.

While the entire student population of a school district is expected to make adequate yearly progress, particular emphasis is placed on designated “sub-group” academic performance. Achievement data from the Missouri’s testing program is disaggregated to identify groups of students that may or may not be performing at expected levels. Close scrutiny of “achievement gaps” in district performance is mandated and publicized. The

implications and ramifications of having minority or poor students under-performing creates a moral obligation to increase their academic success. The resulting pressure generates an atmosphere of urgency which permeates the superintendency.

Study Design

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between superintendents' perceived sense of urgency and student academic performance. More specifically, the study examined the leadership of Missouri superintendents in districts which have been designated as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver using the data from the Annual Performance Report (APR) to sort the districts. The Annual Performance Report quantifies student performance in Missouri's public school districts through a set of standards that includes student achievement as measured by the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP). The APR consists of fourteen standards that also include college placement, attendance, graduation rate, and advanced and career course enrollment. District accreditation is earned by meeting a minimum of nine standards. Provisional accreditation occurs when a district has met six to eight standards and districts are considered unaccredited with five standard or less. Districts that are unaccredited for more than two consecutive years face state take-over. The highest level of performance, Performance with Distinction, is earned when thirteen standards are met. Full Waiver is awarded when twelve standards are met and Limited Waiver is earned when nine standards are met.

The method of analysis was quantitative with survey data being used to determine (a) if differences exist among superintendents' sense of urgency to improve student academic performance when their districts are sorted as performing with distinction, performing with a

full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver as designated by Missouri's annual performance report; (b) if differences exist among superintendents' source of sense of urgency to improve student academic performance among superintendents when their districts are sorted according to the three groups described in the previous paragraph; (c) if differences exist among superintendents' attempts to communicate a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance when their districts are sorted across the three groups; (d) if differences exist among superintendents' perception of change in the sense of urgency across the three groups; (e) if differences exist among superintendents' use of strategies to communicate a sense of urgency across the three groups; and (f) if any relationships exist between superintendents' strategies commonly associated with communicating urgency and the change in the sense of urgency across the district as perceived by the superintendent.

The quantitative data were collected using the Superintendent Sense of Urgency to Improve Academic Performance Survey. The survey consisted of thirty-five items used to assess superintendent degree of urgency, source of urgency, frequency of communication about urgency, change in urgency, and strategies utilized to communicate urgency all in relationship to improving student academic achievement. Responses were based on superintendent perceptions of their own experiences. The survey items and the corresponding research question and hypothesis are found in Table 1.

As outlined in Table 1, there were thirty-five items on The Superintendent Sense of Urgency to Improve Academic Performance Survey. Data to answer research question one and prove hypothesis one were gathered through items two through four which measured superintendent degree of urgency at the time they took the position, after one year in the

position and at the time of the survey.

Table 1

Research Questions, Hypothesis, and Corresponding Survey Items

Survey Categories	Research Question	Hypothesis	Survey Items
Degree of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance	1	1	2 thru 4
Source of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance	2	2	5 thru 13
Frequency of Purposeful Communication to Improve Student Academic Performance	3	3	14 thru 21
Change in Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance	4	4 and 6	22 thru 29
Strategies Utilized to Communicate Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance	5 and 6	5 and 6	30 thru 36

Items five through thirteen measured the source of urgency to improve student academic performance through answers to research question two and hypothesis two. Sources of urgency included the desire to eliminate the achievement gap, the ethical/moral obligation to students, and the local/state/ national obligation of public education to society. The survey also identified the relationship between academic performance and the overall economic/social success of society as a source of urgency as well as the relationship between student academic performance and student success in a global society. Items ten and eleven provided data about community concerns and board member concerns for student academic performance as sources of urgency. The remaining items in this section of the survey

measured the influence state mandates and federal mandates had as sources of urgency.

Superintendents were also asked to indicate how frequently they purposefully communicated a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance to answer research question three and test hypothesis three. In items fourteen through twenty-one respondents were asked how often they communicated the urgency to improve student achievement at open and closed board meetings, with individual board members, with district administrators, with building principals, with teacher leaders/committees, with all district teachers, with community clubs/civic/business organizations, and with the media. The next section, items twenty-two through twenty-nine, measured the superintendent's perception of change in the sense of urgency to improve student academic performance of the board of education, individual board members, district administrators, building principals, teacher leaders/committees, all district teachers, community clubs/civic/business organizations, and the media. Research question four and hypothesis four were answered with data from these items.

Finally, items thirty through thirty-six of the survey were used to gather data to answer research questions five and six and prove hypothesis five and six. Superintendents were asked to indicate how frequently specific strategies were used to communicate a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance. The strategies were based on those identified by Dr. John Kotter (2008) as used in business organizations to increase urgency and enhance business performance. Strategies included identifying an impending crisis, eliminating unnecessary programs and positions, establishing academic targets and goals, holding employees accountable, utilizing data, utilizing consultants and stakeholders, and communicating opportunities for success.

Research Questions

The following research questions were examined during the completion of this study:

- (1) What, if any, differences are there in the superintendent's sense of urgency to improve student academic performance and district achievement?
- (2) What, if any, differences are there in the superintendent's source of urgency to improve student academic performance and district achievement?
- (3) What, if any, differences are there in the superintendent's attempts to communicate urgency to improve student academic performance and district achievement?
- (4) What, if any, differences are there in the superintendent's perception of change in urgency to improve student academic performance across the district and district achievement?
- (5) What, if any, differences are there in the superintendent's use of strategies to communicate urgency to improve student academic performance and district achievement?
- (6) What, if any, relationships exist among the strategies used by the superintendent to communicate urgency and the change in perceived urgency across the district?

Null Hypothesis

The following hypotheses were tested in this study:

H_{01} : There are no significant differences in superintendents' perceived sense of urgency to improve student academic performance as measured by the items of the "degree of urgency" scale among superintendents when their districts are sorted as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a

limited waiver as designated by Missouri's annual performance report when controlling for socio-economic status as measured by district percent of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch.

H₀₂: There are no significant differences in the superintendents' reported source of urgency to improve student academic performance as measured by the items in the "source of urgency" scale when their districts are sorted as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver as designated by Missouri's annual performance report when controlling for socio-economic status as measured by district percent of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch.

H₀₃: There are no significant differences in the superintendents' reported frequency of purposeful communication of a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance among superintendents when their districts are sorted as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver as designated by Missouri's annual performance report when controlling for socio-economic status as measured by district percent of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch.

H₀₄: There are no significant differences among superintendents' perceived change in the sense of urgency to improve student academic performance across the district as reported on the "change in urgency" scale when their districts are sorted as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver as designated by Missouri's annual performance report when controlling for socio-economic status as measured by district percent of students

qualifying for free and reduced lunch.

H₀₅: There are no significant differences in superintendents' reported use of strategies to communicate a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance among superintendents when their districts are sorted as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver as designated by Missouri's annual performance report when controlling for socio-economic status as measured by district percent of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch.

H₀₆: There are no significant predictive linear relationships between the superintendent strategies commonly associated with communicating urgency and a change in the sense of urgency to improve student academic performance across the district as perceived by the superintendent.

Descriptive Findings

Demographic Data

There were 205 superintendents in the state identified as potential participants. The criteria required the superintendents to have been in their current position for no more than three years based. In addition the superintendent's district must have been of K-12 configuration and designated as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver during the 2008 performance cycle as measured by Missouri's Annual Performance Report. There were two other categories of performance; provisional and unaccredited. The districts in these categories were not used due to insufficient sample size. There were 11 provisionally accredited school districts and 6 districts that were unaccredited.

Of the 205 superintendents invited to participate, 98 responded to the

Superintendents' Sense of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance Survey.

There were 59 superintendents from districts performing with distinction, 16 superintendents from districts performing with a full waiver, and 23 superintendents from districts performing with a limited waiver that responded to the survey.

Degree of urgency. Three items on the Superintendents' Sense of Urgency to Improve Academic Performance Survey were designed to measure the degree of urgency district superintendents felt to improve student academic achievement. The items measured the superintendents' perceived sense of urgency at the beginning of their tenure, after the first year in the position, and at the time of the administration of the survey. The responses consisted of a 7-point Likert-type scale with a response of 1 = Very Low Urgency, 2 = Low Urgency, 3 = Somewhat Low Urgency, 4 = Moderate Urgency, 5 = Somewhat High Urgency, 6 = High Urgency, and 7 = Very High Urgency. Therefore, higher ratings on this scale indicated stronger urgency to improve student academic performance.

Degree of urgency descriptive statistics for the 98 superintendent respondents are contained in Table 2. The item with the lowest mean was item 2, "My sense of urgency to improve student academic performance when I assumed my position in this superintendency was," with a mean = 5.7857, and the item with the highest mean was item 4, "My sense of urgency to improve student academic performance at this time is," with a mean = 5.9286. The data of superintendents in districts performing with a limited waiver, full waiver, or with distinction are presented in Table 2. Superintendents had a stronger sense of urgency to improve student achievement at the end of the first year and at the time of the survey than when they assumed the position.

Table 2

Descriptive Data for Degree of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance by District Level Achievement

Item	Limited N = 23	Full N = 16	Distinction N = 59	Total N = 98
2. My sense of urgency to improve student academic performance when I assumed my position in the superintendency was	5.9565	5.8750	5.6949	5.7857
3. My sense of urgency to improve student academic performance at the end of my first year was	6.3043	6.0000	5.7119	5.8980
4. My sense of urgency to improve student academic performance at this time is	6.3913	6.0000	5.7288	5.9286

Superintendents responding at the time of the survey indicated the strongest degree of urgency with a total mean of 5.9286.

In addition superintendents leading districts with lower performance as measured by the limited waiver status possessed a stronger degree of urgency than superintendents in districts with a full waiver or performing with distinction. The degree of urgency was less for superintendents in districts with a full waiver and performing with distinction respectively. As district performance increased the degree of urgency of superintendents decreased as indicated by the means.

Source of urgency. To measure the source of the sense of urgency district superintendent's possessed to improve student academic achievement, nine items were included on the Superintendents' Sense of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance Survey. The responses consisted of a 7-point Likert-scale items with a response of 1 = No Influence, 2 = Low Influence, 3 = Somewhat Low Influence, 4 = Moderate

Influence, 5 = Somewhat Strong Influence, 6 = Strong Influence, and 7 = Very Strong Influence. Therefore, higher ratings on this scale indicated the degree of influence the source had on the superintendents' sense of urgency.

Items 5 through 13 contained sources of urgency and included the desire to eliminate the achievement gap, the ethical/moral obligation to students, the local/state/national obligation of public education to society, the relationship between overall academic performance and the economic/social success of society, and the relationship between student academic performance and student success in a global society. Additional sources of urgency were community concerns about student academic achievement, board member concerns about student academic achievement, and state mandates and federal mandates about student academic achievement.

Descriptive statistics for the sources of sense of urgency from items 5 through 13 are presented in Table 3. The item with the lowest mean was item 10, "...the degree to which community concerns about student academic performance influenced your sense of urgency to improve student academic performance," with a mean of 4.3672. The item with the highest mean was item 6, "...the degree to which ethical/moral obligation to students influenced your sense of urgency to improve student academic performance," with a mean of 5.9898.

Superintendents from all three levels of district performance indicated that the ethical/moral obligation to students had the most influence on their sense of urgency to improve student academic achievement. State mandates/requirements were also a strong source of sense of urgency for all three levels. At the same time, community concerns were the least influential on the superintendents' sense of urgency.

Table 3

Descriptive Data for Source of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance by District Level Achievement

Item	Limited N = 23	Full N = 16	Distinction N = 59	Total N = 98
5. Please indicate the degree to which the elimination of the achievement gap influenced your sense of urgency to improve student academic performance.	4.7391	4.7500	4.5932	4.6531
6. Please indicate the degree to which ethical/moral obligation to students influenced your sense of urgency to improve student academic performance.	6.1739	6.0625	5.8983	5.9898
7. Please indicate the degree to which the local/state/ national obligation of public education to society influenced your sense of urgency to improve student academic performance.	5.5652	4.6250	5.1186	5.1429
8. Please indicate the degree to which the relationship between academic performance and the overall economic/social success of society influenced your sense of urgency to improve student academic performance.	5.0870	5.0000	5.1186	5.0918
9. Please indicate the degree to which the relationship between student academic performance and student success in a global society influenced your sense of urgency to improve student academic performance.	4.7826	5.3750	5.3729	5.2347
10. Please indicate the degree to which community concerns about student academic performance influenced your sense of urgency to improve student academic performance.	4.4348	4.5000	4.3051	4.3673

11. Please indicate the degree to which Board member concerns about student academic performance influenced your sense of urgency to improve student academic performance.	5.0435	5.1875	4.3220	4.6327
12. Please indicate the degree to which state mandates/requirements influenced your sense of urgency to improve student academic performance.	5.6957	5.5000	5.1864	5.3571
13. Please indicate the degree to which federal mandates/requirements influenced your sense of urgency to improve student academic performance.	5.1739	4.7500	4.9153	4.9490

There were differences among the three district performance levels. Superintendents leading districts with a full waiver or performing with distinction were more strongly influenced by the relationship between student academic performance and student success in a global society than those superintendents in districts with a limited waiver. The superintendents in districts with a limited waiver were more influenced by federal mandates/requirements as a source of urgency than those leading districts with full waivers or performing with distinction.

Frequency of purposeful communication. The Superintendents' Sense of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance Survey contained eight items to measure how frequently superintendents purposefully communicated their sense of urgency to improve student academic achievement. The responses consisted of a 7-point Likert-type scale with a response of 1 = Never, 2 = Almost Never, 3 = Seldom, 4 = Moderately Frequently, 5 = Frequently, 6 = Somewhat Frequently, and 7 = Very Frequently. Therefore, more frequent communication to improve student academic achievement was indicated by higher ratings on

this scale.

Items 14 through 21 measured the frequency of purposeful communication of a sense of urgency to improve student academic achievement at open and closed board meetings, with individual board members, with district administrators, with building principals, with teacher leaders/committees, to all district teachers, to community clubs/civic/business organizations, and to the media. The frequency of communication descriptive statistics for the 98 superintendent respondents are contained in Table 4.

The item with the lowest mean was item 20, “I purposefully communicated a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance to community clubs/civic/business organizations,” with a mean of 4.1531. However, item 21, “I purposefully communicated a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance to the media,” had a similar mean of 4.1939. The item with the highest mean was item 17, “I purposefully communicated a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance with building principals,” with a mean of 6.3061.

Overall, superintendents indicated they purposefully communicated a sense of urgency to improve student achievement to their building principals most often and were least likely to communicate with community clubs/civic/business organizations and the media. It should also be noted that superintendents in districts with a limited waiver for student achievement were more apt to purposefully communicate a sense of urgency to improve student performance than superintendents with a full waiver or performing with distinction.

Table 4

Descriptive Data for Purposeful Communication of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance by District Level Achievement

Item	Limited N = 23	Full N = 16	Distinction N = 59	Total N = 98
14. I purposefully communicated a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance at open and closed Board meetings.	5.8696	5.5000	5.2881	5.4592
15. I purposefully communicated a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance with individual Board members.	4.9130	4.8750	4.8814	4.8878
16. I purposefully communicated a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance with district administrators.	6.5217	6.0000	6.0678	6.1633
17. I purposefully communicated a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance with building principals.	6.6087	6.3125	6.1864	6.3061
18. I purposefully communicated a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance with teacher leaders/committees.	6.1304	6.0000	5.5763	5.7755
19. I purposefully communicated a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance to all district teachers simultaneously.	5.8696	5.8125	5.0508	5.3673
20. I purposefully communicated a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance to community clubs/civic/business organizations.	3.9565	4.1250	4.2373	4.1531
21. I purposefully communicated a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance to the media.	4.2174	4.1875	4.1864	4.1939

Change in urgency. As a part of the Superintendents' Sense of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance Survey eight items were used to measure the change in sense of urgency to improve student academic achievement as perceived by the superintendent. The responses consisted of a 7-point Likert-type scale with a response of 1 = Noticeably Decreased, 2 = Decreased, 3 = Somewhat Decreased, 4 = No Change, 5 = Somewhat Increased, 6 = Increased, and 7 = Noticeably Increased. An increase in the sense of urgency to improve student academic achievement as perceived by the superintendent was indicated by higher ratings on this scale.

On the survey, items 22 through 29 measured the perceived change in the sense of urgency to improve student academic achievement by the board of education, individual board members, district administrators, building principals, teacher leaders/committees, all district teachers, community clubs/civic/business organizations, and of the media. The descriptive statistics for items 22 through 29 are in Table 5.

The item with the highest mean was item 25, "I believe the sense of urgency to improve student academic performance of building principals has," with a mean of 6.1122. Item 28, "I believe the sense of urgency to improve student academic performance of community clubs/civic/business organizations has," with a mean of 4.4082. However, item 29, "I believe the sense of urgency to improve student academic performance of the media has," had a similar mean of 4.5918.

Superintendents from all three levels of district student academic performance indicated they saw the least change in the sense of urgency of community clubs/civic/business organization and the media to improve student achievement. It should be noted that these two groups were also those that received the least amount of purposeful

communication as indicated in Table 4. Building level principals and district administrators were considered to have had the greatest change in their sense of urgency and also received the most frequent purposeful communication as reported in Table 4.

Table 5

Descriptive Data for Change in Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance by District Level Achievement

Item	Limited N = 23	Full N = 16	Distinction N = 59	Total N = 98
22. I believe the sense of urgency to improve student academic performance of the Board of Education has	5.5652	5.3750	5.1017	5.2551
23. I believe the sense of urgency to improve student academic performance of individual board members has	5.2609	5.4375	4.9153	5.0816
24. I believe the sense of urgency to improve student academic performance of district administrators has	6.3913	6.3125	5.8983	6.0816
25. I believe the sense of urgency to improve student academic performance of building principals has	6.2174	6.2500	6.0339	6.1122
26. I believe the sense of urgency to improve student academic performance of teacher leaders/committees has	6.1739	5.8750	5.7119	5.8469
27. I believe the sense of urgency to improve student academic performance of all district teachers has	5.8696	5.8750	5.7288	5.7857
28. I believe the sense of urgency to improve student academic performance of community clubs/civics/business organizations has	4.2174	4.1250	4.5593	4.4082
29. I believe the sense of urgency to improve student academic performance of the media has	4.5652	4.5000	4.6271	4.5918

Communication strategies. The final seven items on the Superintendents' Sense of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance Survey were included to measure the communication strategies used by superintendents to convey a sense of urgency to improve student academic achievement. The responses consisted of a 7-point Likert-type scale with a response of 1 = Never, 2 = Almost Never, 3 = Seldom, 4 = Moderately Frequently, 5 = Frequently, 6 = Somewhat Frequently, and 7 = Very Frequently. Those strategies used most frequently by superintendents to increase the sense of urgency to improve student academic achievement were indicated by higher ratings on this scale.

