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**A study of the reasons why Michigan school superintendents
were dismissed or encouraged to leave their positions between
1980 and 1985**

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Michigan State University, 1987

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A STUDY OF THE REASONS WHY MICHIGAN SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS
WERE DISMISSED OR ENCOURAGED TO LEAVE THEIR
POSITIONS BETWEEN 1980 AND 1985

By

Gary C. Roeder

A DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

A STUDY OF THE REASONS WHY MICHIGAN SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS WERE DISMISSED OR ENCOURAGED TO LEAVE THEIR POSITIONS BETWEEN 1980 AND 1985

By

Gary C. Roeder

The purpose of this study was to discover new knowledge about superintendent-board of education relationships, especially as it pertains to the severance of the tenure of superintendents in Michigan school districts between July 1, 1980, and June 30, 1985.

The names of superintendents who were dismissed or encouraged to leave were obtained from university placement officials, intermediate school district superintendents, board of education members, and local school district superintendents. A name had to be validated by at least two sources for it to be included in the study. Seventy superintendents met this criterion and were included in the study. A total of 204 board members responded to the survey, with at least two board members responding from 70 boards of education.

The instrument used in this research requested a response to several questions and also included a checklist evaluation appraisal of the released superintendent, with an opportunity for respondents to add remarks.

Gary C. Roeder

Five research questions were formulated before gathering the data. The findings regarding these questions were:

1. Superintendents included in the study were appraised by board members as being weakest in the area of relationship with the board, of six general classifications provided in the survey.

2. Superintendents included in the study were appraised by board members as being strongest in the area of business and finance, of six general classifications provided in the survey.

3. Of all the specific reasons listed in the general classifications of the survey, the one specific reason appraised by board members to be the most predominant factor in termination of tenure of a superintendent was not the lack of maintaining a high standard of professional ethics, honesty, and integrity.

4. Of those superintendents who served as the primary person managing decline, a majority of those who were dismissed or encouraged to leave were not appraised by board members as having performed poorly in this role.

5. A majority of those superintendents who were dismissed or encouraged to leave were not evaluated in a formal, written manner at least annually.

To my wife, Pam, and wonderful children, Scott and Brian,
whose support and sacrifices have made this possible, this volume
is dedicated.

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This study was made possible only through the effort and cooperation of many. I wish to thank the members of my dissertation committee, Drs. Lou Romano, Cas Heilman, Philip Marcus, and Carl Brautigam. I am especially indebted to Dr. Lou Romano, who has been my advisor, dissertation chairman, and good friend throughout the doctoral experience at Michigan State University.

It was only through the sincere interest, consideration, and cooperation of the Bridgeport-Spaulling Board of Education that the completion of this study became a reality.

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Superintendents of schools have been dismissed from their positions for scores of years, and there is some evidence that this will continue to occur. There continues to be an absence of facts which would explain the underlying reasons why some superintendents lose their positions. It is conceivable that in many cases the release of a superintendent might have been avoided had information from previous cases been available as a guide.

In 1975, David A. Fultz, then Superintendent of Schools at Godwin Heights, Michigan, compiled a study to determine the underlying reasons why superintendents lost their positions during the years from July 1, 1965, to June 31, 1975. The results of this study were reported in his doctoral dissertation.

The role of the superintendent of schools has changed considerably since the completion of that study in 1975. Economic decline, soaring costs, declining enrollments, and school closure have become commonplace, and community pressures for school administrators to provide evidence of quality education and accountability have all complicated the responsibilities of the superintendent. Thus, it becomes apparent that the underlying reasons for the termination of a

superintendent may have changed since the completion of the study by Fultz; therefore, this study was initiated.

When a superintendent of schools is dismissed or encouraged to leave his position, there usually are specific reasons given for this action by the board of education. Also, usually there are other latent factors that go beyond the manifested reasons given. These latent reasons for dismissal are seldom made public.

Eight years have passed since Fultz conducted his research. It seems appropriate, especially since the role and responsibilities of the superintendent have changed considerably in the past ten years, that a similar study be conducted. This study is intended to identify the underlying reasons why superintendents involuntarily left their positions during the five-year span from July 1, 1980, to June 30, 1985.

This study is not a replication of the study completed by Fultz in 1975. However, the procedure and method of research are similar. Due to the manner in which the role of the superintendent has changed over the past ten years, the instrument used in this study was developed to request additional information, particularly in the areas of labor negotiations, evaluation of the superintendent's performance, procedures in the selection of a superintendent, and the effects of declining enrollment and economic decline.

Need of the Study

The uncertainty of continuance in position, which is a characteristic of all high-level management positions, is accentuated

in the office of superintendent of schools. The continuance of the chief administrator's employment depends on the decision of a relatively small number of citizens. Most boards of education include five to seven members, and any time a majority of this group becomes dissatisfied with the superintendent, he can assume that his position is in jeopardy. There are often factors of community pressure that protect him temporarily from dismissal. It is generally true, however, that when a school board becomes disenchanted with its executive, a way will be found to dismiss him.