On the survey, items 30 through 36 measured how frequently specific strategies were used by the superintendent to increase the sense of urgency to improve student academic achievement. The descriptive statistics for items 30 through 36 are in Table 6. The item with the highest mean was item 34, "I utilized data to communicate the urgent need to improve student academic performance," with a mean of 6.2347. Item 31, "I eliminated programs and positions not deemed necessary in order to improve student academic performance," with a mean of 3.8571 was the lowest.

Utilizing data was the strategy most used to communicate a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance by superintendents at all levels of district performance. Setting student academic targets and goals was also used frequently as indicated by a mean of 5.5918. Superintendents were least likely to eliminate programs and positions to communicate a sense of urgency to improve student academic achievement.

When comparing the use of strategies, superintendents in districts performing with distinction were less likely to use the strategies in general and had particularly low means for communicating an impending crisis and eliminating programs and positions with means of

Table 6

Descriptive Data for Specific Strategies Utilized to Communicate the Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance by District Level Achievement

Item	Limited N = 23	Full N = 16	Distinction N = 59	Total N = 98
30. I identified and communicated an impending crisis to the district about improving student academic performance.	5.2609	5.0000	3.8814	4.3878
31. I eliminated programs and positions not deemed necessary in order to improve student academic performance.	4.0000	4.1250	3.7288	3.8571
32. I established student academic targets and goals for the district.	5.9130	5.8125	5.4066	5.5918
33. I held employees accountable for student academic performance.	5.8696	5.2500	5.2712	5.4082
34. I utilized data to communicate the urgent need to improve student academic performance.	6.5652	6.4375	6.0508	6.2347
35. I utilized consultants and stakeholders to help establish a sense of urgency about student academic success.	5.2609	4.1250	4.3390	4.5204
36. I intentionally communicated opportunities for success to stress the need to improve student academic performance.	5.6522	5.7500	5.2542	5.4286

3.8814 and 3.7288 respectively. However, superintendents leading districts with limited waivers had higher means for the use of all seven strategies.

Hypothesis Testing

To answer the research questions, six hypotheses were statistically studied.

Hypothesis One, Two, Three, Four, and Five were analyzed using ANOVA and ANCOVA.

Hypothesis Six was analyzed using step-wise linear regressions. A Tukey post-hoc test was reported for each significant ANOVA and ANCOVA to identify the significantly different factors. The hypotheses are found in the following text. Data analyses reflecting the acceptance or rejection of the hypothesis are provided in the subsequent pages. Rejection of each hypothesis is identified at the end of each section.

Hypothesis One was a test for significant differences in the superintendent's sense of urgency to improve student academic performance at the beginning of their superintendency, at the end of their first year in the position, and at the time of the survey and district achievement when sorted by districts with distinction, districts with a full waiver, and districts with a limited waiver.

Hypothesis Two was a test for significant differences in the superintendent's source of urgency to improve student academic performance and district achievement when sorted by districts with distinction, districts with a full waiver, and districts with a limited waiver.

Hypothesis Three was a test for significant differences in the superintendent's attempts to communicate urgency to improve student academic performance and district achievement when sorted by districts with distinction, districts with a full waiver, and districts with a limited waiver.

Hypothesis Four was a test for significant differences in the superintendent's perception of change in urgency to improve student academic performance across the district and district achievement when sorted by districts with distinction, districts with a full waiver, and districts with a limited waiver.

Hypothesis Five was a test for significant differences in the superintendent's use of strategies to communicate urgency to improve student academic performance and district

achievement when sorted by districts with distinction, districts with a full waiver, and districts with a limited waiver.

Hypothesis Six was a test of the linear relationships among the strategies used by the superintendent to communicate urgency and the change in perceived urgency across the district.

Hypothesis One

The first hypothesis tested in this study was: There are no significant differences in superintendents' perceived sense of urgency to improve student academic performance as measured by the items of the "degree of urgency" scale among superintendents when their districts are sorted as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver as designated by Missouri's annual performance report when controlling for socio-economic status as measured by district percent of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch. A general linear model was developed to test for significant differences among superintendents sense of urgency to improve student achievement when districts were sorted by performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver. The Tukey HSD was used in a post-hoc analysis to identify the nature of the differences when significant differences in superintendent's sense of urgency were found.

The means for the superintendents' degree of urgency when they took their position, at the end of their first year, and at the time of the survey (now) by districts performing with a limited waiver, performing with a full waiver, or performing with distinction are found in Table 7. Results of the ANOVA with the survey items measuring the degree of urgency when they took their position, at the end of their first year, and at the time of the survey

Table 7

Means for Degree of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance: Scores grouped by Districts Performing with Distinction, Full Waiver, or Limited Waiver (n = 98)

Degree of Urgency	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Urgency When Began				
Limited Waiver	23	5.9565	.97600	.20351
Full Waiver	16	5.8750	1.50000	.37500
Distinction	59	5.6949	1.10257	.14354
Total	98	5.7857	1.14198	.11536
Urgency First Year				
Limited Waiver	23	6.3043	.92612	.19311
Full Waiver	16	6.0000	1.31656	.32914
Distinction	59	5.7119	1.08359	.14107
Total	98	5.8980	1.10752	.11188
Urgency Now				
Limited Waiver	23	6.3913	1.07615	.22439
Full Waiver	16	6.0000	1.26491	.31623
Distinction	59	5.7288	1.03108	.13423
Total	98	5.9286	1.10528	.11165

(now) as the dependent variable with districts sorted by performing with a limited waiver, performing with a full waiver, or performing with distinction are reported in Table 8. The post-hoc Tukey HSD data are also presented in Table 8. Mean differences between the degree of urgency at the time of the survey (now) for superintendents in districts performing with a limited waiver ($M = 6.3913$) and superintendents in districts performing with

Table 8

Results of Post-Hoc Analysis of Analysis of Variance of Superintendents' Degree of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance as grouped by Districts Performing with Distinction, Full Waiver, or Limited Waiver

Degree of Urgency	<i>F</i>	<i>F Sig.</i>	District Performance	Mean	Mean Dif.	Sig.		
Urgency When Began	.487	.616	Limited Waiver	5.9565	.08152	.974		
						.26161	.625	
				5.8750	-.08152	.974		
			Full Waiver				.18008	.843
				Distinction	5.6949	-.26161	.625	
								-.18008
Urgency First Year	2.526	.085	Limited Waiver		6.3043	.30435	.668	
						.59248	.075	
				6.0000	-.30435	.668		
			Full Waiver				.28814	.618
				Distinction	5.7119	-.59248	.075	
								-.28814
Urgency Now	3.146	.048	Limited Waiver		6.3913	.39130	.510	
						.66249*	.038	
				6.0000	-.39130	.510		
			Full Waiver				.27119	.648
				Distinction	5.7288	-.66249*	.038	
								-.27119

distinction ($M = 5.7288$) were significant ($p = .038$). Superintendents in districts with a limited waiver viewed the sense of urgency as significantly greater than did superintendents in districts performing with distinction at the time of the survey (now). Therefore, hypothesis one was rejected.

A one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) for degree of urgency when superintendents assumed their position, after the first year as superintendent, and at the time of the survey (now) was used to assess if there were statistically significant differences among superintendents in districts performing with a limited waiver, full waiver, or with distinction after controlling for socio-economic status as measured by district percentage of students identified for free/reduced lunch. Results of the post-hoc Tukey HSD are reported in Tables 9, 10, and 11.

Table 9

Results of Post-Hoc Analysis for Analysis of Covariance of Superintendents' Degree of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance as grouped by Districts Performing with Distinction, Full Waiver, or Limited Waiver when Controlling for Socio-economic Status

Degree of Urgency When Began	District Performance	Mean Difference	Standard Error	Sig.
Limited Waiver	Full Waiver	.0815	.16277	.875
	Distinction	.2616	.12291	.199
Full Waiver	Limited Waiver	-.0815	.16277	.875
	Distinction	.1801	.14093	.477
Distinction	Limited Waiver	-.2616	.12291	.199
	Full Waiver	-.1801	.14093	.477

The data that demonstrates there were no significant differences in degree of urgency

when superintendents took their positions is found in Table 9. There was a significant difference in degree of urgency between superintendents at the end of their first year in districts with a limited waiver ($M = 6.3043$) and superintendents at the end of their first year in districts performing with distinction ($M = 5.7119$) at .05 level ($p = .005$) when controlling for socio-economic factors and is reported in Table 10. No significant differences among superintendents at the time of the survey are reported in Table 11. Therefore, hyposthesis

Table 10

Results of Post-Hoc Analysis for Analysis of Covariance of Superintendents' Degree of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance as grouped by Districts Performing with Distinction, Full Waiver, or Limited Waiver when Controlling for Socio-economic Status

Degree of Urgency End of First Year	District Performance	Mean Difference	Standard Error	Sig.
Limited Waiver	Full Waiver	.3043	.11510	.118
	Distinction	.5925*	.08691	.005
Full Waiver	Limited Waiver	-.3043	.11510	.118
	Distinction	.2881	.09966	.093
Distinction	Limited Waiver	-.5925*	.08691	.005
	Full Waiver	-.2881	.09966	.093

one was rejected when controlling for the socio-economic status of district percentage of students qualifying for free/reduced lunch.

Additional analysis of the data were conducted to more fully understand the significant differences among the degree of urgency at the end of the first year between superintendents in districts with limited waivers and performing with distinction as indicated by ANCOVA when controlling for the socio-economic status measured by the percentage of

students qualifying for free/reduced lunch. First, a more detailed look at free/reduced lunch percentages is presented in Table 12. The districts in the study had a higher percentage of

Table 11

Results of Post-Hoc Analysis for Analysis of Covariance of Superintendents' Degree of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance as grouped by Districts Performing with Distinction, Full Waiver, or Limited Waiver when Controlling for Socio-economic Status

Degree of Urgency At the Time of Survey	District Performance	Mean Difference	Standard Error	Sig.
Limited Waiver	Full Waiver	.3913	.25736	.374
	Distinction	.6625	.19434	.057
Full Waiver	Limited Waiver	-.3913	.25736	.374
	Distinction	.2712	.22284	.505
Distinction	Limited Waiver	-.6625	.19434	.057
	Full Waiver	-.2712	.22284	.505

students qualifying for free/reduced lunch than the state with 46.29% compared to the state percentage of 42.1. Districts performing with distinction had a percentage of 41.14 as compared to districts with a full waiver percentage of 47.18, and districts with a limited waiver percentage of 58.88. A correlation was computed between free/reduced lunch percentages and district levels of performance. A correlation of -0.487 was found between free/reduced lunch percentages and district performance levels. Therefore, as the percentages of students on free/reduces lunch goes up, overall district performance goes down.

Table 12

Free/Reduced Lunch Means

2008 State	Total N=98	Limited Waiver N=23	Full Waiver N=16	Performance with Distinction N=59
42.1%	46.29%	58.88%	47.18%	41.14%

Districts in the study were next sorted into three levels. Level 1 consisted of thirty-three districts with free/reduced percentages of 11 to 40 percent. Level 2 consisted of thirty-two districts with free/reduced percentages of 40 to 54 percent. Level 3 consisted of thirty-three districts with free/reduced percentages of 54-79. The means of Item 3, degree of urgency at the end of the first year, and Item 4, degree of urgency at the time of the survey (now) were then computed by group. Changes in the degree of urgency from the time of taking the superintendent position to the end of the first year to the time of the survey are presented in Table 13.

Table 13

Changes in the Degree of Urgency over Time by Levels of Free/Reduced Lunch

Level of Free Reduced Lunch Percentage	Upon Taking the Position	At the End of the 1 st Year	At the Time of the Survey(Now)	Change from End of 1 st Year to Now
Lowest 1/3 (11%-40%)	5.48	5.46	5.73	+.27
Middle 1/3 (40%-54%)	5.88	5.97	5.91	-.06
Highest 1/3 (54%-79.8%)	6.00	6.18	6.15	-.03

Superintendents in districts from this study with the lowest percentages of students qualifying for free/reduced lunch had the lowest degree of urgency to improve student performance. However, the degree of urgency did increase between the end of the first year and the time of the survey. Superintendents with moderate to high levels of students qualifying for free/reduced lunch had a higher degree of urgency that intensified to a lesser degree over time.

Hypothesis Two

The second hypothesis tested in this study was: There are no significant differences in the superintendents' reported source of urgency to improve student academic performance as measured by the items in the "source of urgency" scale when their districts are sorted as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver as designated by Missouri's annual performance report when controlling for socio-economic status as measured by district percent of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch. A general linear model was developed to test for significant differences among superintendents' reported source of urgency to improve student achievement when districts are sorted by performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver. The Tukey HSD was used in a post-hoc analysis to identify significant differences in superintendent's source of sense of urgency.

The means for the superintendents' reported source of urgency to improve student academic achievement by districts performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver are found in Table 14. Results of the ANOVA are contained in Table 15. The survey items measured the source of urgency as the dependent variable and included the desire to eliminate the achievement gap, the ethical/moral

obligation to students, the local/state/national obligation of public education to society, the relationship between overall academic performance and the economic/social success of society, and the relationship between student academic performance and student success in a global society.

Additional sources of urgency also reported in Table 15 were community concerns about student academic achievement, board member concerns about student academic achievement, and state mandates and federal mandates about student academic achievement. The post-hoc Tukey HSD data are also presented in Table 15. There were no significant differences among the reported sources of urgency for superintendents in districts performing with a limited waiver, performing with a full waiver, or performing with distinction.

A one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) of the source of urgency as reported by superintendents that included the desire to eliminate the achievement gap, the ethical/moral obligation to students, the local/state/national obligation of public education to society, the relationship between overall academic performance and the economic/social success of society, and the relationship between student academic performance and student success in a global society was used to assess if there were statistically significant differences between superintendents in districts performing with a limited waiver, full waiver, or with distinction after controlling for socio-economic status as measured by district percentage of students identified for free/reduced lunch. Additional sources of urgency that were also tested were community concerns about student academic achievement, board member concerns

Table 14

Means for Source of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance: Scores grouped by Districts Performing with Distinction, Full Waiver, or Limited Waiver (n = 98)

Source of Urgency	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Eliminate the Achievement Gap				
Limited Waiver	23	4.7391	1.42118	.29634
Full Waiver	16	4.7500	1.65328	.41332
Distinction	59	4.5932	1.67248	.21774
Total	98	4.6531	1.59963	.161159
Ethical/Moral Obligation				
Limited Waiver	23	6.1739	1.02922	.21461
Full Waiver	16	6.0625	1.28938	.32234
Distinction	59	5.8983	1.19906	.15610
Total	98	5.9898	1.17091	.11828
Obligation of Education to Society				
Limited Waiver	23	5.5652	1.30823	.27278
Full Waiver	16	4.6250	1.14746	.28687
Distinction	59	5.1186	1.26061	.16412
Total	98	5.1429	1.27627	.12892
Academic Performance/Economic Success				
Limited Waiver	23	5.0870	1.20276	.25079
Full Waiver	16	5.0000	1.5470	.28868
Distinction	59	5.1186	1.26061	.16412
Total	98	5.0918	1.21915	.12315
Student Success in Global Society				
Limited Waiver	23	4.7826	1.67757	.34980

	Full Waiver	16	5.3750	1.02470	.25617
	Distinction	59	5.3729	1.23034	.16018
	Total	98	5.9898	1.17091	.11828
Community Concerns	Limited Waiver	23	4.4348	1.50230	.31325
	Full Waiver	16	4.5000	1.93218	.48305
	Distinction	59	4.3051	1.27650	.16619
	Total	98	4.3673	1.43870	.14533
Board Concerns	Limited Waiver	23	5.0435	1.22394	.255521
	Full Waiver	16	5.1875	1.93972	.48493
	Distinction	59	4.3220	1.41958	.18481
	Total	98	4.6327	1.50865	.15240
State Mandates	Limited Waiver	23	5.6957	1.39593	.29107
	Full Waiver	16	5.5000	1.15470	.28868
	Distinction	59	5.1864	1.27947	.16657
	Total	98	5.3571	1.29432	.13075
Federal Mandates	Limited Waiver	23	5.1739	1.77488	.37009
	Full Waiver	16	4.7500	1.77012	.44253
	Distinction	59	4.9153	1.36821	.17813
	Total	98	4.9490	1.52891	.15444

Table 15

Results of Post-Hoc Analysis of Analysis of Variance for Superintendents' Source of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance as grouped by Districts Performing with Distinction, Full Waiver, or Limited Waiver

Source of Urgency	<i>F</i>	<i>F Sig.</i>	District Performance	Mean	Mean Dif.	Sig.
Elimination of the Achievement Gap	.102	.903	Limited Waiver	4.7391	-.01087	1.000
				.14591	.928	
			Full Waiver	4.7500	.01087	1.000
				.15678	.937	
			Distinction	4.5932	-.14591	.928
				-.15678	.937	
Ethical/Moral Obligation	.490	.614	Limited Waiver	6.1739	.11141	.954
				.27561	.609	
			Full Waiver	6.0625	-.11141	.954
				.16419	.874	
			Distinction	5.8983	-.27561	.609
				-.16419	.874	
Obligation of Public Education to Society	2.677	.074	Limited Waiver	5.5652	.94022	.060
				.44657	.321	
			Full Waiver	4.6250	-.94022	.060
				-.49364	.347	
			Distinction	5.1186	-.44657	.321
				.49364	.347	

Relationship between Academic Performance and Economic/Social Success of Society	.059	.943	Limited Waiver	5.0870	.08696	.974
					-.03169	.994
			Full Waiver	5.0000	-.08696	.974
					-.11864	.938
			Distinction	5.1186	.03169	.994
					.11864	.938
Relationship between Academic Performance and Student Success in Global Society	1.763	.177	Limited Waiver	4.7826	-.59239	.356
					-.59027	.169
			Full Waiver	5.3750	.59239	.356
					.00212	1.000
			Distinction	5.3729	.59027	.169
					-.00212	1.000
Community Concerns	.146	.864	Limited Waiver	4.4348	-.06522	.990
					.12970	.930
			Full Waiver	4.5000	.06522	.990
					.19492	.883
			Distinction	4.3051	-.12970	.930
					-.19492	.883
Board Concerns	3.339	.040	Limited Waiver	5.0435	-.14402	.952
					.72144	.120
			Full Waiver	5.1875	.14402	.952

							104
					.86547	.099	
			Distinction	5.3220	-.72144	.120	
					-.86547	.099	
State			Limited Waiver	5.6957	.19565	.887	
Mandates/Requirements	1.409	.249			.50921	.248	
			Full Waiver	5.5000	-.19565	.887	
					.31356	.665	
			Distinction	5.1864	-.50921	.248	
					-.31356	.665	
Federal			Limited Waiver	5.1739	.42391	.675	
Mandates/Requirements	.394	.676			.25866	.675	
			Full Waiver	4.7500	-.42391	.675	
					-.16525	.923	
			Distinction	4.9153	-.25866	.773	
					.16525	.923	

about student academic achievement, and state mandates and federal mandates about student academic achievement which are presented in Table 16. There were no significant differences in the source of urgency among superintendents in districts with a limited waiver, full waiver or performing with distinction when controlling for the socio-economic factor of district percentage of students qualifying for free/reduced lunch for the ANCOVA as presented in Table 16. Therefore, hypothesis two was not rejected.

Table 16

Results Post-Hoc Analysis of Analysis of Covariance for Superintendents' Source of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance as grouped by Districts Performing with Distinction, Full Waiver, or Limited Waiver when Controlling for Socio-economic Status

	District Performance	Mean Difference	Standard Error	Sig.
Eliminate the Achievement Gap				
Limited Waiver	Full Waiver	-.0109	.53985	1.000
	Distinction	.1459	.40765	.933
Full Waiver	Limited Waiver	.0109	.53985	1.000
	Distinction	.1568	.46742	.941
Distinction	Limited Waiver	-.1459	.40765	.933
	Full Waiver	-.1568	.46742	.941
Ethical/Moral Obligation				
Limited Waiver	Full Waiver	.1114	.25736	.904
	Distinction	.2756	.19434	.415
Full Waiver	Limited Waiver	-.1114	.25736	.904
	Distinction	.1642	.22284	.757
Distinction	Limited Waiver	-.2756	.19434	.415
	Full Waiver	-.1642	.22284	.757
Obligation of Education to Society				
Limited Waiver	Full Waiver	.9402	.48831	.246
	Distinction	.4466	.36873	.508
Full Waiver	Limited Waiver	-.9402	.48831	.246

	Distinction	-.4936	.42280	.529
Distinction	Limited Waiver	-.4466	.36873	.508
	Full Waiver	.4936	.42280	.529
Academic Performance/Economic Success				
Limited Waiver	Full Waiver	.0870	.61982	.989
	Distinction	-.0317	.46803	.997
Full Waiver	Limited Waiver	-.0870	.61982	.989
	Distinction	-.1186	.53666	.974
Distinction	Limited Waiver	-.0317	.46803	.997
	Full Waiver	.1186	.53666	.974
Student Success in Global Society				
Limited Waiver	Full Waiver	.5924	.43065	.433
	Distinction	-.5903	.32519	.276
Full Waiver	Limited Waiver	.5924	.43065	.433
	Distinction	.0021	.37288	1.000
Distinction	Limited Waiver	.5903	.32519	.276
	Full Waiver	-.0021	.37288	1.000
Community Concerns				
Limited Waiver	Full Waiver	-.0652	.25736	.966
	Distinction	.1297	.19434	.793
Full Waiver	Limited Waiver	.0652	.25736	.966
	Distinction	.1949	.22284	.682
Distinction	Limited Waiver	-.1297	.19434	.793

	Full Waiver	-.1949	.22284	.682
Board Concerns				
Limited Waiver	Full Waiver	-.1440	.57548	.966
	Distinction	.7214	.43455	.324
Full Waiver	Limited Waiver	.1440	.57548	.966
	Distinction	.8655	.49828	.299
Distinction	Limited Waiver	-.7214	.43455	.324
	Full Waiver	-.8655	.49828	.299
State Mandates				
Limited Waiver	Full Waiver	.1957	.39871	.879
	Distinction	.5092	.30107	.314
Full Waiver	Limited Waiver	-.1957	.39871	.879
	Distinction	.3136	.34522	.664
Distinction	Limited Waiver	-.5092	.30107	.314
	Full Waiver	-.3136	.34522	.664
Federal Mandates				
Limited Waiver	Full Waiver	.4239	.38173	.558
	Distinction	.2587	.28825	.670
Full Waiver	Limited Waiver	-.4239	.38173	.558
	Distinction	-.1653	.33052	.875
Distinction	Limited Waiver	-.2587	.28825	.670
	Full Waiver	.1653	.33052	.875

Hypothesis Three

The third hypothesis tested in this study was: There are no significant differences in the superintendents' reported frequency of purposeful communication of a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance among superintendents when their districts are sorted as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver as designated by Missouri's annual performance report when controlling for socio-economic status as measured by district percent of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch. A general linear model was developed to test for significant differences among superintendents frequency of purposeful communication of a sense of urgency to improve student achievement when districts are sorted by performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver. The Tukey HSD was used in a post-hoc analysis to identify significant differences in superintendents' frequency of purposeful communication of a sense of urgency.

The means for the superintendents' frequency of purposeful communication of a sense of urgency when sorted by districts performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver are found in Table 17. Results of the ANOVA with the survey items measuring the frequency of communication of urgency to the school board, to individual board members, to district administrators, to building principals, to teacher leaders, to all district teachers, to community clubs/civic/business organizations, and to the media as the dependent variable with districts sorted by performing with a limited waiver, performing with a full waiver, or performing with distinction as reported in Table 18. The post-hoc Tukey HSD data are also presented in Table 18. Mean differences between the frequency of purposeful communication to all district teachers for superintendents in districts

Table 17

Means for Frequency of Purposeful Communication of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance: Scores grouped by Districts Performing with Distinction, Full Waiver, or Limited Waiver (n = 98)

Frequency of Purposeful Communication	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Communication to School Board				
Limited Waiver	23	5.8696	.96786	.20181
Full Waiver	16	5.5000	1.36626	.34157
Distinction	59	5.2881	1.09939	.14313
Total	98	5.4592	1.13218	.11437
Communication to Individual Board Members				
Limited Waiver	23	4.913	1.75585	.36612
Full Waiver	16	4.8750	1.70783	.42696
Distinction	59	4.8814	1.16093	.15114
Total	98	4.8878	1.39869	.14129
Communication to District Administrators				
Limited Waiver	23	6.5217	.73048	.15232
Full Waiver	16	6.0000	1.54919	.38730
Distinction	59	6.0678	1.03164	.13431
Total	98	6.1633	1.08118	.10922
Communication to Building Principals				
Limited Waiver	23	6.6087	.72232	.15061
Full Waiver	16	6.3125	.87321	.21830
Distinction	59	6.1864	.95547	.12439
Total	98	6.3061	.90141	.09106

Communication to Teacher Leaders					
	Limited Waiver	23	6.1304	1.14035	.23778
	Full Waiver	16	6.0000	1.21106	.30277
	Distinction	59	5.5763	1.17742	.15329
	Total	98	5.7755	1.18870	.12008
Communication to All District Teachers					
	Limited Waiver	23	5.8696	1.21746	.25386
	Full Waiver	16	5.8125	1.04682	.26171
	Distinction	59	5.0508	1.27879	.16648
	Total	98	5.3673	1.27940	.12924
Communication to Community Clubs/Civic Business Organizations					
	Limited Waiver	23	3.9565	1.60902	.33550
	Full Waiver	16	4.1250	1.58640	.39660
	Distinction	59	4.2373	1.30436	.16981
	Total	98	4.1531	1.41678	.14312
Communication to Media					
	Limited Waiver	23	4.2174	1.47576	.30772
	Full Waiver	16	4.1875	1.86971	.46743
	Distinction	59	4.1864	1.43208	.18644
	Total	98	4.1939	1.50366	.15189

performing with a limited waiver ($M = 5.8698$) and superintendents in districts performing with distinction ($M = 5.0508$) were significant ($p = .022$). Superintendents in districts with a limited waiver purposefully communicated a sense of urgency to improve student academic

Table 18

Results of Post-Hoc Analysis of Analysis of Variance for Superintendents' Frequency of Purposeful Communication of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance as grouped by Districts Performing with Distinction, Full Waiver, or Limited Waiver

Frequency of Purposeful Communication	<i>F</i>	<i>F Sig.</i>	District Performance	Mean	Mean Dif.	<i>Sig.</i>
Communication to School Board	2.251	.111	Limited Waiver	5.8696	.36957	.569
				.58143	.092	
			Full Waiver	5.5000	-.36957	.569
				.21186	.780	
			Distinction	5.2881	-.58143	.092
				-.21186	.780	
Communication to Individual Board Members	.005	.995	Limited Waiver	4.9130	.03804	.996
				.03169	.995	
			Full Waiver	4.8750	-.03804	.996
				-.00636	1.000	
			Distinction	4.8814	-.03169	.995
				.00636	1.000	
Communication to District Administrators	1.701	.188	Limited Waiver	6.5217	.52174	.299
				.45394	.203	
			Full Waiver	6.0000	-.52174	.299
				-.06780	.973	
			Distinction	6.0678	-.45394	.203
				.06780	.973	

Communication to Building Principals	1.848	.163	Limited Waiver	6.6087	.29620	.567
					.42225	.138
			Full Waiver	6.3125	-.29620	.567
					-.12606	.871
Communication to Teacher Leaders	2.192	.117	Limited Waiver	6.1304	.13043	.938
					.55416	.139
			Full Waiver	6.0000	-.13043	.938
					.42373	.410
Communication to All District Teachers	4.913	.009	Limited Waiver	5.8696	.05707	.989
					.81872*	.022
			Full Waiver	5.8125	-.05707	.989
					.76165	.077
Communication to Community Clubs/Civic Business Organizations	.324	.724	Limited Waiver	3.9565	-.16848	.930
					-.28077	.704
			Full Waiver	4.1250	.16848	.930
					-.11229	.958

			Distinction	4.2373	.28077	.704
					.11229	.958
Communication to Media	.004	.996	Limited Waiver	4.2174	.02989	.998
					.03095	.996
			Full Waiver	4.1875	-.02989	.998
					.00106	1.000
			Distinction	4.1864	-.03095	.996
					-.00106	1.000

performance with district teachers more than did superintendents in districts performing with distinction. Therefore, hypothesis three was rejected.

A one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) of the frequency of purposeful communication of urgency to the school board, to individual board members, to district administrators, to building principals, to teacher leaders, to all district teachers, to community clubs/civic/business organizations, and to the media was used to assess if there were statistically significant differences among superintendents in districts performing with a limited waiver, full waiver, or with distinction after controlling for socio-economic status as measured by district percentage of students identified for free/reduced lunch. Results of the ANCOVA and the results of the post-hoc Tukey HSD are presented in Table 19.

There was a significant difference in the frequency of purposeful communication of urgency to the board of education between superintendents in districts with a limited waiver ($M = 5.8696$) and superintendents in districts performing with distinction ($M = 5.2881$) when controlling for socio-economic factors as reported in Table 19. Mean differences between

Table 19

Results of Post-Hoc Analysis of Analysis of Covariance for Superintendents' Frequency of Purposeful Communication to Improve Student Academic Performance as grouped by Districts Performing with Distinction, Full Waiver, or Limited Waiver when Controlling for Socio-economic Status

	District Performance	Mean Difference	Standard Error	Sig.
Communication to School Board				
Limited Waiver	Full Waiver	.3696	.16277	.172
	Distinction	.5814*	.12291	.020
Full Waiver	Limited Waiver	-.3696	.16277	.172
	Distinction	.2119	.14093	.381
Distinction	Limited Waiver	-.5814*	.12291	.020
	Full Waiver	-.2119	.14093	.391
Communication to Individual Board Members				
Limited Waiver	Full Waiver	.0380	.36397	.994
	Distinction	.0317	.27483	.993
Full Waiver	Limited Waiver	-.0380	.36397	.994
	Distinction	-.0064	.31514	1.000
Distinction	Limited Waiver	-.0317	.27483	.993
	Full Waiver	.0064	.31514	1.000
Communication to District Administrators				
Limited Waiver	Full Waiver	.5217	.23019	.173
	Distinction	.4539	.17382	.122

Full Waiver	Limited Waiver	-.5217	.23019	.173
	Distinction	-.0678	.19931	.939
Distinction	Limited Waiver	-.4539	.17382	.122
	Full Waiver	.0678	.19931	.939
Communication to Building Principals				
Limited Waiver	Full Waiver	.2962	.23019	.472
	Distinction	.4223	.17382	.146
Full Waiver	Limited Waiver	-.2962	.23019	.472
	Distinction	.1261	.19931	.811
Distinction	Limited Waiver	-.4223	.17382	.146
	Full Waiver	-.1261	.9931	.811
Communication to Teacher Leaders				
Limited Waiver	Full Waiver	.1304	.36397	.933
	Distinction	.5542	.27483	.224
Full Waiver	Limited Waiver	-.1304	.36397	.933
	Distinction	.4237	.31514	.447
Distinction	Limited Waiver	-.5542	.27483	.224
	Full Waiver	-.4237	.31514	.447
Communication to All District Teachers				
Limited Waiver	Full Waiver	-.0571	.48831	.993
	Distinction	.8187	.36873	.181
Full Waiver	Limited Waiver	-.0571	.48831	.993
	Distinction	.7617	.42280	.280

Distinction	Limited Waiver	-.8187	.36873	.181
	Full Waiver	-.7617	.42280	.280
Communication to Community Clubs/Civic Business Organizations				
Limited Waiver	Full Waiver	-.1685	.57548	.954
	Distinction	-.2808	.43455	.804
Full Waiver	Limited Waiver	.1685	.57548	.954
	Distinction	-.1123	.49828	.973
Distinction	Limited Waiver	.2808	.43455	.804
	Full Waiver	.1123	.49828	.973
Communication to Media				
Limited Waiver	Full Waiver	.0299	.47456	.998
	Distinction	.0310	.35834	.996
Full Waiver	Limited Waiver	-.0299	.47456	.998
	Distinction	.0011	.41089	1.000
Distinction	Limited Waiver	-.0310	.35834	.996
	Full Waiver	-.0011	.41089	1.000

the frequency of purposeful communication to the board of education for superintendents in districts performing with a limited waiver and superintendents in districts performing with distinction were significant ($p = .020$) at the .05 level. Superintendents in districts with a limited waiver purposefully communicated a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance with the board of education more than did superintendents in districts performing with distinction when controlling for the socio-economic factor of district

percentage of students qualifying for free/reduced lunch. Therefore, hypothesis three was rejected.

Hypothesis Four

The fourth hypothesis tested in this study was: There are no significant differences among superintendents' perceived change in the sense of urgency to improve student academic performance across the district as reported on the “change in urgency” scale when their districts are sorted as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver as designated by Missouri’s annual performance report when controlling for socio-economic status as measured by district percent of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch.

A general linear model was developed to test for significant differences among superintendents’ perceived change in the sense of urgency to improve student achievement when districts are sorted by performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver. The Tukey HSD was used in a post-hoc analysis to identify significant differences in superintendents’ perceived change in the sense of urgency.

The means for the superintendents’ perceived change in the sense of urgency when sorted by districts performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver are found in Table 20. Results of the ANOVA with the survey items measuring the perceived change in the urgency of the school board, of individual board members, of district administrators, of building principals, of teacher leaders, of all district teachers, of community clubs/civic/business organizations, and of the media as the dependent variable with districts sorted by performing with a limited waiver, performing with a full

Table 20

Means for Superintendents' Perceived Change of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance: Scores grouped by Districts Performing with Distinction, Full Waiver, or Limited Waiver (n = 98)

Frequency of Purposeful Communication	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Change of School Board				
Limited Waiver	23	5.5652	1.03687	.21620
Full Waiver	16	5.3750	1.02470	.25617
Distinction	59	5.1017	1.02881	.13394
Total	98	5.2551	1.03855	.10491
Change of Individual Board Members				
Limited Waiver	23	5.2609	1.09617	.22857
Full Waiver	16	5.4375	1.09354	.27339
Distinction	59	4.9153	1.19320	.15534
Total	98	5.0816	1.16365	.11755
Change of District Administrators				
Limited Waiver	23	6.3913	.72232	.15061
Full Waiver	16	6.3125	.94548	.23662
Distinction	59	5.8983	1.06180	.13823
Total	98	6.0816	.99144	.10015
Change of Building Principals				
Limited Waiver	23	6.2174	1.34693	.28086
Full Waiver	16	6.2500	.77460	.19365
Distinction	59	6.0339	.98201	.12785
Total	98	6.1122	1.04420	.10548

Change of Teacher Leaders					
	Limited Waiver	23	6.1739	1.02922	.21461
	Full Waiver	16	5.8750	.95743	.23936
	Distinction	59	5.7119	1.00088	.13030
	Total	98	5.8469	1.00875	.10190
Change of All District Teachers					
	Limited Waiver	23	5.8696	1.01374	.21138
	Full Waiver	16	5.8750	.88506	.22127
	Distinction	59	5.7288	.96187	.12522
	Total	98	5.7857	.95518	.09649
Change of Community Clubs/Civic Business Organizations					
	Limited Waiver	23	4.2174	1.08530	.22630
	Full Waiver	16	4.1250	1.08781	.27195
	Distinction	59	4.5593	.72567	.09447
	Total	98	4.4082	.89485	.09039
Change of Media					
	Limited Waiver	23	4.5652	1.37597	.28691
	Full Waiver	16	4.5000	1.31656	.32914
	Distinction	59	4.6271	.88859	.11568
	Total	98	4.5918	1.08254	.10935

waiver, or performing with distinction are found in Table 21. The post-hoc Tukey HSD data are also presented in Table 21. There were no significant differences among the superintendents' perceived change in the sense of urgency of the school board, of individual board members, of district administrators, of building principals, of teacher leaders, of all

Table 21

Results of Post-Hoc Analysis of Analysis of Variance for Superintendents' Perceived Change of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance as grouped by Districts Performing with Distinction, Full Waiver, or Limited Waiver

Perceived Change of Urgency	<i>F</i>	<i>F Sig.</i>	District Performance	Mean	Mean Dif.	Sig.
Change of School Board	1.805	.170	Limited Waiver	5.5652	.19022	.838
					.46352	.165
			Full Waiver	5.3750	-.19022	.838
					.27331	.616
Change of Individual Board Members	1.646	.198	Distinction	5.1017	-.46352	.165
					-.27331	.616
			Limited Waiver	5.2609	-.17663	.886
					.34562	.447
Change of District Administrators	2.652	.076	Full Waiver	5.4375	.17663	.886
					.52225	.249
			Distinction	4.9153	-.34562	.447
					-.52225	.249
Change of Building Principals	.417	.660	Limited Waiver	6.3913	.07880	.967
					.49300	.104
			Full Waiver	6.3125	-.07880	.967
					.41419	.292
			Distinction	5.8983	-.49300	.104
				-.41419	.292	

						121
					.18349	.758
			Full Waiver	6.2500	.03261	.995
					.21610	.746
			Distinction	6.0339	-.18349	.758
					-.21610	.746
Change of Teacher Leaders	1.771	.176	Limited Waiver	6.1739	.29891	.631
					.46205	.151
			Full Waiver	5.8750	-.29891	.631
					.16314	.832
			Distinction	5.7119	-.46205	.151
					-.16314	.832
Change of All District Teachers	.259	.772	Limited Waiver	5.8696	-.00543	1.000
					.14075	.823
			Full Waiver	5.8750	.00543	1.000
					.14619	.852
			Distinction	5.7288	-.14075	.823
					-.14619	.852
Change of Community Clubs/Civic Business Organizations	2.220	.114	Limited Waiver	4.2174	.09239	.945
					-.34193	.262
			Full Waiver	4.1250	-.09239	.945
					-.43432	.195
			Distinction	4.5593	.34193	.262

					.43432	.195
Change of Media	.094	.910	Limited Waiver	4.5652	.06522	.982
					-.06190	.971
			Full Waiver	4.5000	-.06522	.982
					-.12712	.910
			Distinction	4.6271	.06190	.971
					.12712	.910

district teachers, of community clubs/civic/business organizations, and of the media as the dependent variable with districts sorted by performing with a limited waiver, performing with a full waiver, or performing with distinction.