In place of statutory protection, the school superintendent usually has a contractual agreement with his board for a specified term of years. The length of this period is commonly a matter of negotiation between the two parties. A flexible agreement is occasionally used to minimize the effect of sudden community explosion. A sliding contract provides for a term of years, typically three, with a clause providing for annual review. If at the end of the first year both the board and the executive are content, a new three-year document is drawn up and signed. If, on the other hand, one party is doubtful of the desirability of extending the employment to cover the fourth year, no new contract is executed. This is a clear warning to the superintendent that he may not be reemployed for that additional year.

When a superintendent is dismissed before the end of his contract, he is confronted with a difficult choice. More often than not, the reasons are concealed in a mass of evasive verbiage uttered

by the school board. He may demand a public hearing to bring charges out into the open. Another course open to him is court action to compel the board to honor the contract. In either case, the affair may be expected to degenerate into emotional and other undesirable outcomes. The airing of charges and responses makes a public scene, which few schoolmen care to undergo.

This very fact, which is known by both boards and administrators, plays a large part in determining the course of such a conflict. Boards count on the reluctance of professional people to take part in public airing of differences. The superintendent is concerned with the notoriety and cannot be sure whether it will hurt or help his chances of getting another position. Consequently, he is likely to choose the less dangerous course and leave without contesting his dismissal.

Michigan, along with the rest of the nation, has witnessed a substantial turnover of superintendents in recent years. A Michigan Department of Education report (1975) indicated that 45% of Michigan school districts had vacancies during 1969-1974, an average of 9% turnover a year. The highest rate was in districts of over 10,000 students: 80% reported vacancies during the five-year period, for an average annual rate of 16%. The lowest rate was in districts of 2,501 to 5,000 students: 39.4% for the five-year period, or 7.9% annually.

Another study (Brautigam, 1975) provided further information on superintendent turnover in reporting that of 256 changes of

superintendencies in Michigan during the five-year period from 1969 through 1974, 21 were second and third changes. Of the 51 1974 changes, 15 were filled by the movement of a superintendent to another superintendency; 13 were filled by promotion from within the district; and 23 were filled by nonsuperintendents from other districts (eight central office persons: seven principals and eight from other categories). Brautigam stated that there seemed to be no geographic factors present in the vacancies occurring in Michigan.

The dismissal of a superintendent of schools can be embarrassing both to the superintendent and to the board of education. If the specific factors, or the more underlying reasons, for this action could have been detected by the board of education or the superintendent early in the superintendent's tenure, it is possible that the reasons could have been eliminated. However, resolution of this conflict can only be accomplished if one or both parties are aware of the factors causing the difficulty.

There is a need for a study that can search out the information available about the many cases of dismissal in Michigan over the past five years. Board members and superintendents need to study the patterns of dismissal as one means of preventing similar occurrences in their own districts.

The dismissal of a superintendent often comes as a sudden shock to the superintendent, school personnel, and the community, even though tremors are usually evident before the final quake of dismissal. In most instances, if some type of formal evaluation

procedure has been conducted annually, the friction between the board and the superintendent would have surfaced openly. However, sometimes no formal evaluation procedures have been followed, even though evaluation of administrative personnel is becoming more and more prevalent and even mandated in many states.

A superintendent, by knowing in advance the pitfalls of this person's predecessors, of this superintendent's neighbors, and of this person's peers, may plan actions more carefully for the preservation of his position. Knowing in advance of those areas of conflict that have caused frictions across the state, the board of education can take action to guide its superintendent in the direction of policies it would wish to have executed. It can take action that may in many cases prevent friction that might lead to the necessity of removing the superintendent from his position.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify and describe both manifest and latent reasons why superintendents of schools in Michigan were dismissed or encouraged to leave their positions. The instrumentation is so structured that six general classifications of factors in dismissal are listed. Several specific classifications of factors in dismissal are listed under each general classification. The open-ended questions provide an opportunity for further analysis of underlying reasons for termination. It is further the purpose of this study to make new knowledge available to the colleges of education

that prepare administrators, university placement bureaus that recommend superintendents for placement, boards of education through the Michigan Association of School Boards, and superintendents of schools through the Michigan Association of School Administrators. All of these persons and agencies should profit greatly from the information gathered.

Statement of the Problem

The problem can be summarized as follows:

1. Identify, by means of a questionnaire to school board members who served when a superintendent was dismissed or encouraged to leave, those factors that precipitated their action.
2. Of six general factors, identify the weakest area of responsibility and the strongest area of responsibility of superintendents included in the study, through an appraisal by school board members.
3. Identify specific reasons, as a part of each general factor, that were considered by board members as conditions involved in the termination of tenure of a superintendent.
4. Subject the general factors, the specific reasons, and the comments listed on the open-ended questions to intense analysis.
5. Interpret the data, and select the most significant factors that tend to explain the causes of school board/superintendent friction that were severe enough to terminate the employment of the superintendent.