A one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) of superintendents' perceived change in the sense of urgency was used to assess if there were statistically significant differences among superintendents in districts performing with a limited waiver, full waiver, or with distinction after controlling for socio-economic status as measured by district percentage of students identified for free/reduced lunch. Results of the post-hoc Tukey HSD with the survey items measuring the perceived change in the urgency of the school board, of individual board members, of district administrators, of building principals, of teacher leaders, of all district teachers, of community clubs/civic/business organizations, and of the media to improve student academic performance are contained in Table 22. There were no significant differences in the superintendents' perceived change in the sense of urgency to improve student performance in districts with a limited waiver, full waiver or performing

Table 22

Results of Post-Hoc Analysis of Analysis of Covariance for Superintendents' Perceived Change in a Sense of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance as grouped by Districts Performing with Distinction, Full Waiver, or Limited Waiver when Controlling for Socio-economic Status

	District Performance	Mean Difference	Standard Error	Sig.
Change of School Board				
Limited Waiver	Full Waiver	.1902	.32554	.835
	Distinction	.4635	.24582	.256
Full Waiver	Limited Waiver	-.1902	.32554	.835
	Distinction	.2733	.28187	.631
Distinction	Limited Waiver	-.4635	.24582	.256
	Full Waiver	-.2733	.28187	.631
Change of Individual Board Members				
Limited Waiver	Full Waiver	-.1766	.32554	.856
	Distinction	.3456	.24582	.420
Full Waiver	Limited Waiver	.1766	.32554	.856
	Distinction	.5222	.28187	.265
Distinction	Limited Waiver	-.3456	.24582	.420
	Full Waiver	-.5222	.28187	.265
Change of District Administrators				
Limited Waiver	Full Waiver	.0788	.28193	.958
	Distinction	.4930	.21289	.164
Full Waiver	Limited Waiver	-.0788	.28193	.958

	Distinction	.4142	.24410	.312
Distinction	Limited Waiver	-.4930	.21289	.164
	Full Waiver	-.4142	.24410	.312
Change of Building Principals				
Limited Waiver	Full Waiver	-.0326	.30452	.994
	Distinction	.1835	.22994	.724
Full Waiver	Limited Waiver	.3026	.30452	.994
	Distinction	.2161	.26366	.712
Distinction	Limited Waiver	-.1835	.22994	.724
	Full Waiver	-.2161	.26366	.712
Change of Teacher Leaders				
Limited Waiver	Full Waiver	.2989	.25736	.532
	Distinction	.4620	.19434	.154
Full Waiver	Limited Waiver	-.2989	.25736	.532
	Distinction	.1631	.22284	.759
Distinction	Limited Waiver	-.4620	.19434	.154
	Full Waiver	-.1631	.22284	.759
Change of All District Teachers				
Limited Waiver	Full Waiver	-.0054	.34529	1.000
	Distinction	.1408	.26073	.857
Full Waiver	Limited Waiver	.0054	.34529	1.000
	Distinction	.1462	.29897	.880
Distinction	Limited Waiver	-.1408	.26073	.857

Change of Community Clubs/Civic Business Organizations	Full Waiver	-.1462	.29897	.880
	Limited Waiver	.0924	.38173	.968
Full Waiver	Distinction	-.3419	.28825	.520
	Limited Waiver	-.0924	.38173	.968
Distinction	Distinction	-.4343	.33052	.460
	Limited Waiver	.3419	.28825	.520
Change of Media	Full Waiver	.4343	.33052	.460
	Limited Waiver	.0652	.28193	.971
Full Waiver	Distinction	-.0619	.21289	.955
	Limited Waiver	-.0652	.28193	.971
Distinction	Distinction	-.1271	.24410	.866
	Limited Waiver	.0619	.21289	.955
	Full Waiver	.1271	.24410	.866

with distinction when controlling for the socio-economic factor of district percentage of students qualifying for free/reduced lunch. Therefore, hypothesis four was not rejected.

Hypothesis Five

The fifth hypothesis tested in this study was: There are no significant differences in superintendents' reported use of strategies to communicate a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance among superintendents when their districts are sorted as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited

waiver as designated by Missouri's annual performance report when controlling for socioeconomic status as measured by district percent of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch. A general linear model was developed to test for significant differences among superintendents reported use of strategies to communicate a sense of urgency to improve student achievement when districts are sorted by performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver. The Tukey HSD was used in a post-hoc analysis to identify significant differences in superintendent's reported use of strategies to communicate a sense of urgency.

The means for the superintendents' reported use of strategies to communicate a sense of urgency to improve student performance by districts performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver are found in Table 23. Results of the ANOVA with the survey items measuring the superintendent's use of communication strategies as the dependent variables with districts sorted by performing with a limited waiver, performing with a full waiver, or performing with distinction are presented in Table 24. The post-hoc Tukey HSD data are also presented in Table 24. Mean differences between the reported use of identifying an impending crisis for superintendents in districts performing with a limited waiver ($M = 5.2609$) and superintendents in districts performing with distinction ($M = 3.8814$) were significant ($p = .004$). Superintendents in districts with a limited waiver utilized the communication strategy of identifying an impending crisis more than did superintendents in districts performing with distinction. Therefore, hypothesis five was rejected.

Table 23

Means for Communication Strategies Utilized to Improve Student Academic Performance: Scores grouped by Districts Performing with Distinction, Full Waiver, or Limited Waiver (n = 98)

Communication Strategies	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Identified an Impending Crisis				
Limited Waiver	23	5.2609	1.45282	.30293
Full Waiver	16	5.0000	1.82574	.45644
Distinction	59	3.8814	1.75268	.22818
Total	98	4.3878	1.79709	.18153
Eliminated Programs and Positions				
Limited Waiver	23	4.0000	2.02260	.42174
Full Waiver	16	4.1250	1.74642	.43661
Distinction	59	3.7288	1.61705	.21052
Total	98	3.8571	1.72907	.17466
Set Academic Goals and Targets				
Limited Waiver	23	5.9130	1.12464	.23450
Full Waiver	16	5.8125	1.04682	.26171
Distinction	59	5.4068	1.19075	.15502
Total	98	5.5918	1.16510	.11769
Held Employees Accountable				
Limited Waiver	23	5.8696	1.17954	.24595
Full Waiver	16	5.2500	1.52753	.38188
Distinction	59	5.2712	1.04767	.13639
Total	98	5.4082	1.18266	.11947

Utilized Data	Limited Waiver	23	6.5652	.78775	.16426
	Full Waiver	16	6.4375	.81394	.20349
	Distinction	59	6.0508	.93631	.12190
	Total	98	6.2347	.90589	.09151
Utilized Consultants and Stakeholders	Limited Waiver	23	5.2609	1.21421	.25318
	Full Waiver	16	4.1250	2.09364	.52341
	Distinction	59	4.3390	1.62534	.21160
	Total	98	4.5204	1.66362	.16805
Identified Opportunities for Success	Limited Waiver	23	5.6522	1.11227	.23193
	Full Waiver	16	5.7500	1.00000	.25000
	Distinction	59	5.2542	1.07628	.14012
	Total	98	5.4286	1.08409	.10951

A one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) of superintendents' reported use of strategies to communicate a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance was used to assess if there were statistically significant differences among superintendents in districts performing with a limited waiver, full waiver, or with distinction after controlling for socio-economic status as measured by district percentage of students identified for free/reduced lunch. The results of the post-hoc Tukey HSD with the survey items measuring the perceived use of strategies to communicate a sense of urgency to improve student achievement included identifying an impending crisis, eliminating programs, setting

Table 24

Results of Post-Hoc Analysis of Analysis of Variance for Communication Strategies Utilized to Improve Student Academic Performance as grouped by Districts Performing with Distinction, Full Waiver, or Limited Waiver

Communication Strategies	<i>F</i>	<i>F Sig.</i>	District Performance	Mean	Mean Dif.	Sig.
Identified an Impending Crisis	6.687	.002	Limited Waiver	5.2609	.26087	.885
					1.37951*	.004
			Full Waiver	5.0000	-.26087	.885
					1.11864	.056
Eliminated Programs and Positions	.428	.653	Distinction	3.8814	-1.37951*	.004
					-1.11864	.056
			Limited Waiver	4.0000	-.12500	.973
					.27119	.802
Set Academic Goals and Targets	1.942	.149	Full Waiver	4.1250	.12500	.973
					.39619	.699
			Distinction	3.7288	-.27119	.802
					-.39619	.699
Held Employees			Limited Waiver	5.9130	.10054	.961
					.50626	.180
			Full Waiver	5.8125	-.10054	.961
					.40572	.429
				5.4068	-.50626	.180
					-.40572	.429

						130
Accountable	2.353	.101	Limited Waiver	5.8696	.61957	.237
					.59838	.098
			Full Waiver	5.2500	-.61957	.237
					-.02119	.998
			Distinction	5.2712	-.59838	.098
					.02119	.998
Utilized Data	3.296	.041	Limited Waiver	6.5652	.12772	.898
					.51437	.052
			Full Waiver	6.4375	-.12772	.898
					.38665	.273
			Distinction	6.0508	-.51437	.052
					-.38665	.273
Utilized Consultants and Stakeholders	3.222	.044	Limited Waiver	5.2609	1.13587	.086
					.92189	.060
			Full Waiver	4.1250	-1.13587	.086
					-.21398	.887
			Distinction	4.3390	-.92189	.060
					.21398	.887
Identified Opportunities for Success	1.996	.142	Limited Waiver	5.6522	-.09783	.958
					.39794	.292
			Full Waiver	5.7500	.09783	.958
					.49576	.234
			Distinction	5.2542	-.39794	.292
					-.49576	.234

academic goals and targets, holding employees accountable, utilizing data, using consultants, and providing opportunities for success are reported in Table 25. There were significant differences among superintendents' use of identifying an impending crisis as a strategy to communicate a sense of urgency. The mean difference between superintendents in districts with a limited waiver ($M = 5.2609$) and superintendents in districts performing with distinction ($M = 3.8814$) was significant at the .05 level ($p = .006$). The mean difference between superintendents in districts with a full waiver ($M = 5.0000$) and superintendents in districts performing with distinction ($M = 3.8814$) was also significant at the .05 level ($p = .022$). Superintendents in districts with a limited waiver and superintendents in districts with a full waiver were more apt to use the strategy of identifying an impending crisis to communicate a sense of urgency to improve student performance than superintendents in district performing with distinction. Therefore, hypothesis five was rejected.

Hypothesis Six

The sixth hypothesis tested in this study was: There are no significant predictive linear relationships between the superintendent strategies commonly associated with communicating urgency and a change in the sense of urgency to improve student academic performance across the district as perceived by the superintendent. Stepwise regression was the method used to determine the predictor (independent) variables with the best estimate, or predictive power for the dependent variables. Stepwise regression equations were estimated for each group's perceived change in urgency to improve student academic performance and included the board of education, individual board members, district administrators, building principals, teacher leaders, all district teachers, community organizations, and the media as the dependent variable. In the equation the strategies utilized

Table 25

Results of Post-Hoc Analysis of Analysis of Covariance for Superintendents' Reported Use of Strategies to Communicate a Sense of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance as grouped by Districts Performing with Distinction, Full Waiver, or Limited Waiver when Controlling for Socio-economic Status

	District Performance	Mean Difference	Standard Error	Sig.
Identified an Impending Crisis				
Limited Waiver	Full Waiver	.2609	.28193	.655
	Distinction	1.3795*	.21289	.006
Full Waiver	Limited Waiver	-.2609	.28193	.655
	Distinction	1.1186*	.24410	.022
Distinction	Limited Waiver	-1.3795*	.21289	.006
	Full Waiver	-1.1186*	.24410	.022
Eliminated Programs and Positions				
Limited Waiver	Full Waiver	-.1250	.73698	.984
	Distinction	.2712	.55650	.881
Full Waiver	Limited Waiver	.1250	.73698	.984
	Distinction	.3962	.63810	.817
Distinction	Limited Waiver	-.2712	.55650	.881
	Full Waiver	-.3862	.63810	.817
Set Academic Goals and Targets				
Limited Waiver	Full Waiver	.1005	.36397	.959
	Distinction	.5063	.27483	.268
Full Waiver	Limited Waiver	-.1005	.36397	.959

	Distinction	.4057	.31514	.472
Distinction	Limited Waiver	-.5063	.27483	.268
	Full Waiver	-.4057	.31514	.472
Held Employees Accountable				
Limited Waiver	Full Waiver	.6196	.25736	.149
	Distinction	.5984	.19434	.077
Full Waiver	Limited Waiver	-.6196	.25736	.149
	Distinction	-.0212	.22284	.995
Distinction	Limited Waiver	-.5984	.19434	.077
	Full Waiver	.0212	.22284	.995
Utilized Data				
Limited Waiver	Full Waiver	.1277	.23019	.850
	Distinction	.5144	.17382	.087
Full Waiver	Limited Waiver	-.1277	.23019	.850
	Distinction	.3867	.19931	.242
Distinction	Limited Waiver	-.5144	.17382	.087
	Full Waiver	-.3867	.19931	.242
Utilized Consultants and Stakeholders				
Limited Waiver	Full Waiver	1.1359	.48831	.162
	Distinction	.9219	.36873	.136
Full Waiver	Limited Waiver	-1.1359	.48831	.162
	Distinction	-.2140	.42280	.873
Distinction	Limited Waiver	-.9219	.36873	.136

Provided Opportunities for Success	Full Waiver	.2140	.42280	.873
Limited Waiver	Full Waiver	-.0978	.28193	.937
	Distinction	.3979	.21289	.261
Full Waiver	Limited Waiver	.0978	.28193	.937
	Distinction	.4958	.24410	.220
Distinction	Limited Waiver	-.3979	.21289	.261
	Full Waiver	-.4958	.24410	.220

to communicate a sense of urgency were the independent variables and included identifying an impending crisis, eliminating programs and positions, setting academic goals and targets, holding employees accountable, utilizing data, utilizing consultants, and providing opportunities for success.

Eight stepwise linear regressions were conducted. Seven of the eight regressions were significant. Therefore, null hypothesis six was rejected. The statistics from the stepwise regressions contain the model summary data that includes the number of models produced, R , R^2 , Adjusted R^2 , and Standard Error of the Estimate. The results of the multiple regressions for “Board of Education Change in Urgency” are found in Table 26. Model 1, “Opportunities for Success,” accounted for 14% of the variance in “Board of Education Change in Urgency” (Adjusted $R^2 = .141$). Model 2, “Opportunities for Success” and “Crisis,” accounted for 21% of the variance in “Board of Education Change in Urgency” (Adjusted $R^2 = .209$). Model 3, “Opportunities for Success,” “Crisis,” and “Set Goals and Targets,” accounted for 25% of the variance in “Board of Education Change in Urgency”

Table 26

Linear Regression: Board of Education Change in Urgency with Strategies to Communicate a Sense of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance

Model Summary					
Model	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>R</i> ² Change	Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	Std. Error of the Est.
1	.387 ^a	.150	.150	.141	.96251
2	.475 ^b	.225	.075	.209	.92367
3	.522 ^c	.272	.047	.249	.90005

a. Predictors: (Constant), Opportunities for Success

b. Predictors: (Constant), Opportunities for Success, Crisis

c. Predictors: (Constant), Opportunities for Success, Crisis, Set Goals and Targets

ANOVA					
Model	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	Sig. <i>F</i>
Regression	15.685	1	15.685	16.930	.000 ^a
Residual	88.938	96	.926		
Total	104.622	97			
Regression	23.571	2	11.785	13.814	.000 ^b
Residual	81.052	95	.853		
Total	104.622	97			
Regression	28.475	3	9.492	11.717	.000 ^c
Residual	76.148	94	.810		
Total	104.622	97			

Coefficients					
Variables	<i>B</i>	Std. Error	β	<i>t</i>	Sig. <i>t</i>
(Constant)	3.241	.499		6.497	.000
Opportunities for Success	.371	.090	.387	4.115	.000
(Constant)	2.983	.486		6.135	.000
Opportunities for Success	.283	.091	.296	3.107	.002
Crisis	.167	.055	.289	3.040	.003
(Constant)	2.315	.546		4.237	.000
Opportunities for Success	.199	.095	.207	2.085	.040
Crisis	.155	.054	.268	2.872	.005
Setting Goals and Targets	.212	.086	.237	2.460	.016

(Adjusted $R^2 = .249$). Four variables, “Eliminate Programs,” “Employee Accountability,” “Utilize Data,” and “Utilize Consultants,” did not achieve significance in the model.

The results of the multiple regressions for “Individual Board Member Change in Urgency” are found in Table 27. Model 1, “Crisis,” accounted for 16% of the variance in “Individual Board Member Change in Urgency” (Adjusted $R^2 = .162$). Model 2, “Crisis” and “Set Goals and Targets,” accounted for 20% of the variance in “Individual Board Member Change in Urgency” (Adjusted $R^2 = .195$). Five variables, “Opportunities for Success,” “Eliminate Programs,” “Employee Accountability,” “Utilize Data,” and “Utilize Consultants,” did not achieve significance in the model.

The results of the multiple regressions for “District Administrator Change in Urgency” are found in Table 28. Model 1, “Opportunities for Success,” accounted for 20% of the variance in “District Administrator Change in Urgency” (Adjusted $R^2 = .200$). Model 2, “Opportunities for Success” and “Crisis,” accounted for 25% of the variance in “District Administrator Change in Urgency” (Adjusted $R^2 = .252$). Five variables, “Set Goals and Targets,” “Eliminate Programs,” “Employee Accountability,” “Utilize Data,” and “Utilize Consultants,” did not achieve significance in the model.

The results of the multiple regressions for “Building Principal Change in Urgency” are found in Table 29. Model 1, “Data,” accounted for 21% of the variance in “Building Principal Change in Urgency” (Adjusted $R^2 = .206$). Model 2, “Data” and “Opportunities for Success,” accounted for 26% of the variance in “Building Principal Change in Urgency” (Adjusted $R^2 = .256$). Five variables, “Set Goals and Targets,” “Eliminate Programs,” “Employee Accountability,” “Crisis,” and “Utilize Consultants,” did not achieve significance in the model.

Table 27

Linear Regression: Individual Board Member Change in Urgency with Strategies to Communicate a Sense of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance

Model Summary					
Model	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>R</i> ² Change	Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	Std. Error of the Est.
1	.414 ^a	.171	.171	.162	1.06496
2	.460 ^b	.212	.041	.195	1.04407

a. Predictors: (Constant), Crisis
b. Predictors: (Constant), Crisis, Set Goals and Targets

ANOVA					
Model	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	Sig. <i>F</i>
Regression	22.469	1	22.469	19.812	.000 ^a
Residual	108.878	96	1.134		
Total	131.347	97			
Regression	27.789	2	13.895	12.746	.000 ^b
Residual	103.558	95	1.090		
Total	131.347	97			

Coefficients					
Variables	<i>B</i>	Std. Error	β	<i>t</i>	Sig. <i>t</i>
(Constant)	3.907	.285		13.703	.000
Crisis	.268	.060	.414	4.451	.000
(Constant)	2.879	.542		5.308	.000
Crisis	.240	.060	.371	3.977	.000
Set Goals and Targets	.206	.093	.206	2.209	.030

Table 28

Linear Regression: District Administrators Change in Urgency with Strategies to Communicate a Sense of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance

Model Summary					
Model	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>R</i> ² Change	Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	Std. Error of the Est.
1	.456 ^a	.208	.208	.200	.88680
2	.517 ^b	.268	.060	.252	.85734

a. Predictors: (Constant), Opportunities for Success
b. Predictors: (Constant), Opportunities for Success, Crisis

ANOVA					
Model	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	Sig. <i>F</i>
Regression	19.851	1	19.851	25.243	.000 ^a
Residual	75.496	96	.786		
Total	95.347	97			
Regression	25.519	2	12.760	17.360	.000 ^b
Residual	69.827	95	.735		
Total	95.347	97			

Coefficients					
Variables	<i>B</i>	Std. Error	β	<i>t</i>	Sig. <i>t</i>
(Constant)	3.816	.460		8.302	.000
Opportunities for Success	.417	.083	.456	5.024	.000
(Constant)	3.597	.451		7.970	.000
Opportunities for Success	.343	.085	.375	4.053	.000
Crisis	.142	.051	.257	2.777	.007

Table 29

Linear Regression: Building Principal Change in Urgency with Strategies to Communicate a Sense of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance

Model Summary					
Model	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>R</i> ² Change	Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	Std. Error of the Est.
1	.462 ^a	.214	.214	.206	.93073
2	.521 ^b	.271	.057	.256	.90062

a. Predictors: (Constant), Data

b. Predictors: (Constant), Data, Opportunities for Success

ANOVA					
Model	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	Sig. <i>F</i>
Regression	22.604	1	22.604	26.094	.000 ^a
Residual	83.161	96	.866		
Total	105.765	97			
Regression	28.708	2	14.354	17.697	.000 ^b
Residual	77.057	95	.811		
Total	105.765	97			

Coefficients					
Variables	<i>B</i>	Std. Error	β	<i>t</i>	Sig. <i>t</i>
(Constant)	2.790	.657		4.245	.000
Data	.533	.104	.462	5.108	.000
(Constant)	2.292	.661		3.467	.001
Data	.384	.115	.333	3.349	.001
Opportunities for Success	.263	.096	.273	2.743	.007

The results of the multiple regressions for “Teacher Leaders Change in Urgency” are found in Table 30. Model 1, “Opportunities for Success,” accounted for 10% of the variance in “Teacher Leaders Change in Urgency” (Adjusted $R^2 = .096$). Six variables, “Utilize

Data,” “Set Goals and Targets,” “Eliminate Programs,” “Employee Accountability,” “Crisis,” and “Utilize Consultants,” did not achieve significance in the model.

Table 30

Linear Regression: Teacher Leaders Change in Urgency with Strategies to Communicate a Sense of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance

Model Summary					
Model	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>R</i> ² Change	Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	Std. Error of the Est.
1	.325 ^a	.105	.105	.096	.95909

a. Predictors: (Constant), Opportunities for Success

ANOVA					
Model	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	Sig. <i>F</i>
Regression	10.398	1	10.398	11.303	.001 ^a
Residual	88.306	96	.920		
Total	98.704	97			

Coefficients					
Variables	<i>B</i>	Std. Error	β	<i>t</i>	Sig. <i>t</i>
(Constant)	4.207	.497		8.463	.000
Opportunities for Success	.302	.090	.325	3.362	.001

The results of the multiple regressions for “All District Teachers Change in Urgency” are found in Table 31. Model 1, “Opportunities for Success,” accounted for 5% of the variance in “All District Teachers Change in Urgency” (Adjusted $R^2 = .047$). Six variables, “Utilize Data,” “Set Goals and Targets,” “Eliminate Programs,” “Employee Accountability,” “Crisis,” and “Utilize Consultants,” did not achieve significance in the model.

Table 31

Linear Regression: All District Teachers Change in Urgency with Strategies to Communicate a Sense of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance

Model Summary					
Model	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>R</i> ² Change	Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	Std. Error of the Est.
1	.239 ^a	.057	.057	.047	.93233

a. Predictors: (Constant), Opportunities for Success

ANOVA					
Model	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	Sig. <i>F</i>
Regression	5.053	1	5.053	5.813	.018 ^a
Residual	83.447	96	.869		
Total	88.500	97			

Coefficients					
Variables	<i>B</i>	Std. Error	β	<i>t</i>	Sig. <i>t</i>
(Constant)	4.643	.483		9.607	.000
Opportunities for Success	.211	.087	.239	2.411	.018

The results of the multiple regressions for “Community Organizations Change in Urgency” did not find significance. Therefore, there are no significant predictive linear relationships between the superintendent strategies commonly associated with communicating urgency and community organizations change in the sense of urgency to improve student academic performance across the district as perceived by the superintendent.

The results of the multiple regressions for “Media Change in Urgency” are found in Table 32. Model 1, “Opportunities for Success,” accounted for 4% of the variance in “Media Change in Urgency” (Adjusted $R^2 = .035$). Six variables, “Utilize Data,” “Set Goals and

Targets,” “Eliminate Programs,” “Employee Accountability,” “Crisis,” and “Utilize Consultants,” did not achieve significance in the model.

Table 32

Linear Regression: Media Change in Urgency with Strategies to Communicate a Sense of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance

Model Summary					
Model	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>R</i> ² Change	Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	Std. Error of the Est.
1	.212 ^a	.045	.045	.035	1.06341

a. Predictors: (Constant), Opportunities for Success

ANOVA					
Model	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	Sig. <i>F</i>
Regression	5.113	1	5.113	4.521	.036 ^a
Residual	108.561	96	1.131		
Total	113.673	97			

Coefficients					
Variables	<i>B</i>	Std. Error	<i>β</i>	<i>t</i>	Sig. <i>t</i>
(Constant)	3.442	.551		6.244	.000
Opportunities for Success	.212	.100	.212	2.126	.036

Summary of Findings

A total of 98 superintendents leading K-12 districts across the state of Missouri responded to a survey measuring the sense of urgency to improve student academic performance. The Superintendents’ Sense of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance Survey consisted of thirty-five items and was completed by 59 superintendents in districts performing with distinction, 16 superintendents in districts with full waivers, and

23 superintendents in districts with limited waivers as measured determined by Missouri's Annual Performance Report.

The survey measured five categories: Superintendent's Degree of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance, Superintendent's Source of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance, Superintendent's Frequency of Purposeful Communication to Increase the Sense of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance, Superintendent's Perceived Change in the Sense of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance, and Superintendent's Use of Strategies to Communicate a Sense of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance. Superintendent responses were sorted by student academic performance as measured by district with a limited waiver, districts with a full waiver, and districts performing with distinction. Data from the survey were analyzed using analysis of variance (ANOVA) and analysis of co-variance (ANCOVA) with Tukey post-hoc assessment and multiple regression equation estimates.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis One: The first hypothesis, there are no significant differences in superintendents' perceived sense of urgency to improve student academic performance as measured by the items of the "degree of urgency" scale among superintendents when their districts are sorted as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver as designated by Missouri's annual performance report when controlling for socio-economic status as measured by district percent of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch, was rejected. There was a significant difference between the degree of urgency of superintendents in districts with a limited waiver and superintendents in districts performing with distinction at the end of the first year when

controlling for free and reduced lunch percentages. In addition, the post-hoc analysis identified a significant difference between the degree of urgency between superintendents in districts with a limited waiver and superintendents in districts performing with distinction at the time of the survey (now).

Hypothesis Two: The second hypothesis, there are no significant differences in the superintendents' reported source of urgency to improve student academic performance as measured by the items in the "source of urgency" scale when their districts are sorted as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver as designated by Missouri's annual performance report when controlling for socio-economic status as measured by district percent of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch, was not rejected. There were no significant differences among superintendents in districts with a limited waiver, superintendents with a full waiver, or superintendents in districts performing with distinction.

Hypothesis Three: The third hypothesis, there are no significant differences in the superintendents' reported frequency of purposeful communication of a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance among superintendents when their districts are sorted as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver as designated by Missouri's annual performance report when controlling for socio-economic status as measured by district percent of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch, was rejected. There was a significant difference between superintendents in districts with a limited waiver and superintendents in districts performing with distinction when purposefully communicating with boards of education. In addition, the post-hoc analysis resulted in a significant difference between superintendents in districts with a limited waiver

and superintendents in districts performing with distinction when purposefully communicating with all district teachers.

Hypothesis Four: The fourth hypothesis, there are no significant differences among superintendents' perceived change in the sense of urgency to improve student academic performance across the district as reported on the "change in urgency" scale when their districts are sorted as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver as designated by Missouri's annual performance report when controlling for socio-economic status as measured by district percent of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch, was not rejected. There were no significant differences among superintendents' perceived change in sense of urgency across the district.

Hypothesis Five: The fifth hypothesis, there are no significant differences in superintendents' reported use of strategies to communicate a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance among superintendents when their districts are sorted as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver as designated by Missouri's annual performance report when controlling for socio-economic status as measured by district percent of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch, was rejected. There were significant differences between superintendents in districts with a limited waiver and superintendents in districts performing with distinction when identifying an impending crisis to communicate a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance. There were also significant differences between superintendents in districts with a full waiver and superintendents in districts performing with distinction when identifying an impending crisis to communicate a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance.

Hypothesis Six: The sixth hypothesis, there are no significant predictive linear relationships between the superintendent strategies commonly associated with communicating urgency and a change in the sense of urgency to improve student academic performance across the district as perceived by the superintendent, was rejected. The strategies of Providing Opportunities for Success, Identifying an Impending Crisis, Setting Goals and Targets, and Utilizing Data explained variability in the change of a sense of urgency across the district.

Chapter 5

Discussion of Findings

Introduction

The role of superintendent has changed considerably over the last 150 years. While the current position requires a plethora of roles, responsibilities, and skills that has not always been the case. The earliest superintendents were little more than secretary-clerks that managed operational aspects of schools (Bjork, Glass, & Brunner, 2005). Overtime the position of the superintendent evolved into five roles as identified by Theodore J. Kowalski (2005) and included teacher-scholar, manager, democratic leader, applied scientist, and communicator.

Today the superintendency is defined by multiple standards found in the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLIC) Standards document. These standards were developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers (2010) and the National Policy Board on Educational Administration to better prepare educational leaders and are used as the framework for educational leadership programs across the nation. There are six standards with accompanying knowledge, dispositions, and performance indicators. The standards state: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community; advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth; ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment; collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and

mobilizing community resources; acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner; and by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.

A cursory examination of the standards quickly brings one to the realization that the roles, responsibilities and expectations of the superintendency are complex and demanding. The focus of the standards is on student success and learning and certainly encompasses the five roles of teacher-scholar, manager, democratic leader, applied scientist, and communicator identified by Kowalski (2005). Student success and learning are measured in Missouri through the Annual Performance Report and districts are held accountable for student performance through this report.

The data from the Annual Performance Report (APR) are utilized to determine the success and viability of school districts. Over time, underperforming districts can be taken over by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and, eventually, dissolved. In addition, the APR is public and published throughout the media. Therefore, student academic performance is the primary concern of school boards and their superintendents.

School boards hire superintendents to lead organizations that meet the accountability requirements of *No Child Left Behind Act* while at the same time promoting and achieving the goals of the board. The superintendent's position is critical to the academic success of the students in the school district (Waters & Marzano, 2006). Now, more than ever, superintendents must focus on student academic performance (Fullan, 2003) and convince others--faculty, staff, administrators, community members, media, and board members--of the importance of student achievement. According to Ronald W. Reboire in *The Ethics of*

Educational Leadership (2001) “the superintendent is a key player in school reform” and “a new superintendent is expected to reform the schools in the district” (p. 112). While the reform is expected to improve student achievement, it must be done quickly or the superintendent is viewed as a failure.

Establishing a sense of urgency (Kotter, 2006) is the first step in any change process and this is true for superintendents attempting to improve student academic performance. However, little is known about the use of urgency in the superintendency. This study sought to explore the degree of urgency a superintendent possessed to improve student achievement, the source(s) of the urgency, the target of communication about urgency, the change in urgency of those targets, and the strategies used to communicate a sense of urgency.

Overview of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between superintendents’ perceived sense of urgency and student academic performance. More specifically the study examined the leadership of Missouri superintendents in districts which have been designated as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver using the data from the Annual Performance Report to sort the districts.

Student performance on 14 measures that include student achievement, attendance, graduation rates, and college placement is used to designate Missouri’s school districts as performing with distinction (13-14 points), performing with a full waiver (12 points), performing with a limited waiver (9-11 points), performing as provisionally accredited (6-8 points), or unaccredited (0-5 points). There were 446 K-12 school districts in 2008; 314 districts performing with distinction; 44 districts performing with a full waiver; 71 districts performing with a limited waiver; 11 districts performing as provisionally accredited; and 6

districts unaccredited. The number of districts provisionally accredited and unaccredited was too small to provide an adequate sample size to include in the study. Therefore, 205 district leaders were invited to participate in this study. These superintendents had been in their current position for no more than three years. No more than three years in the position allowed the participants to respond while their experiences were fresh to protect the responses from inaccuracy due to time.

The method of analysis was quantitative with survey data being used to determine (a) if differences exist among superintendents' sense of urgency to improve student academic performance when their districts are sorted as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver as designated by Missouri's annual performance report; (b) if differences exist among superintendents' source of sense of urgency to improve student academic performance among superintendents when their districts are sorted as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver as designated by Missouri's annual performance report; (c) if differences exist among superintendents' attempts to communicate a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance when their districts are sorted as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver as designated by Missouri's annual performance report; (d) if differences exist among superintendents' perception of change in the sense of urgency across the district when their districts are sorted as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver as designated by Missouri's annual performance report; (e) if differences exist among superintendents' use of strategies to communicate a sense of urgency across the three groups; and, (f) if any relationships exist between superintendents' strategies commonly associated

with communicating urgency and the change in the sense of urgency across the district as perceived by the superintendent.

The quantitative data were collected using the Superintendent “Sense of Urgency” to Improve Academic Performance Survey. The survey consisted of thirty-five items used to assess superintendent degree of urgency, source of urgency, frequency of communication about urgency, change in urgency, and strategies utilized to communicate urgency all in relationship to improving student academic achievement. Responses were based on superintendent perceptions of their own experiences and analyzed using analysis of variance, analysis of covariance, post-hoc analysis and multiple linear regression equation estimates.

Research Questions

The following research questions were examined during the completion of this study:

- (1) What, if any, differences are there in the superintendent’s sense of urgency to improve student academic performance and district achievement?
- (2) What, if any, differences are there in the superintendent’s source of urgency to improve student academic performance and district achievement?
- (3) What, if any, differences are there in the superintendent’s attempts to communicate urgency to improve student academic performance and district achievement?
- (4) What, if any, differences are there in the superintendent’s perception of change in urgency to improve student academic performance across the district and district achievement?