Research Questions

The following general research questions were formulated regarding the findings of this study:

1. Of the six general classifications in the survey, would Community Relationships be appraised by board members as the weakest area of responsibility of those superintendents who were dismissed or encouraged to leave?
2. Of the six general classifications in the survey, would Business and Finance be appraised by board members as the strongest area of responsibility of those superintendents who were dismissed or encouraged to leave?
3. Of all the specific reasons listed in the general classifications of the survey, would the one specific reason appraised by board members as the most predominant factor in termination of tenure of a superintendent be the lack of maintaining a high standard of professional ethics, honesty, and integrity in all professional matters?
4. Of those superintendents who served as the primary person managing decline for management, would a majority of those who were dismissed or encouraged to leave be appraised by board members as having performed poorly in this role?
5. Would a majority of those superintendents who were dismissed or encouraged to leave not be evaluated in a formal written manner at least annually?

Basic Assumptions

Because the purpose of this study was to discover underlying reasons for the dismissal of school superintendents, the important issue of sampling was considered. Since all superintendents were validated by at least two sources as having been dismissed or encouraged to leave, and because every member of the boards of education who took action regarding these superintendents were contacted, and because at least two board members from each board involved responded to the survey, it was assumed that this was more than an adequate sample of the population.

Since board members were made aware that the names of school districts and individuals would remain anonymous, and with assurance by the Executive Director of the Michigan Association of School Boards that the results of this study would be made available to board members to assist them in preventing board-superintendent friction situations, the concept of mutual assistance was assumed positive. Thus, the answers given to the questionnaire were assumed to represent the true and honest expressions of opinions of survey respondents.

Because the listing of general and specific classification of reasons for terminating the tenure of a superintendent may omit certain reasons that should be considered, it was desirable to use the open-ended survey to allow more complete and adequate commitment of the person answering the questionnaire. It was assumed that the personalized-type response of the comment-type answer would generate a more intimate and detailed expression of the board member's opinion.

Definition of Terms

Superintendent of schools: One who was employed by a board of education as the chief executive officer of a school district and who held that position at the time of dismissal or encouragement to leave.

School board member: A resident of a school district who was legally elected to serve as a member of a board of education of a school district. For the purpose of this study, only those members were questioned who served as a board member at the time the superintendent was dismissed or encouraged to leave.

Dismissed superintendent: A superintendent of schools who was asked to leave or was specifically informed that his contract would not be renewed. This includes the cases in which the board of education (a) broke a contract before termination date, (b) refused to renew the contract, or (c) requested the resignation of the superintendent. Even if the superintendent agreed to resign, he was still, for the purpose of this research, considered a dismissed superintendent.

Superintendent encouraged to leave: Where inferences and suggestions were strong, or when opposition was great, and the superintendent saw these signs and left because of them.

Specific and/or underlying reasons: The real or latent reasons, as perceived by the questionnaire respondents. They may not have been the reasons that were generally made public, but were the specific reasons that appeared in the open-ended questions. The

specific reasons that were used to prove general charges were the ones being sought.

Weakest area of responsibility: The appraisal by a board member of the one activity, of six listed, in which a superintendent included in this study performed the poorest.

Strongest area of responsibility: The appraisal by a board member of the one activity, of six listed, in which a superintendent included in this study performed the best.

Relationship with the board: (a) Supported board policy and board actions to the staff and to the public. (b) Clearly understood his role as an administrator of board policy, not a policy maker. (c) Kept the board informed on issues, concerns, needs, and general operation of the school system. (d) Offered professional advice and recommendations, based on thorough study and analysis, to board on items needing action. (e) Sought and accepted constructive criticism of his work. (f) Provided well-planned meeting agendas. (g) Had information readily available for the board on agenda items. (h) Had a harmonious working relationship with the board.

Community relations: (a) Was recognized in the community as a leader in public education. (b) Developed friendly and cooperative relationships with news media. (c) Sought and gave attention to problems and opinions of community groups and individuals. (d) Actively participated in community organizations. (e) Had the respect and support of the community in the operation of the school system.

Business and finance: (a) Evaluated financial needs and made recommendations for adequate financing. (b) Kept informed on needs of the school program, plant, facilities, equipment, and supplies. (c) Required adequate control and accounting of funds. (d) Required that funds were spent wisely.

Staff and personnel relationships: (a) Encouraged appropriate staff members to participate in planning and decision making and then accepted their suggestions. (b) Developed good staff morale and loyalty to the organization. (c) Treated all personnel fairly without discrimination or favoritism. (d) Delegated authority to appropriate staff members. (e) Recruited and assigned the best of available personnel in terms of their competencies. (f) Evaluated performance of staff members and provided constructive criticism that was acceptable. (g) Provided an active role in developing salary schedules and recommending personnel procedures and policies. (h) Was highly respected by school personnel at all levels.

Educational leadership: (a) Provided the leadership to implement innovative programs and initiate educational progress. (b) Kept informed regarding all aspects of the instructional programs of the district. (c) Was involved in educational conferences and read considerably in order to keep abreast of current educational practices. (d) Required an organized and planned program of curriculum development, evaluation, and improvement. (e) Provided democratic procedures in using the abilities and talents of staff members and citizens.

(f) Maintained political awareness and was proficient in working with local and state legislators.

Personal qualities: (a) Was not afraid to make decisions and would defend convictions in the face of pressure and partisan influence. (b) Devoted time and energy effectively to the responsibilities of his position. (c) Had the respect of school personnel. (d) Had the respect of his professional colleagues in area school districts. (e) Maintained a high standard of ethics, honesty, and integrity in all personal and professional matters. (f) Possessed a pleasing personality and reflected personal charisma.

Declining enrollment: A continuous drop in the number of students enrolled in a school district, which results in the closing of individual school buildings or the rearranging of grade structure.

Economic decline: A school district, which through the loss of enrollment and increased costs, finds itself in a situation where there are not ample funds to meet its current costs.

Overview

The survey instrument provides the most adequate overview of this research study. (See Appendix C.) Chapter II provides a review of the literature. The design of the study and the design of the instrument are discussed in detail in Chapter III. In Chapter IV, the results are analyzed. Chapter V provides a summary and conclusions of the study, with recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Literature pertinent to this study is reviewed in this chapter in the following sequence: The Role of the Superintendent, The Turn-over and Mobility of the Superintendency, The Selection and Evaluation of the Superintendent, The Dismissal of the Superintendent, and Summary.

The Role of the Superintendent

The superintendency of schools is one of the most crucial and perhaps most difficult public functions in American life today. The occupant of the position of superintendent, more than any other single person in the community, influences the shape of public education. Thus, he has a basic role in determining what will become of the young people of his community, and through them to some extent what his community and nation will become. His role is changing rapidly because of rapid changes in our society. These include growth of knowledge and its effect on life, the population explosion, rural depopulation and urban growth, technological progress, and widespread demand for equal opportunity (Educational Policies Commission, 1965).

The superintendent has many functions, but all are focused on a single goal: to provide the best possible education for the

community. This means creating conditions that allow other people to get things done and above all to create an environment in which the teacher in the classroom can perform to the best of his ability. It also means assisting the board of education in the formulation of policies governing the school system. Increasingly, it implies a key role in the development of general policies affecting the life of the locality, the state, and the nation. The superintendent is the leader in a real sense, for he must be an expert in bringing out the best in his community and his staff. The most important of his roles are:

1. The supervision of the instructional program of the schools. He seeks consensus of his board, community, and staff on the goals of the school as a basis for decisions on the program.

2. The management aspect. This constitutes the task of making choices and stimulating action and consensus. Also, he plays a major role in the selection of personnel.

3. The administration of the school budget. The budget is prepared under the superintendent's direction and calls for intricate balancing of many factors.

4. The solution of day-to-day problems. This involves the responsibility to encourage a permanent reexamination of the purpose of the schools in light of changing conditions and values.

5. The practice of the art of human relations. This is vital to his relationship with school personnel, the school board, and the community (Educational Policies Commission, 1965).

The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) (1982) conducted a study in 1982, based on a selected sample of 2,533 public school superintendents across the nation for the purpose of determining how superintendents wear their roles and their problems. The findings indicated that the superintendency is a stressful position. However, superintendents reported considerable fulfillment in their performance within a highly stressful occupation.

When asked to rank the major issues and challenges they face, superintendents in the study touched virtually every imaginable area of educational concern. The top issues, in order, were:

1. Financing schools
2. Planning and goal setting
3. Assessing educational outcomes
4. Accountability credibility
5. Staff and administrator evaluation
6. Administrator-board relations
7. Special education Public Law 94-142
8. Obtaining timely and accurate information for decision making
9. Issues such as negotiations and strikes
10. Rapidly decreasing/increasing enrollments
11. Greater visibility of the superintendent
12. Personal time management
13. Parents' apathy and irresponsibility about their own children--including child abuse

14. Compliance with state and federal record-keeping requirements
15. Student discipline
16. Staff recruitment/selection
17. Changes in values and behavioral norms
18. Use of drugs and alcohol in the schools

Ashby (1978) related his feelings that some boards and superintendents themselves are confused about their respective roles. The superintendent is confused about whether he is the board's man, the educational leader of teachers, or the man in the middle. The superintendent appears to be moving gradually into the position of being the board's man. In defining the role of the superintendent, Ashby believed that school boards fall into these three groups: those who look for a public-relations man, those who look for a good business manager, and those who look for an educational leader. However, in many cases, boards set out to find an educational leader and then criticize the newly hired superintendent for not being more business-like. It is important that boards and superintendents define their respective roles.