(5) What, if any, differences are there in the superintendent's use of strategies to communicate urgency to improve student academic performance and district achievement?

(6) What, if any, relationships exist among the strategies used by the superintendent to communicate urgency and the change in perceived urgency across the district?

Null Hypothesis

The following hypotheses were tested in this study:

H₀₁: There are no significant differences in superintendents' perceived sense of urgency to improve student academic performance as measured by the items of the "degree of urgency" scale among superintendents when their districts are sorted as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver as designated by Missouri's annual performance report when controlling for socio-economic status as measured by district percent of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch.

H₀₂: There are no significant differences in the superintendents' reported source of urgency to improve student academic performance as measured by the items in the "source of urgency" scale when their districts are sorted as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver as designated by Missouri's annual performance report when controlling for socio-economic status as measured by district percent of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch.

H₀₃: There are no significant differences in the superintendents' reported frequency of purposeful communication of a sense of urgency to improve student academic

performance among superintendents when their districts are sorted as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver as designated by Missouri's annual performance report when controlling for socio-economic status as measured by district percent of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch.

H₀₄: There are no significant differences among superintendents' perceived change in the sense of urgency to improve student academic performance across the district as reported on the "change in urgency" scale when their districts are sorted as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver as designated by Missouri's annual performance report when controlling for socio-economic status as measured by district percent of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch.

H₀₅: There are no significant differences in superintendents' reported use of strategies to communicate a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance among superintendents when their districts are sorted as performing with distinction, performing with a full waiver, or performing with a limited waiver as designated by Missouri's annual performance report when controlling for socio-economic status as measured by district percent of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch.

H₀₆: There are no significant predictive linear relationships between the superintendent strategies commonly associated with communicating urgency and a change in the sense of urgency to improve student academic performance across the district as perceived by the superintendent.

Summary of Findings

Descriptive Results

Superintendents leading K-12 districts were identified as participants in the study. There were 205 district leaders who had been in their current position for no more than three years based on the issuance of three year contracts as the typical practice in Missouri and were in districts performing with a limited waiver, performing with a full waiver, or performing with distinction as measured by Missouri's Annual Performance Report. Of the 205 invited to participate, 98 responded to the Superintendents "Sense of Urgency" to Improve Academic Performance Survey. There were 23 superintendents from districts performing with a limited waiver, 16 superintendents from districts performing with full waiver, and 59 superintendents from districts performing with distinction who responded.

Degree of urgency. The degree of urgency as perceived by the superintendents who responded to the survey when they took their position, at the end of the first year, and at the time of the survey (now) indicated that superintendents had a stronger sense of urgency to improve student achievement the longer they were in their positions with increasing total means occurring from the beginning of superintendent tenure. Superintendents responded that "at the time of the survey" they perceived the strongest degree of urgency with a total mean of 5.9286. The total mean at the end of the first year was 5.8980 and when the superintendents assumed their position the total mean was 5.7857.

At all times superintendents leading districts with lower performance as measured by the limited waiver status possessed a stronger degree of urgency than superintendents in districts with a full waiver or performing with distinction. The degree of urgency was less for superintendents in districts with a full waiver and performing with distinction

respectively. As district performance increased the degree of urgency of superintendents decreased as indicated by the means at the time the superintendents took their position, at the end of the first year, and at the time of the survey (now).

Source of urgency. Descriptive results for the source of urgency to improve student academic performance as perceived by superintendents indicated that an ethical/moral obligation to students was the dominant source for all respondents with the highest total mean of 5.9898. Community concerns were the least influential as a source of urgency with a mean of 4.3672. State mandates/requirements were also a strong source of sense of urgency for all three levels with a mean of 5.3571.

Superintendents leading districts with a full waiver or performing with distinction were more strongly influenced by the relationship between student academic performance and student success in a global society as a source of urgency than those superintendents in districts with a limited waiver. The superintendents in districts with a limited waiver were more influenced by federal mandates/requirements as a source of urgency than those leading districts with full waivers or performing with distinction.

Purposeful communication. Superintendents indicated that they used purposeful communication to increase the sense of urgency to improve student academic achievement most often with their building principals and least often with community clubs/civic/business organizations. The total mean for purposeful communication with building principals was 6.3061 and the total mean for purposeful communication with community clubs/civic/business organizations was 4.1531. Superintendents were also less likely to purposefully communicate with the media with a total mean of 4.1939.

Overall, superintendents in districts with a limited waiver for student achievement were more apt to purposefully communicate a sense of urgency to improve student performance than superintendents with a full waiver or performing with distinction. The exception is purposeful communication with community clubs/civic/business organizations where superintendents leading districts performing with distinction had a total mean of 4.2373, superintendents leading districts with a full waiver had a total mean of 4.1250, and superintendents leading districts with a limited waiver had a total mean of 3.9565.

Change in urgency. The superintendents perceived the greatest amount of change in the sense of urgency in building level principals. The total mean for principals was 6.1122. Community clubs/civic/business organizations and media were the least likely to have a change in the sense of urgency with a total mean of 4.4082 and 4.5918 respectively. Superintendents from all three levels of district student academic performance indicated they saw the least change in the sense of urgency of community clubs/civic/business organization and the media to improve student achievement.

Utilization of strategies. Superintendents described their use of strategies to communicate a sense of urgency on the survey. Utilizing data was the strategy most used by superintendents from all of the state performance categories to communicate a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance (mean of 6.2347). Setting student academic targets and goals was also used frequently as indicated by a mean of 5.5918. Superintendents were least likely to eliminate programs and positions to communicate a sense of urgency to improve student academic achievement with a mean of 3.8571.

When comparing the use of strategies, superintendents in districts performing with distinction were less likely to use the strategies in general and had particularly low means for

communicating an impending crisis and eliminating programs and positions with means of 3.8814 and 3.7288 respectively. However, superintendents leading districts with limited waivers had generally higher means for the use of the strategies with the exception of eliminating programs and positions with a mean of 4.000. Superintendents in districts with full waivers used eliminating programs and positions slightly more with a mean of 4.1250.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis One was rejected because there was a significant difference between the degree of urgency of superintendents in districts with a limited waiver and superintendents in districts performing with distinction at the end of the first year when controlling for free and reduced lunch percentages. In addition, there was a significant difference between the degree of urgency between superintendents in districts with a limited waiver and superintendents in districts performing with distinction at the time of the survey.

Hypothesis Two was not rejected because there were no significant differences among superintendents in districts with a limited waiver, superintendents in districts with a full waiver, or superintendents in districts performing with distinction.

Hypothesis Three was rejected because there was a significant difference in the frequency of purposeful communication between superintendents in districts with a limited waiver and superintendents in districts performing with distinction when purposefully communicating with boards of education. In addition, there was a significant difference between superintendents in districts with a limited waiver and superintendents in districts performing with distinction when purposefully communicating with all district teachers.

Hypothesis Four was not rejected because there were no significant differences among superintendents' perceived change in sense of urgency across the district.

Hypothesis Five was rejected because there were significant differences in the use of communication strategies between superintendents in districts with a full waiver and superintendents in districts performing with distinction when identifying an impending crisis to communicate a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance. There was also a significant difference between superintendents in districts with a limited waiver and superintendents in districts performing with distinction when identifying an impending crisis to communicate a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance.

Hypothesis Six was rejected because the strategies of Providing Opportunities for Success, Identifying an Impending Crisis, Setting Goals and Targets, and Utilizing Data significantly explained variability in the change in the sense of urgency across the district.

Discussion of Findings

This discussion is organized into five sections that correspond to the major findings of the study. Discussion of the findings that involve the superintendents' degree of urgency is found in section one. Discussion of the findings that pertain to the source of a sense of urgency for superintendents is found in the second section. Findings about the purposeful communication about urgency and the change in urgency as perceived by the superintendent are considered in sections three and four. Finally, the findings relevant to the strategies superintendents utilized to communicate a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance are discussed in section five.

Differences in Degree of Urgency

An assessment of the data from hypothesis one indicated a significant ($p < .05$) difference between the degree of urgency of superintendents leading districts performing with a limited waiver and the degree of urgency of superintendents leading districts

performing with distinction at the time of the survey (now). Superintendents leading schools with high student academic performance are less likely to have a sense of urgency to improve than superintendents whose districts are achieving at lower levels. The legislation of state and federal mandates and the accompanying sanctions for poor student achievement would certainly account for the increase in urgency in lower performing school districts.

Superintendents, as district leaders, are under pressure to guarantee high student performance (Peterson & Barnett, 2004; Leithwood, 2001; Fowler, 2004). Logically, those superintendents of underperforming districts would feel a greater sense of urgency.

Furthermore, when the data from hypothesis one were examined after controlling for free and reduced lunch, a significant ($p < .05$) difference was found between superintendents leading districts with a limited waiver and superintendents leading districts performing with distinction at the end of the first year in their current position. A correlation analysis was run among the districts in this study for free/reduced lunch and academic performance. This relationship was significant ($p < .05$) and negative. As the percentage of students on free/reduced lunch increased, student academic performance decreased. Closing the achievement gap has become a major focus of public education as a way to improve the social and economic well-being of the country (Fullan, 2003). It is logical that superintendents in lower performing districts would feel a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance more quickly during their tenure on the job than superintendents in districts that were performing at a high level.

Regardless of the socio-economic status of the community, superintendents of lower achieving districts have a greater sense of urgency than superintendents in higher achieving districts. Kotter (2006) contended that success creates complacency which can lead to

embracing the status quo and ultimately missing opportunities and external threats. Kotter goes also notes that historical success can lead to the notion that everything is fine and there is no need for change or reform.

Differences in Source of Urgency

An examination of the data from hypothesis two revealed no significant difference among the source of urgency for superintendents in districts with limited waiver, full waiver, or performing with distinction. However, descriptive data comparisons indicated that superintendents had assorted sources of a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance. Superintendents from all three levels of district performance reported that the ethical/moral obligation to students had the most influence on their sense of urgency to improve student achievement. The demand for moral leadership that promotes democratic ideals in a diverse society permeates public education and its leadership and is demonstrated through the responses to the survey (Shields, 2006).

State mandates and requirements were also a strong source of a sense of urgency for all superintendents. Superintendents leading districts with a limited waiver were more influenced by federal mandates and requirements than those leading districts with a full waiver or performing with distinction. District achievement levels published in the media likely create a sense of urgency for superintendents. District performance weighs heavily on the success of the superintendent. Public accountability and the potential state take-over of a poorly performing school district would cause a sense of urgency for district level leadership. Missouri's Department of Elementary and Secondary education has proven that even the most severe sanctions would be applied. The state board of education disbanded Wellston school district for academic reasons in December of 2009 (stltoday.com, 2009).

Descriptive data from the survey indicated that community concerns had the lowest influence on a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance for superintendents. Superintendents are dependent upon the community for fiscal and political support. Community concerns can quickly become a priority for boards of education who are elected by district constituents, and therefore, impact the work of superintendents profoundly (Alsbury, 2003). Superintendents should be proactive and cultivate communication within communities to improve student academic performance.

Differences in Purposeful Communication

An examination of the data from hypothesis three revealed a significant difference ($p < .05$) between the frequency of purposeful communication with all district teachers of superintendents in districts with a limited waiver and superintendents in districts performing with distinction. Superintendents in districts with a limited waiver communicated a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance with all district teachers more often than did superintendents in districts performing with distinction. Leaders of districts with high performance do not feel as compelled to communicate urgency with all district teachers.

This finding suggests that superintendents in lower performing school districts recognize the need to communicate with teachers who can impact achievement at the classroom level. Elmore (2007) contends that the lack of improvement in student achievement over the last twenty years has been an issue of scale. Reform movements tend to attempt changes in the structure of school systems but rarely impact actual classroom practice. It seems superintendents in districts performing with a limited waiver understand the importance of communicating a sense of urgency to improve student academic achievement to all district teachers to improve instruction and learning.

Furthermore, when the data from hypothesis three were examined after controlling for free and reduced lunch, a significant ($p < .05$) difference was found between the frequency of purposeful communication with board members of superintendents leading districts with a limited waiver and superintendents leading districts performing with distinction.

Superintendents in districts with a limited waiver communicated a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance with board members more often than did superintendents in districts performing with distinction. Again, this finding suggests that superintendents in lower performing school districts recognize the importance of communicating urgency to board members. Marzano and Waters (2006) support the notion that high student achievement requires the superintendent to communicate the achievement goals of the district to board members. School boards must be convinced by the superintendent that the goals are required for student success.

Conversely, school boards and their individual members expect the superintendent to guarantee a high quality education. If boards are going to support the recommendations of superintendents, according to Peterson and Short (2001), positive board relations with the superintendent are imperative. Communicating the needs of the district, and in particular, the need to improve student academic performance is critical for districts struggling with performance issues. The role of superintendent as communicator is clearly recognized in this circumstance.

Descriptive findings indicated that all superintendents purposefully communicated a sense of urgency to improve student achievement with building principals most often and least often with community organizations and the media. This supports the notion that a building principal is a critical component in improving student academic achievement

(Klingensmith, 2007; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). Superintendents perceive this and act accordingly.

In general, superintendents in districts with a limited waiver are more like to purposefully communicate a sense of urgency to improve student achievement than other superintendents in the study. Again, the pressure to improve student achievement in lower performing schools or face sanction would create the need to communicate urgency more frequently. The findings of this study affirm the frequency of communication.

Differences in Change in Urgency

An examination of the data from hypothesis four revealed no significant difference in perceived change in urgency among superintendents in districts with limited waiver, full waiver, or performing with distinction. However, descriptive data suggested that all superintendents saw the most change in perceived sense of urgency to improve student achievement from building principals with a total mean of 6.1122 and the least change in community organizations and the media with total means of 4.4082 and 4.5918.

Interestingly, building principals had the highest total mean for purposeful communication from superintendents with a mean 6.3061 and community organizations and the media received the least purposeful communication from the superintendents with total means of 4.1531 and 4.1939 respectively. It appears that purposeful communication by the superintendent influenced the change in the sense of urgency.

Differences in Utilization of Strategies

An examination of the data from hypothesis five revealed a significant difference ($p < .05$) between superintendents in districts with a limited waiver and superintendents in districts performing with distinction when it came to identifying an impending crisis as a

communication strategy to increase the sense of urgency to improve student academic performance. Superintendents from lower performing school districts were more apt to identify an impending crisis to communicate a sense of urgency to improve student achievement. An example of an impending crisis would be potential sanctions from state and federal mandates if achievement failed to improve.

Furthermore, when the data from hypothesis five were examined after controlling for free and reduced lunch, a significant ($p < .05$) difference was found between superintendents leading districts with a full waiver and superintendents leading districts performing with distinction as they used the communication strategy of identifying an impending crisis to increase the sense of urgency to improve student academic performance. Superintendents leading districts with a full waiver also utilized identifying an impending crisis to increase urgency to improve academic achievement more than superintendents in districts performing with distinction. Descriptive data supported this finding and revealed that superintendents in school districts performing with distinction used identifying an impending crisis less often and that these superintendents were less likely to use the strategies in general.

Superintendents in districts with a limited waiver utilized all of the strategies more than other superintendents in the study. It would appear that superintendents in lower performing districts use as many communication strategies as possible. Again, the degree of urgency was higher for this set of superintendents and the need to communicate more imperative.

Superintendent use of data to increase a sense of urgency was the most frequently used strategy for the three groups. Change processes embrace the use of data as a mechanism to spur implementation of reform (Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Collins, 2001;

Leithwood & Prestine, 2002). Collins contends that “confronting the brutal facts” is essential in moving towards improvement. The superintendents in this study relied more heavily on the use of data to communicate urgency than any other strategy.

Utilizing data was closely followed by setting academic goals and targets. Waters and Marzano (2006) specifically connect goal-setting by the superintendent to improving student achievement. They recommend a collaborative approach that involves all stakeholders. However, superintendents used consultants and stakeholders to communicate urgency less than data, establishing academic goals and targets, holding employees accountable, or providing opportunities for success.

Interestingly, superintendents were reluctant to eliminate programs and positions to increase the sense of urgency to improve student academic performance. This seems counter intuitive with the use of data. Data, utilized to its fullest extent, would help identify ineffective programs that should be eliminated to free up valuable resources for other academic endeavors. Therefore, the superintendents identify data as their most frequently used strategy but it appears that data were infrequently used for the purpose of program decision-making and reduction.

Relationships among Change in Urgency and Utilization of Strategies

This study used linear regression analyses to estimate possible relationships of the influence of the communication strategies on the perceived amount of change in urgency. The findings provide information for superintendents who want to change the sense of urgency to improve student academic performance. Intentional application of one or more of the identified strategies has the potential to impact a change in a sense of urgency of those individuals. Relationships are presented in Table 33. The amount of predictive variance is

represented in the table by the use of numbers in each row with “1” being the greatest explanation of variance, “2” being the next most explanation of variance, and “3” being the least explanation of variance.

Table 33

Relationships among Change in Urgency and Utilization of Strategies

	BOE	Ind. Board Member	Dist. Admin.	Build. Prin.	Teacher Leaders	All District Teachers	Media
Communication Strategies							
Identified an Impending Crisis	2	1	2				
Eliminated Programs and Positions							
Set Academic Goals and Targets	3	2					
Held Employees Accountable							
Utilized Data				1			
Utilized Consultants and Stakeholders							
Identified Opportunities for Success	1		1	2	1	1	1

To effect a change in the sense of urgency to improve student achievement by the Board of Education, the superintendent should consider the following strategies (a) identify

opportunities for success (b) outline an impending crisis and, (c) set goals and targets. The most effective strategy is providing opportunities for success. This indicates the need for the superintendent to have improvement plans ready for implementation. When the superintendent adds identifying an impending crisis for the Board of Education, the likelihood that a change in a sense of urgency will occur increases. Setting goals and targets adds a better chance of impacting a change in urgency. Therefore, superintendents who recognize the need to create a change in the sense of urgency of their Boards of Education should consider the value of proactively developing an improvement plan with specific goals and targets that allows for successful completion and includes the consequences of not improving student achievement.

When working with individual board members to change their sense of urgency to improve student academic performance, superintendents should identify an impending crisis and then set goals and targets. This resembles, with the exception of providing opportunities for success, the impact of the strategies on Boards of Education. It appears that identifying an impending crisis and setting targets and goals is important to changing the sense of urgency to improve student achievement of individual board members.