Anton Hess (in Ashby, 1978), Commissioner for Basic Education, Pennsylvania Department of Public Instruction, believed that teachers have become intimately involved in board policies formerly considered to be management prerogatives. Teachers are now requesting rights that no union professional organization enjoys. Teachers are literally wrestling from the superintendent and the board decisions on what

should be taught, who should teach it, and who should supervise the teachers in their work. The man in the middle is the superintendent. It is nearly impossible for the superintendent to be the executive and the advisor to the board and, at the same time, give credibility to his image as a professional leader of a teaching staff under this dilemma.

The results of a study conducted by the University of Oregon in 1967, in which 45 superintendents from different-sized districts and from 42 states were interviewed, provided five categories of the most serious problems superintendents felt they were faced with in their roles (Goldhammer, Aldridge, Suttle, & Becker, 1967). These categories were:

1. Educational change. More than 50% of the superintendents focused on the influences pressing on them to stimulate change in the schools.
2. Teachers' militancy. The problem of dealing with militant teacher groups who demand a role in the decision-making structure of the schools has impressed a whole new set of concerns on the superintendents.
3. Instruction. How the schools will continue to teach the young and toward what ends are matters of considerable concern.
4. Critical social issues. Since the Supreme Court decision of 1954, it has been apparent that schools can no longer retreat into their ivy-covered cloisters for protection from the controversies of

contemporary social issues. The superintendent today frequently feels he is more involved in social than in purely educational issues.

5. Finance. Financial worries plague the superintendent in the traditional role as the procurer of resources for the school organization.

The superintendent makes dozens of decisions every day. He makes policy decisions and value judgments. His decisions are always subject to criticism and second-guessing. What must be understood, however, is that these decisions frequently are complex and almost always have widespread ramifications. In making these decisions, the effective superintendent is probably right 90% of the time, but he cannot be right all of the time, and he cannot be expected to be right all of the time (Southworth, 1967).

In general, the superintendent has a very short time in which to decide (a) to make a decision, (b) not to make a decision, (c) to refer to someone else, (d) not to refer to someone else, (e) to temporize, or (f) to refuse to consider the matter (Southworth, 1967).

Campbell (1978) suggested that the superintendent has three major functions. These are: to help define and clarify the purpose and direction of the school, to establish and maintain an organization to work at these purposes, and to secure and allocate resources needed by the organization. Campbell felt that increasing demands on school administrators are being made by the larger society. With the civil rights revolution, schools are now seen by many not only as

traditional instructional centers, but as power instruments of social policy.

Much of the current literature has discussed the changing role of the superintendent in the 1980s. Financing schools, planning a good setting, assessing educational outcomes, accountability-credibility, and staff administrator evaluation are consistent with society's demand for higher and more favorable institutional performance. They reflect society's call for prudence and efficiency in times of declining resources. In the 1980s, these issues are reflections of the incredible battle with inflation.

In discussing the changing role and responsibilities of the school superintendent, Burbank (1978) suggested that the nature of leadership within the school system is changing at a rapid pace. The direct personal influence of the superintendent is diminishing, particularly as districts become larger. Less and less do school employees have any personal kind of relationship with the superintendent. All too often they know him only as a distant authority figure who seems to be responsible for whatever they do not like about their conditions of work.

As the advisor and executive to the school board of today, the superintendent is likely to find that the board is changing rapidly. Better-educated and more articulate than ever before, the citizens who are responsible for policy making no longer accept policy proposals without sound basis. No longer is the superintendent's advice taken on word alone. It must be supported by solid justification. The day

of domination of a school board by an administrator with a degree is gone. The executive must be an educational statesman capable of putting together soundly based recommendations and defending them vigorously under intelligent questioning of well-informed board members (Burbank, 1978).

To identify the current problems facing school superintendents in Nebraska, Norton (1971) conducted a study in spring 1971 that investigated four levels of problems expressed by school superintendents. The 118 chief school executives included in the study were selected randomly and represented schools with widely varying enrollments. The findings of this study indicated that five areas of his responsibility create the greatest problem. These five areas are listed in rank order as reported in the study:

1. Problems of teacher personnel
2. Public relations
3. Pupil personnel problems
4. Increasing educational costs and problems in finance
5. Problems related to the board of education.

The escalating dynamism of teacher organizations and collective bargaining is challenging the superintendent to reassess his role in teacher-board relationships. The benevolent paternalism of other years is being rejected by teacher leaders. Their associations are now pushing for formalized lines of communication between the school board and the teacher association (Burbank, 1978).

In the area of collective bargaining, the superintendent of schools is the man in the middle. Most factors indicate that the effect of negotiations on the superintendent is similar to the effect of the ball-point pen on the blotter or the internal-combustion engine on the one-horse shay. The superintendent really represents the students in the negotiating process. Thus, he is the man in the middle, and he must exert a positive influence on both the teachers and the board (Rasmussen, 1968).

Bradley (1970) observed that negotiations between the teachers and the school board have affected the superintendent in two ways. One, the teachers no longer automatically accept at face value all the suggested proposals of the board of education and the superintendent. Two, there has been a major change in the relationship of the superintendent within the framework of the actual process of negotiations. Superintendents have for years kept their hold on the professional organizations representing teachers. They have encouraged their own teachers to become more active in the same professional organization without preparing for estrangement from the group. Now that teachers are in the process of dominating the leadership of such groups, superintendents are finding themselves outside the normally friendly paternalistic camp. They are representing the board of education and the students and teachers are representing themselves.

If a superintendent who retired in the 1930s could return in the 1980s, he would find the superintendency recognizable, but he would also discover a new set of circumstances that call for new

responses. One such set of circumstances is that created by organizations of teachers. Until teacher organizations appeared, the best of superintendents when beset with political or financial pressures, or caught in the cross-fire from special-interest groups, could usually rely on staff support, not only in a political way, but also to sustain their own morale and courage in time of crisis. This is no longer true today as collective bargaining is laced with a considerable amount of gamesmanship. The impression is created today that teachers and administrators are adversaries. Individual teachers may have a different view of the superintendent, but according to the game plan, they do not dare let this be known (Raubinger, 1971).

To find out whether there is reason to believe that a new kind of superintendent exists, in 1969 School Management editors mailed a four-page questionnaire to 776 superintendents, selected at random from across the United States (Adams & Doherty, 1970). A total of 360 questionnaires were returned. The survey results indicated that:

1. A significant number of superintendents did conceive of their leadership role in terms best characterized as active rather than passive.

2. Superintendents who subscribed to a more passive self-concept tended to be less consistent in their responses to the survey questions, probably a result of confusion or uncertainty as to their leadership roles.

There are those today who would blame most of the faults of society on the schools and the persons who administer them. Those

persons favor the removal of the prevalently school-oriented, professionally educated, broadly experienced educator and replacing him with a finance expert, a managing wizard, a spiritualist in business, or just a sharp politician. Finis E. Engleman (1970), Executive Secretary Emeritus of the AASA, felt that it would be a sorry day when the superintendent is tied to the coattail of the vote-seeking mayor or the political boss. Both political parties are the superintendent's clientele, as are the League of Women Voters, the P.T.A., the Chamber of Commerce, the Council of Churches, and the labor unions. With these and others, the superintendent associates as the independent spokesman of the whole educational system. His role is the most complex and the most harassing of all public leadership posts.

Southworth (1978) suggested that the superintendency as we know it today cannot continue. The responsibilities of the superintendency have so increased and multiplied that no single person can serve as chief administrator, professional negotiator, planner, executive, architect for change, and father figure as he has in the past. The demands of school boards and professional staffs have made the continuance of the superintendency in its present form impossible.

Southworth suggested that the position of superintendent be divided and made two positions. One position would be a senior school administrator; the second would be a senior educator. The senior school administrator would hold the top leadership position of the

district, occupying a position slightly in authority to that of the senior educator.

Moffitt (1967) summarized the changing role of the school superintendent when he wrote:

The successful superintendent today should possess the wizardry and escape mechanisms of Batman, the industry of Paul Bunyan and his administrative assistant Babe, and the digestion of Peter Piper, who is reputed to have been able to masticate a peck of pickled peppers without suffering from stomach ulcers. (p. 8)

The Turnover and Mobility of the Superintendency

The position of superintendent of schools in Michigan and across the nation has become one that is vacated frequently, and superintendents are becoming a mobile lot. Carlson (1972) discussed the mobility of the place-bound and the career-bound superintendent (the place-bound superintendent being one who is usually promoted from within the school system and is more interested in place of employment than his career, while the career-bound superintendent is one who is bound to a career rather than a place of employment). His research indicated that much of the intraoccupational mobility of superintendents is horizontal career mobility (from one superintendency to another of similar prestige) rather than vertical career mobility (from one superintendency to another of higher prestige). It appears that for the superintendent, the American dream of starting at the bottom with a small superintendency and working to the top with a large superintendency is just that, and only the exceptions realize the dreams. Men at the top of the prestige hierarchy of the occupation ordinarily start near the top, and men who start near the

bottom ordinarily stay near the bottom. Also, about 44% of the place-bound superintendents studied had held their jobs ten or more years, whereas 34% of the career-bound superintendents had been in their positions that long.

A special commission of the AASA was created in 1982 to report on the status of the superintendency and to update a series of reports begun almost 60 years ago. A stratified sample of superintendents was selected with the assistance of the National Education Research Division. A 1971 study by the AASA had challenged the commonly held notion that superintendents on the whole were a highly mobile group who changed positions frequently. The data collected in the 1971 study substantiated the findings of the earlier study somewhat and supported the conclusion that the vast majority of superintendents confined their experience as chief school administrators to very few positions. More than three-fourths of the superintendents sampled in the 1971 study, involving districts with student enrollments of from less than 300 to over 25,000, had stayed in two or fewer districts (AASA, 1982).