To change the sense of urgency of district administrators the data revealed that providing opportunities for success followed by the identification of an impending crisis are the strategies the superintendent should employ. Again, it seems the need for a plan that outlines potentially successful programs followed by the articulation of the consequences of failing to improve student achievement will create a change in the sense of urgency for district administrators.

The strategy that is most effective in creating a change in the sense of urgency of building principals is utilizing data. And when utilizing data is followed by opportunities for success the potential for a change in urgency is even greater. Building principals as instructional leaders are familiar with data and are often required to develop and implement building level improvement plans as well as being held accountable by the superintendent for student achievement in their buildings. It is not surprising that data and opportunities for success change building principals' sense of urgency.

Both groups, teacher leaders and all district teachers responded best to providing opportunities for success to change the sense of urgency to improve student academic performance. None of the other strategies were predictors for a change in the sense of urgency for teachers.

The findings of the study indicated that there were no strategies used by superintendents to communicate a sense of urgency that could predict a change in the sense of urgency of community organizations. It should be noted that superintendents reported that they communicated a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance to community organizations the least. They also indicated that community concerns were not a major source of urgency for the superintendents themselves. While the literature posits that superintendents must be in tune with their communities to be successful (Alsbury, 2003), district leaders indicated through this study that the community does not impact their leadership as it pertains to student achievement.

Superintendents who want to change the sense of urgency to improve student academic performance of the media should provide opportunities for success as well. The media, along with teachers, seem to be effected by this strategy only. Interestingly,

superintendents purposefully communicated a sense of urgency to improve student achievement to the media less often.

Summary of the Relationship among Strategies and Change in Urgency

Providing opportunities for success was a predictor for a change in the sense of urgency for all the groups except community organizations and was the most effective for Boards of Education, district administrators, teacher leaders, all district teachers, and the media. It appears that the superintendent must be able to articulate a vision that promises a positive outcome. This is supported in the change/reform literature (Collins, 2001; Kotter, 2006; Bolman & Deal, 2006; Hall & Hord (2006). Bolman and Deal (2006) suggested that successful leaders present a clear vision of success to followers to create change.

While superintendents reported using data as the most frequently used strategy to communicate a sense of urgency overall, this strategy was only associated with building level principals. When opportunities for success were added to the use of data with principals the likelihood that the sense of urgency to improve student achievement would change was higher.

Three groups--the board of education, individual board members, and district administrators-- were effected by identifying an impending crisis. And, three of the strategies--eliminating programs and positions, holding employees accountable, and using consultants--had no predictive value for change in a sense of urgency to improve student performance for any of these groups.

Implications

This exploratory research study provides information about superintendents' sense of urgency to improve student academic performance and the strategies used to communicate

that urgency. The notion of specifically establishing a sense of urgency as one of the earliest steps in the reform process is new to education. The information in this study can serve as the framework for further investigation into this topic.

Implications for Practice

Douglas B. Reeves in *Leading Change in Your School; How to Conquer Myths, Build Commitment, and Get Results* (2009) posits that change leaders must “balance their sense of urgency with a more thoughtful approach to implementing change” (p. 7). This statement implies that change leaders possess a sense of urgency. This exploratory study indicates that superintendents leading districts with lower student achievement possess a stronger sense of urgency to improve student achievement than superintendents in high performing districts. The lack of urgency among the superintendents leading higher performing districts is disconcerting at best. Until all students are proficient, superintendents should be compelled to act with urgency to improve student achievement.

Superintendents must be prepared to initiate, implement, and sustain change. The process of instilling a sense of urgency for change into the organization will open the doors of reform. Reeves (2009) calls this “creating conditions for change.” In practice, this can take a variety of forms. However, the superintendent as skilled communicator maybe the most important factor in a successful reform process.

In particular, the results of this study indicate that communication about urgency can have results. When superintendents intentionally communicate a sense of urgency, there are changes in perceived urgency. It is incumbent upon the superintendent to be purposeful about communicating urgency. It is important to behave with true urgency to instill urgency in an organization (Kotter, 2008). Recommendations for practice include speaking with

passion about the need to change and modeling the expected reaction to opportunities for success. Superintendents must match words and deeds and provide support for implementation of new programs and practices to improve student achievement.

Specifically, this study revealed that providing opportunities for success is a substantial strategy for creating a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance. This typically would manifest itself in the development and implementation of improvement plans. Setting goals and targets was another communication strategy that effected change in the sense of urgency to improve student achievement as identified in this study. Goals would also manifest themselves in improvement plans.

The research of Waters and Marzano (2006) found that goal setting was an integral component in the process of guaranteeing high student achievement utilized by effective superintendents. Superintendents interested in improving student academic performance should develop improvement plans with specific goals that are attainable and communicate those plans as opportunities for success.

Superintendents indicated that they used data to communicate a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance. However, eliminating programs and positions deemed unnecessary was not used nor was holding employees accountable, a commonly described practice. Data, used properly, should identify ineffective programs. Maintaining ineffective programs is a waste of district resources which could be better used to improve student achievement.

It is hard to understand why district level leaders would not hold employees accountable to increase a sense of urgency to improve academic performance. Highly

qualified teachers are the determining factor for student success. Superintendents should absolutely hold classroom teachers accountable for student learning.

Identifying an impending crisis might also heighten the sense of urgency to improve student achievement as indicted in this exploratory study. However, Kotter (2008) warns against the indiscriminate use of this strategy. Crisis can strike fear and anger in stakeholders which in turn can disable the ability of the school district to take advantage of opportunities for success. Caution should be used when implementing this strategy. Kotter in *Leading Change* (2006), recommends finding major opportunities embedded in the necessity to change while discussing an impending crisis.

Implications for Preparation Programs

The role of superintendent as communicator found in the review of literature is seen throughout the findings of this study. Superintendents must be able to articulate a sense of urgency to multiple groups and audiences to lead districts intent on improving student academic performance. Preparation programs should provide a variety of learning experiences that require the development of communication skills. In particular ISLLC Standard 1 should be emphasized. The performances in Standard 1 list various processes and activities that should be intentionally incorporated into the learning activities of preparation programs.

Those performances include communicating the vision and mission effectively with all audiences and using symbols, ceremonies, and stories in the process. Superintendents are also expected to model the vision as well as celebrating success. Preparation programs should help superintendents develop these skills thoroughly.

Finally, superintendent candidates who may end up leading a district with lower student achievement must be prepared for the challenges of leading change or reform that includes establishing a sense of urgency. Required internships in districts where practicing superintendents are leading reform to improve student achievement would enhance the learning for future superintendents. However, preparation programs must instill the importance of academic success for all students in potential district leaders.

Implications for Future Research

This exploratory study has provided a basis for future research. Additional research is recommended to investigate the following:

1. Does longevity as superintendent in a district change the sense of urgency for those leaders?
2. What factors or events trigger a sense of urgency in superintendents leading high performing school districts?
3. Are there other effective strategies used by superintendents to communicate urgency to improve student academic performance?

Conclusions

This exploratory research study provided insight into one aspect of the change process for superintendents who find themselves in school districts in need of improved student achievement. While one might argue that until all students perform at high levels, every school district is in need of improvement, the reality of state and federal sanctions for poor student performance puts more pressure on district leaders when performance standards

are not being met. Establishing a sense of urgency seems to be an important component in the change process that promotes reform.

In particular, providing opportunities for success appears to be a strong strategy for communicating a sense of urgency across school districts. An opportunity for success suggests that there is hope of improved student academic performance. That even in the face of an impending crisis, hope is alive. That by following the leadership of the superintendent, student achievement will improve.

Marcus Buckingham, in *The One Thing You Need to Know...About Great Managing, Great Leading, and Sustained Individual Success* (2005), contends there is only one definition of leadership. Buckingham states “Great leaders rally people to a better future” (p. 59). This author goes on to say that great leaders are driven by their vision of the future and are defined by their ability to get others to join them in their quest. Sergiovanni (2005) concurred and stated “Perhaps the most important and perhaps most neglected leadership virtue is hope.” The vision of a better future provides the hope that is needed to persevere, even in the face of an impending crisis.

Superintendents would be well-advised to establish a sense of urgency and provide opportunities for success to all stakeholders. All must rally to the hope of a better future for all students.

References

- Alsbury, T. L. (2003). Superintendent and school board member turnover: Political versus apolitical turnover as a critical variable in the application of the dissatisfaction theory. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 39(5), 667-698.
- Andrews, R. & Grogan, M. (2002). Defining preparation and professional development for the future. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 38(2), 233-256.
- Bennett, W. J., Finn, C. E., & Cribb, J. T. (1999). *The educated child: A parent's guide from preschool through eighth grade*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster Adult Publishing Group.
- Bensimon, E. M., Neumann, A., & Birnbaum, R. (1989). Making sense of administrative leadership: The "L" word in higher education. ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report No. 1. Washington, DC: School of Education and Human Development, The George Washington University.
- Bjork, L. G., Glass, T. E., & Brunner, C. C. (2005). Characteristics of American school superintendents. In L. G. Bjork & T. J. Kowalski (Eds.), *The contemporary superintendent: Preparation, practice, and development* (pp.1-18). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Bjork, L. G. & Gurley, D. E. (2005). Superintendent as educational statesman and political strategist. In L. G. Bjork & T. J. Kowalski (Eds.), *The contemporary superintendent: Preparation, practice, and development* (pp. 71-106). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Bjork, L. G., Kowalski, T. J., & Browne-Ferrigno, T. (2005). Learning theory and research. In L. G. Bjork & T. J. Kowalski (Eds.), *The contemporary superintendent:*

- Preparation, practice, and development* (pp. 71-106). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Bolman, L. G. & Deal, T. E. (2006). *The wizard and the warrior: Leading with passion and power*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Brown-Ferrigno, T. & Glass, T. E. (2005). Superintendent as organizational manager. In L. G. Bjork & T. J. Kowalski (Eds.), *The contemporary superintendent: Preparation, practice, and development* (pp. 71-106). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Brunner, C. C. (2000). *Principles of power: women superintendents and the riddle of the heart*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Brunner, C. C., Grogan, M. & Bjork, L (2002). Shifts in the discourse defining the superintendency: Historical and current foundations of the position. In J. Murphy (Ed.), *The educational leadership challenge: Redefining leadership for the 21st century* (pp. 1-19). Chicago, IL: National Society for the Study of Education.
- Buckingham, M. (2005). *The one thing you need to know...about great managing, great leading, and sustained individual success*. New York, NY: FREE PRESS.
- Carlson, R. V. (1996). *Reframing & reform: Perspectives on organization, leadership, and school change*. White Plains, NY: Longman Publishers USA.
- Collins, J. (2001). *Good to great: Why some companies make the leap...and others don't*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.
- Corcoran, T., Fuhrman, S. H., & Belcher, C. L. (2001). The district role in instructional improvement. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 83(1), 78-88.

- Council of Chief State School Officers. (1996). Interstate school leaders licensure consortium standard for leaders. Retrieved on January 18, 2010 from <http://www.ccsso.org/content/pdfs/isllcstd.pdf>
- Davis, J. R. (2003). *Learning to lead: A handbook for postsecondary administrators* (Chapters 1, 2, 4, 8). Westport, CT: American Council on Education and Praeger Publishers.
- DuFour, R. & Eaker, R. (1998). *Professional learning communities at work: Best practices for enhancing student achievement*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Elmore, R. F. (2007). *School reform from the inside out: Policy, practice, and performance*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Fowler, F. C. (2004). *Policy studies for educational leaders: an introduction*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Person Education, Inc.
- Fullan, M. (2003). *Change forces with a vengeance*. New York, NY: Routledge Flamer.
- Fullan, M. (2006). *Turnaround leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Fullan, M. (2007). *The new meaning of educational change*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Fullan, M. (2003). *The moral imperative of school leadership*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Company.
- Fusarelli, B. C. & Fusarelli, L. D. (2005). Reconceptualizing the superintendentcy: Superintendents as applied social scientists and social activists. In L. G. Bjork & T. J. Kowalski (Eds.), *The contemporary superintendent: Preparation, practice, and development* (pp.1-18). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

- Furman, G. (2003). The 2002 UCEA Presidential Address. *University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) Review*, Winter, Vol. XLV(1), 1-6.
- Glass, T. E., Bjork, L. G., & Brunner, C. C. (2000). *The American school superintendent: 2000*. Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators.
- Goldring, E. & Greenfield, W. (2002). Understanding the evolving concept of leadership in education: Roles, expectations, and dilemmas. In J. Murphy (Ed.), *The educational leadership challenge: Redefining leadership for the 21st century* (pp. 1-19). Chicago, IL: National Society for the Study of Education.
- Grogan, M. (2003). Laying the groundwork for a reconception of the superintendency from feminist postmodern perspectives. In M. D. Young and L. Skrla (Eds.), *Reconsidering feminist research in educational leadership*, (pp. 9-34). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Hargreaves, A. & Fink, D. *Sustainable Leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2006.
- Hargreaves, A. & Goodson, I. (2006). Educational change over time? The sustainability and nonsustainability of three decades of secondary school change and continuity. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 42, (1), 3-41.
- Hord, S. M., Rutherford, W. L, Huling-Austin, L., & Hall, G. E. (1987). *Taking charge of change*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Hall, G. E. & Hord, S. M. (2006). *Implementing change: Patterns, principles, and potholes*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Klingensmith, E. (2008). *The relative impact of principal managerial, instructional, and transformational leadership on student achievement in Missouri middle level schools*

(Doctoral dissertation). Available from Proquest Dissertations and Theses database.
(UMI No. 3322714)

Kotter, J. P. (1996). *Leading change*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business Press.

Kotter, J. P. (2008). *A sense of urgency*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business Press.

Kowalski, T. J. (2005). Evolution of the school district superintendent position. In L. G. Bjork & T. J. Kowalski (Eds.), *The contemporary superintendent: Preparation, practice, and development* (pp.1-18). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Kowalski, T. J. & Keedy, J. L. (2005). Preparing superintendents to be effective communicators. In L. G. Bjork & T. J. Kowalski (Eds.), *The contemporary superintendent: Preparation, practice, and development* (pp.1-18). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

KSDK.com. (2007) St. Louis school district misses deadline, hopes to keep accreditation.
Retrieved on March 13, 2007 from
http://www.ksdk.com/news/education_article.aspx?storyid=113746

Leithwood, K. (2001). School leadership in the context of accountability policies.
International Journal of Leadership in Education, 4(3), 217-235.

Leithwood & Duke (1999). A century's quest to understand school leadership. In J. Murphy and K. Seashore-Louis (Eds.) *Handbook of Research on Educational Administration* (2nd edition), 45-72. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Leithwood, K., Jantzi, D., & Steinbach, R. (2000). Changing leadership: A menu of possibilities. In *Changing leadership for changing times* (pp. 3-39). Philadelphia, PA: Open University Press.

- Leithwood, K. & Prestine, N. (2002). Unpacking the challenges of leadership at the school and district level. In J. Murphy (Ed.), *The educational leadership challenge: Redefining leadership for the 21st century* (pp. 20-41). Chicago, IL: National Society for the Study of Education.
- Lugg, C. A., Bulkley, K, Firestone, W. A. & Garner, C. W. (2002). The contextual terrain facing education leaders. In J. Murphy (Ed.), *The educational leadership challenge: Redefining leadership for the 21st century* (pp. 20-41). Chicago, IL: National Society for the Study of Education.
- Marzano, R. J., Waters, T., & McNulty, B. A. (2005). *School leadership that works: From research to results*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development and Arvada, CO: Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning.
- Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2005). Annual public reporting of information by school districts. Retrieved on February 17, 2005 from <http://www.dese.mo.gov/schoollaw/rulesregs/503402000.html>
- Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2005). News Release, Vol. 39, No. 16. Retrieved on March 13, 2007 from <http://dese.mo.gov/news/2005/wellstonstatus.html>
- Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2007). News Release, Vol. 41, No. 10. Retrieved on March 19, 2007 from <http://dese.mo.gov/news/2007/SLPSTransition.html>
- Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2008). *Missouri school improvement program: Understanding your annual performance report*. Retrieved on February 20, 2009 from <http://dese.mo.gov>

- Murphy, J. (2002). Reculturing the profession of educational leadership: A new blueprint. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 38(2) 176-191.
- Murphy, J. & Meyers, C. V. (2008). *Turning around failing schools: leadership lessons from the organizational sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- National Commission of Excellence in Education. (1983). *A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.
- National School Boards Association. (2005). State of Missouri takes over the unaccredited Wellston school district. Retrieved on March 13, 2007 from <http://www.nsba.org/site/page>
- Nonaka, I. & Takeuchi, H. (1995). *The knowledge-creating company*. New York, NY: The Oxford University Press.
- Petersen, G. J. & Barnett, B. G. (2005). The superintendent as instructional leader: Current practice, future conceptualizations, and implications for preparation. In L. G. Bjork & T. J. Kowalski (Eds.), *The contemporary superintendent: Preparation, practice, and development* (pp. 71-106). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Petersen, G. J. & Short, P. M. (2001). The school board president's perception of the district superintendent: Applying the lenses of social influence and social style. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 37(4) 533-570.
- Rebore, Ronald W. (2001). *The ethics of educational leadership*. Columbus, OH: Merrill Prentice Hall.
- Reeves, Douglas B. (2009). *Leading change in your school: how to conquer myths, build commitment, and get results*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

- Schein, E. H. (1996). Culture: The missing concept in organizational studies. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 41, 229-240.
- Schlechty, P. C. (2001). *Shaking up the school house*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Senge, P. M. (2000). *Schools that learn*. New York, NY: Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc.
- Sergiovanni, T. J. (2000). *The lifeworld of leadership: Creating culture, community, and personal meaning in our schools*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Sergiovanni, T. J. (2005). *Strengthening the heartbeat: Leading and learning together in schools*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Sergiovanni, T. J. (2007). An epistemological problem: What if we have the wrong theory? In P. D. Houston, A. M. Blankstein & R. W. Cole (Eds.), *Out-of-the-box leadership* (pp. 49-66). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Sherman, W. H. & Grogan, M. (2003). Superintendents' responses to the achievement gap: an ethical critique. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 6, (3), 223-237.
- Shields, C. M. (2006). Creating spaces for value-based conversations: The role of school leaders in the 21st century. *International Studies in Educational Administration*, 34, (2), 62-81.
- Singleton, Jr., R. A., Straits, B. C., & Straits, M. M. (1993). *Approaches to social research* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Sparks, D. (2007). What it means to be an outside-the-box leader. In P. D. Houston, A. M. Blankstein & R. W. Cole (Eds.) *Out-of-the-box leadership*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.