A study of superintendent turnover in Colorado by Grieder (1970) indicated that the post as superintendent may be losing its appeal. He indicated that Colorado may not be representative of the 50 states. However, of the 181 superintendents in Colorado in 1971,

41 left their positions, and as late as June, 25 superintendencies were still vacant. Grieder stated:

Two factors have contributed to the loss of appeal of the superintendency. These are: (1) a work week that consists of approximately 60 hours, and (2) the extremely heavy pressure that is part of the work load. (p. 10)

The study conducted by the AASA in 1982 indicated that school superintendents do not stay in one position very long. The typical chief school administrator remains in his position approximately five years. Relatively few, however, (15%) have changed positions more than five times. About 87% of the superintendents in the study had served in three or fewer districts, and 46% had been employed in only one district. Also, superintendents are very fickle about changing their state residencies; approximately 86% served as superintendents in only one state (Gregg & Knezevich, 1971).

A test of belief in and commitment to a profession is whether the people in the profession would choose to do it all over again. In the 1981 AMA study, over half of the superintendents (males and females) said they would, but this total was down substantially from a decade earlier. Slightly fewer now than ten years ago reported that the superintendency is an impossible position, and they wanted out as soon as possible.

On the other hand, there are issues that would drive many superintendents from the profession should those issues intensify. The number-one issue for both male and female superintendents is

"negotiations, strikes and other forms of teacher militancy" (Gregg & Knezevich, 1971, p. 23).

Talbot (1966) felt that many superintendents leave their positions because institutions of higher learning are producing graduates who are ill-prepared or unsuited to survive the guerrilla warfare of public service in the cities. He felt that training in teacher colleges and universities and experience as a teacher or a principal are largely irrelevant preparation for the staggering problems of running a large school system.

It cannot be denied that there are sometimes conditions present under which a chief school administrator must move. Many conditions are manufactured, imagined, or grasped as reasons to justify a worthy or unworthy motive in changing jobs, but setting aside these unfortunate attitudinal misconceptions, we know that for some the time arrives when moving is the only answer. For reasons of health, finances, loss of self-confidence, loss of institutional confidence, irreparable error in judgment, and many more, a chief educational executive must be separated or must separate himself. It can be interpreted as a positive separation if it is self-imposed; it could be negative, personally and for the school district, if it is not (Knox, 1973).

Knox (1973) summarized the dilemma in which a superintendent may find himself when he wrote:

Above the door to the office of the chief administrator there should be a theater-type marquee, done in academic taste of course, reflecting these words "100 Problems appearing daily 9 to 5. Matinee performances on Saturdays and Sundays with special

showings at any hour without special arrangement." A nice added touch would be an accompanying bill proclaiming, "through these portals pass the most beautiful problems in the world." (pp. 17-18)

There have been some expressions of feeling that a long stay in office by the superintendent may be detrimental to the development and progress of a school system. There is some evidence that the innovativeness of the school system may decline progressively the longer some superintendents stay in the position. Superintendents see a dilemma: They realize that a school superintendent cannot act in a manner that assures his reappointment over and over while systematically developing the quality of educational service rendered by the school district. The sharper the focus on the one alternative, the less attention given to the other. The actions of one California superintendent who was able to cope with this dilemma were reported in a case study by Richard Carlson (1972). The man whom Carlson called "Setwell" was a place-bound superintendent who served 27 years in a school system with over 7,000 students. The ingredients of administrative longevity cited in the case were:

- (1) Setwell never permitted himself to take a position in conflict with his Board of Education.
- (2) He made the selection of new members of the Board of Education (who were appointed by the mayor) a matter of vital concern to himself and normally succeeded in exerting significant influence in the naming of new members.
- (3) Setwell's relationship with many members of the Board transcended the official relationship.
- (4) He was normally adroit in his ability to avoid a conflict-producing situation.
- (5) Setwell was an active member of essentially every community organization for which he was eligible.
- (6) He befriended hundreds of individuals in ways which created in them a feeling of personal indebtedness to him.
- (7) He made himself readily available for service in the multitude of community projects.
- (8) He carefully maintained personal contact with students in the schools, creating among them in each generation an affection for him.
- (9) Setwell

had a reputation among colleagues and laymen of being a person who did not fall for every fad that came along and who felt that the three R's were of basic significance. (10) He seldom attempted to influence teaching methods or to organize in-service education. . . . (11) He was known to the teachers as a person who would not press for better salaries for teachers and to the business community as a person who did not insist that all money go for teachers' salaries. (12) Throughout his career he enjoyed the confidence of the more prominent and influential elements of the community. (13) He survived a politically motivated attempt to remove him from office and emerged from the conflict a popular hero. (14) In his younger days Setwell was an athlete and a successful coach, a fact which was remembered affectionately by many and which gave him a contact with still another facet of the community. (15) He was a politician, both in the sense that he could distinguish the possible from the impossible and in the sense that he was willing to sacrifice principle for expediency when he thought the larger good would thus be served. (16) Although his relationships with his subordinate administrators were notable for their excellence, the relationships were that of father and son. Decisions of importance were made by Setwell, not by conference. (17) Setwell was sensitive to the picture of him carried in the mind of persons in the community. He, therefore, carefully constructed this picture, producing what can only be described as a legend, which depicted his activities in a highly entertaining and complimentary way. (18) He was a person of rare personal magnitude, a speaker of outstanding ability, and a raconteur of exceptional skill. (pp. 143-44)

What is included in this list of factors is no more significant than what is not included. The list is completely void of positive statements about Setwell's contributions to the development of the school system during the 27-year reign.