St. Louis Post-Dispatch (2009, December 18). School's over for Wellston district. Retrieved on January 14, 2010 from

<http://www.stltoday.com/stltoday/news/stories.nsf/education/story>

Yukl, G. A. (2002). *Leadership in organizations*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

U.S. Department of Education (1983). *Nation at risk*.

U.S. Department of Education. (2005). *No child left behind: Expanding the promise*.

Retrieved February 17, 2005 from <http://www.ed.gov/nclb/landing.jhtml?src=ov>

Waters, J. T. & Marzano, R. J. (2006). *School district leadership that works: The effect of superintendent leadership on student achievement*. Denver, CO: Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning.

White, E. G. (2005). *Leadership beyond excuses: The courage to hold the rope*. Indianapolis, IN: Power Publishing.

Appendix A

Superintendents' Sense of Urgency Survey

Superintendent “Sense of Urgency” to Improve Academic Performance

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. The study of “urgency” in the superintendency is a new way of looking at key factors in school district improvement. Urgency or “a sense of urgency” refers to a strong desire to take action. Organizational improvement depends upon a sense of urgency to create change. Your responses to this survey will provide the foundation not only for our study, but for future research. The survey consists of 37 items and will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. Thank you again and have a great summer.

Susan Gauzy, Assistant Superintendent, Wentzville Schools
Jerry Valentine, Professor, University of Missouri-Columbia

1. Please type your name for record keeping purposes. After the data has been entered into the database, all names will be deleted.

Name: _____

DEGREE OF URGENCY

Please indicate the DEGREE to which each of the following describes your sense of urgency to improve student academic performance (there are three questions in this section).

2. My sense of urgency to improve student academic performance when I assumed my position in this superintendency was

- 7 VERY HIGH URGENCY
- 6 HIGH URGENCY
- 5 SOMEWHAT HIGH URGENCY
- 4 MODERATE URGENCY
- 3 SOMEWHAT LOW URGENCY
- 2 LOW URGENCY
- 1 VERY LOW URGENCY

3. My sense of urgency to improve student academic performance at the end of my first year in this superintendency was

- 7 VERY HIGH URGENCY
- 6 HIGH URGENCY
- 5 SOMEWHAT HIGH URGENCY
- 4 MODERATE URGENCY
- 3 SOMEWHAT LOW URGENCY
- 2 LOW URGENCY
- 1 VERY LOW URGENCY

4. My sense of urgency to improve student academic performance at this time is

- 7 VERY HIGH URGENCY
- 6 HIGH URGENCY
- 5 SOMEWHAT HIGH URGENCY
- 4 MODERATE URGENCY
- 3 SOMEWHAT LOW URGENCY
- 2 LOW URGENCY
- 1 VERY LOW URGENCY

Source of Urgency

Please indicate the DEGREE to which each of the following influenced your sense of urgency to improve student academic performance (there are nine questions in this section).

5. Please indicate the degree to which the elimination of the achievement gap influenced your sense of urgency to improve student academic performance.

- 7 VERY STRONG INFLUENCE
- 6 STRONG INFLUENCE
- 5 SOMEWHAT STRONG INFLUENCE
- 4 MODERATE INFLUENCE
- 3 SOMEWHAT LOW INFLUENCE
- 2 LOW INFLUENCE
- 1 NO INFLUENCE

6. Please indicate the degree to which ethical/moral obligation to students influenced your sense of urgency to improve student academic performance.

- 7 VERY STRONG INFLUENCE
- 6 STRONG INFLUENCE
- 5 SOMEWHAT STRONG INFLUENCE
- 4 MODERATE INFLUENCE
- 3 SOMEWHAT LOW INFLUENCE
- 2 LOW INFLUENCE
- 1 NO INFLUENCE

7. Please indicate the degree to which the local/state/national obligation of public education to society influenced your sense of urgency to improve student academic performance.

- 7 VERY STRONG INFLUENCE
- 6 STRONG INFLUENCE
- 5 SOMEWHAT STRONG INFLUENCE
- 4 MODERATE INFLUENCE
- 3 SOMEWHAT LOW INFLUENCE
- 2 LOW INFLUENCE
- 1 NO INFLUENCE

8. Please indicate the degree to which the relationship between academic performance and the overall economic/social success of society influenced your sense of urgency to improve student academic performance.

- 7 VERY STRONG INFLUENCE
- 6 STRONG INFLUENCE
- 5 SOMEWHAT STRONG INFLUENCE
- 4 MODERATE INFLUENCE
- 3 SOMEWHAT LOW INFLUENCE
- 2 LOW INFLUENCE
- 1 NO INFLUENCE

9. Please indicate the degree to which the relationship between student academic performance and student success in a global society influenced your sense of urgency to improve student academic performance.

- 7 VERY STRONG INFLUENCE
- 6 STRONG INFLUENCE
- 5 SOMEWHAT STRONG INFLUENCE
- 4 MODERATE INFLUENCE
- 3 SOMEWHAT LOW INFLUENCE
- 2 LOW INFLUENCE
- 1 NO INFLUENCE

10. Please indicate the degree to which community concerns about student academic performance influenced your sense of urgency to improve student academic performance.

- 7 VERY STRONG INFLUENCE
- 6 STRONG INFLUENCE
- 5 SOMEWHAT STRONG INFLUENCE
- 4 MODERATE INFLUENCE
- 3 SOMEWHAT LOW INFLUENCE
- 2 LOW INFLUENCE
- 1 NO INFLUENCE

11. Please indicate the degree to which Board member concerns about student academic performance influenced your sense of urgency to improve student academic performance.

- 7 VERY STRONG INFLUENCE
- 6 STRONG INFLUENCE
- 5 SOMEWHAT STRONG INFLUENCE
- 4 MODERATE INFLUENCE
- 3 SOMEWHAT LOW INFLUENCE
- 2 LOW INFLUENCE
- 1 NO INFLUENCE

12. Please indicate the degree to which state mandates/requirements influenced your sense of urgency to improve student academic performance.

- 7 VERY STRONG INFLUENCE
- 6 STRONG INFLUENCE
- 5 SOMEWHAT STRONG INFLUENCE
- 4 MODERATE INFLUENCE
- 3 SOMEWHAT LOW INFLUENCE
- 2 LOW INFLUENCE
- 1 NO INFLUENCE

13. Please indicate the degree to which federal mandates/requirements influenced your sense of urgency to improve student academic performance.

- 7 VERY STRONG INFLUENCE
- 6 STRONG INFLUENCE
- 5 SOMEWHAT STRONG INFLUENCE
- 4 MODERATE INFLUENCE
- 3 SOMEWHAT LOW INFLUENCE
- 2 LOW INFLUENCE
- 1 NO INFLUENCE

Frequency of Communication

Please indicate the FREQUENCY with which you purposefully communicated the sense of urgency to improve student academic performance (there are eight questions in this section).

14. I purposefully communicated a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance at open and closed Board meetings.

- 7 VERY FREQUENTLY
- 6 SOMEWHAT FREQUENTLY
- 5 FREQUENTLY
- 4 MODERATELY FREQUENTLY
- 3 SELDOM
- 2 ALMOST NEVER
- 1 NEVER

15. I purposefully communicated a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance with individual Board members.

- 7 VERY FREQUENTLY
- 6 SOMEWHAT FREQUENTLY
- 5 FREQUENTLY
- 4 MODERATELY FREQUENTLY
- 3 SELDOM
- 2 ALMOST NEVER
- 1 NEVER

16. I purposefully communicated a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance with district administrators.

- 7 VERY FREQUENTLY
- 6 SOMEWHAT FREQUENTLY
- 5 FREQUENTLY
- 4 MODERATELY FREQUENTLY
- 3 SELDOM
- 2 ALMOST NEVER
- 1 NEVER

17. I purposefully communicated a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance with building principals.

- 7 VERY FREQUENTLY
- 6 SOMEWHAT FREQUENTLY
- 5 FREQUENTLY
- 4 MODERATELY FREQUENTLY
- 3 SELDOM
- 2 ALMOST NEVER
- 1 NEVER

18. I purposefully communicated a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance with teacher leaders/committees.

- 7 VERY FREQUENTLY
- 6 SOMEWHAT FREQUENTLY
- 5 FREQUENTLY
- 4 MODERATELY FREQUENTLY
- 3 SELDOM
- 2 ALMOST NEVER
- 1 NEVER

19. I purposefully communicate a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance to all district teachers simultaneously.

- 7 VERY FREQUENTLY
- 6 SOMEWHAT FREQUENTLY
- 5 FREQUENTLY
- 4 MODERATELY FREQUENTLY
- 3 SELDOM
- 2 ALMOST NEVER
- 1 NEVER

20. I purposefully communicated a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance to community clubs/civic/business organizations.

- 7 VERY FREQUENTLY
- 6 SOMEWHAT FREQUENTLY
- 5 FREQUENTLY
- 4 MODERATELY FREQUENTLY
- 3 SELDOM
- 2 ALMOST NEVER
- 1 NEVER

21. I purposefully communicated a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance to the media.

- 7 VERY FREQUENTLY
- 6 SOMEWHAT FREQUENTLY
- 5 FREQUENTLY
- 4 MODERATELY FREQUENTLY
- 3 SELDOM
- 2 ALMOST NEVER
- 1 NEVER

Change in Urgency

Please indicate the DEGREE to which you perceive the sense of urgency to improve student academic performance has changed for each of the following groups (there are eight questions in this section).

22. I believe the sense of urgency to improve student academic performance of the Board of Education has

- 7 NOTICEABLY INCREASED
- 6 INCREASED
- 5 SOMEWHAT INCREASED
- 4 NO CHANGE
- 3 SOMEWHAT DECREASED
- 2 DECREASED
- 1 NOTICEABLY DECREASED

23. I believe the sense of urgency to improve student academic performance of individual Board members has

- 7 NOTICEABLY INCREASED
- 6 INCREASED
- 5 SOMEWHAT INCREASED
- 4 NO CHANGE
- 3 SOMEWHAT DECREASED
- 2 DECREASED
- 1 NOTICEABLY DECREASED

24. I believe the sense of urgency to improve student academic performance of district administrators has

- 7 NOTICEABLY INCREASED
- 6 INCREASED
- 5 SOMEWHAT INCREASED
- 4 NO CHANGE
- 3 SOMEWHAT DECREASED
- 2 DECREASED
- 1 NOTICEABLY DECREASED

25. I believe the sense of urgency to improve student academic performance of building principals has

- 7 NOTICEABLY INCREASED
- 6 INCREASED
- 5 SOMEWHAT INCREASED
- 4 NO CHANGE
- 3 SOMEWHAT DECREASED
- 2 DECREASED
- 1 NOTICEABLY DECREASED

26. I believe the sense of urgency to improve student academic performance of teacher leaders/committees has

- 7 NOTICEABLY INCREASED
- 6 INCREASED
- 5 SOMEWHAT INCREASED
- 4 NO CHANGE
- 3 SOMEWHAT DECREASED
- 2 DECREASED
- 1 NOTICEABLY DECREASED

27. I believe the sense of urgency to improve student academic performance of all district teachers has

- 7 NOTICEABLY INCREASED
- 6 INCREASED
- 5 SOMEWHAT INCREASED
- 4 NO CHANGE
- 3 SOMEWHAT DECREASED
- 2 DECREASED
- 1 NOTICEABLY DECREASED

28. I believe the sense of urgency to improve student academic performance of community clubs/civic/business organizations has

- 7 NOTICEABLY INCREASED
- 6 INCREASED
- 5 SOMEWHAT INCREASED
- 4 NO CHANGE
- 3 SOMEWHAT DECREASED
- 2 DECREASED
- 1 NOTICEABLY DECREASED

29. I believe the sense of urgency to improve student academic performance of the media has

- 7 NOTICEABLY INCREASED
- 6 INCREASED
- 5 SOMEWHAT INCREASED
- 4 NO CHANGE
- 3 SOMEWHAT DECREASED
- 2 DECREASED
- 1 NOTICEABLY DECREASED

Communication Strategies

Please indicate the FREQUENCY with which you utilized the following strategies to communicate a sense of urgency to improve student academic performance (there are eight questions in this section).

30. I identified and communicated an impending crisis to the district about improving student academic performance.

- 7 VERY FREQUENTLY
- 6 SOMEWHAT FREQUENTLY
- 5 FREQUENTLY
- 4 MODERATELY FREQUENTLY
- 3 SELDOM
- 2 ALMOST NEVER
- 1 NEVER

31. I eliminated programs and positions not deemed necessary in order to improve student academic performance.

- 7 VERY FREQUENTLY
- 6 SOMEWHAT FREQUENTLY
- 5 FREQUENTLY
- 4 MODERATELY FREQUENTLY
- 3 SELDOM
- 2 ALMOST NEVER
- 1 NEVER

32. I established student academic targets and goals for the district.

- 7 VERY FREQUENTLY
- 6 SOMEWHAT FREQUENTLY
- 5 FREQUENTLY
- 4 MODERATELY FREQUENTLY
- 3 SELDOM
- 2 ALMOST NEVER
- 1 NEVER

33. I held employees accountable for student academic performance.

- 7 VERY FREQUENTLY
- 6 SOMEWHAT FREQUENTLY
- 5 FREQUENTLY
- 4 MODERATELY FREQUENTLY
- 3 SELDOM
- 2 ALMOST NEVER
- 1 NEVER

34. I utilized data to communicate the urgent need to improve student academic performance.

- 7 VERY FREQUENTLY
- 6 SOMEWHAT FREQUENTLY
- 5 FREQUENTLY
- 4 MODERATELY FREQUENTLY
- 3 SELDOM
- 2 ALMOST NEVER
- 1 NEVER

35. I utilized consultants and stakeholders to help establish a sense of urgency about student academic success.

- 7 VERY FREQUENTLY
- 6 SOMEWHAT FREQUENTLY
- 5 FREQUENTLY
- 4 MODERATELY FREQUENTLY
- 3 SELDOM
- 2 ALMOST NEVER
- 1 NEVER

36. I intentionally communicated opportunities for success to stress the need to improve student academic performance.

- 7 VERY FREQUENTLY
- 6 SOMEWHAT FREQUENTLY
- 5 FREQUENTLY
- 4 MODERATELY FREQUENTLY
- 3 SELDOM
- 2 ALMOST NEVER
- 1 NEVER

37. If you purposefully used other strategies to communicate a sense of urgency to improve academic performance, please write in the strategy in the space below and indicate the frequency with which you used the strategy as very frequently, frequently, or seldom.

--

Appendix B
IRB Approval Letter

Comments Regarding Project #1135438**Comment Number: 225111 (04-29-2009)**

Exempt Approval Letter sent on Apr 29, 2009:

To: sgauzy@lebanon.k12.mo.us, ValentineJ@missouri.edu

BCC: bryantel@missouri.edu

Subject: Campus IRB Exempt Approval Letter: IRB # 1135438

Dear Investigator:

Your human subject research project entitled Missouri Superintendents' Perception of a Sense of Urgency to Improve Student Academic Performance was reviewed and APPROVED as "Exempt" on April 29, 2009 and will expire on April 29, 2010. Research activities approved at this level are eligible for exemption from some federal IRB requirements. Although you will not be required to submit the annual Continuing Review Report, your approval will be contingent upon your agreement to annually submit the "Annual Exempt Research Certification" form to maintain current IRB approval. You must submit the "Annual Exempt Research Certification" form by March 15, 2010 to provide enough time for review and avoid delays in the IRB process. Failure to timely submit the certification form by the deadline will result in automatic expiration of IRB approval. (See form: <http://irb.missouri.edu/eirb/>)

If you wish to revise your activities, you **do not need to submit an Amendment Application**. You must contact the Campus IRB office for a determination of whether the proposed changes will continue to qualify for exempt status. You will be expected to provide a brief written description of the proposed revisions and how it will impact the risks to subject participants. The Campus IRB will provide a written determination of whether the proposed revisions change from exemption to expedite or full board review status. If the activities no longer qualify for exemption, as a result of the proposed revisions, an expedited or full board IRB application must be submitted to the Campus IRB. The investigator may not proceed with the proposed revisions until IRB approval is granted.

Please be aware that all human subject research activities must receive prior approval by the IRB prior to initiation, regardless of the review level status. If you have any questions regarding the IRB process, do not hesitate to contact the Campus IRB office at (573) 882-9585.

Campus Institutional Review Board

Comment Number: 225082 (04-29-2009)

Application Received Notice sent on Apr 29, 2009:

To: sgauzy@lebanon.k12.mo.us, ValentineJ@missouri.edu

BCC: gehac@missouri.edu

Subject: Campus IRB Application Received Memo: IRB # 1135438

Investigators:

Your application has been received by the IRB. Please click on the following link for more information regarding the application process.

https://irb.missouri.edu/eirb/main.php?action=View_Comments&proj_num=1135438

5/5/2009

eIRB - Comments

Page 2 of 2

<https://irb.missouri.edu/eirb/letter/23502>

Thank you,

Campus Institutional Review Board

VITA

Susan Maupin Gauzy was born in Washington, Missouri on September 16, 1954. She graduated from high school in May of 1973 from Gasconade County R-II in Owensville, Missouri as salutatorian of her class. After living in Lawton, Oklahoma and Fairbanks, Alaska, Susan graduated from Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri in 1985 as salutatorian of her class with Bachelor of Science in Education. She then went on to teach seventh and eighth grade social studies at Gasconade County R-II middle school for nine years.

In 1991 Susan graduated from the University of Missouri-Columbia with a Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction. After attaining certification, she became principal of Owensville Middle School in 1994 and led the development, building, and transition of a new middle school facility. In 1996 Susan graduated from the University of Missouri-Columbia with an Educational Specialist Degree in Educational Administration.

From 2000 through 2010 she has worked in central office positions as assistant superintendent and superintendent at Lebanon R-III, Southern Boone County R-I, and Wentzville R-IV. Most of her work has involved instructional leadership and student learning and achievement.

Susan has three children; Darcy who is an English teacher, Travis who is an English teacher, and Tessa who is completing coursework to become an English teacher. Susan also has one grandson, Braden, who hasn't decided to be an English teacher...yet.