School board-superintendent relations have long been a topic of discussion among board members, superintendents, and researchers in educational administration. Analysis of findings from the 1982 survey, as well as other studies, has indicated that serious tensions exist between boards and superintendents in many communities. However, there is no absolute way of comparing today's tensions with those of the past.

Why these tensions? One reason has already been reported: the number of superintendents who said they left their last superintendency either because of "conflict with the board, the prospect of being fired or being fired." That means that about one in six changes in the superintendency involved some tension in this relationship.

Another indication of increased tensions is the number of superintendents who cited board-related issues and challenges as causes for them to leave the superintendency, should those issues intensify. "Caliber of persons assigned to or removed from local boards of education" and "administrator-board relations" were ranked second and third among those causes.

As reported earlier, "issues such as negotiations, strikes and other forms of teacher militancy" (which often involve the board) represents the most often cited reason for leaving the superintendency should such issues intensify. In addition, in 1982, "difficulty in relations with school board members" was stated as the tenth most important factor inhibiting superintendents' effectiveness.

The fact that these issues ranked so high is important to the future of education. Tensions between superintendents and boards have always existed. The first persons appointed to superintendencies 150 years ago often did not last long because board members became uncomfortable with paid executives taking over and performing tasks they had become accustomed to handling. Over the years, proposals have been made by responsible persons calling for the abandonment of school boards. These questions involving executive and policy functions are

perennial, but the current conditions surrounding those relationships appear to be deteriorating.

In these times of declining enrollments and inflation, there is a high prospect for conflict to occur, even when the climate is filled with good intentions. The most pervasive and difficult-to-solve problem is school finance, according to superintendents. Furthermore, when asked to identify the most difficult problem facing board members, it also turned out to be finance. In addition, collective bargaining places increasing stress and strain on local school districts.

The Selection and Evaluation of the Superintendent

As public education has become more and more complex, its management has become more and more difficult. Greater skills are required for the successful management of today's schools. Nothing that the board does is more important than employing and retaining a professionally prepared and dedicated superintendent. (AASA, 1980, p. 3)

The year was 1968. The thoughts were those jointly expressed by the AASA and the National School Boards Association. Almost two decades later, the words still hold true. Selecting a superintendent is perhaps the most critical decision a school board has to make.

Today the selection of a superintendent has become even more complex. School boards must consider many additional factors when employing a chief executive officer for the school system. History has written new chapters into the life of the superintendent that boards must consider when making employment decisions.

As we move into the mid-1980s, a superintendent is expected to provide increased leadership in the learning process, become even more student oriented, face taxpayers' revolts that directly conflict with the first two goals, and deal with mandated funding reforms, declining enrollments and test scores, new mandates for the handicapped, full-scale involvement of the courts in school governance, competency-based testing, "back to basics," women's rights and Title IX, and even collective bargaining by members of the management team. In short, the duties of the superintendent of schools continue to become more complex, more challenging, more exhausting, more diversified, and more precarious as society and the schools head quickly toward the twenty-first century (AASA, 1980).

Harold Spears (1968), formerly President of the AASA and formerly Superintendent of the San Francisco Schools, stated:

The search for a superintendent, in spite of its sincerity, is often a blundering pilgrimage fought with uncertainties that mark the odds against a promising relationship. The first decision a district must make is whether to go outside or promote from within.

If a school board decides to go outside the system to select a superintendent, the board may either complete the screening and selection process on their own or seek help from consultants or university officials. College and university officials are able to examine credentials in a very professional manner, and they can screen down to the number of candidates that the board wishes to call for personal interviews. When the board begins this selection search,

however, it must remember that there is no perfect superintendent, just as there is no perfect board member (Johnson, 1982).

Johnson (1982) felt that the process of selecting a superintendent is almost as important as the final choice a board makes. In this process, the community should become very much involved. He favored the consultant-panel process, but at least one of the consultants should meet with teachers, administrators, and representatives of the students and the community. This consultant may also participate in a public session, conducted by the board, for parents and other district residents. The purpose of this public session should be to outline the dimensions and the procedure in the search for a superintendent, to define the consultant's role and why the board needs consultant advice, and also to make it clear that the board alone will make the final choice.

Cohodes (1983) observed that the reason so many Americans enter analysis is that they think they ought to have a perfect personality. The search for a superintendent with a perfect personality is just as futile. When the candidate for a superintendency satisfies all the concerns of the board and relieves all the anxieties of the adult population, it may be time to back off and think a little harder about the selection process. The board may be hiring the right man, but for the wrong generation.

Staires (1979) felt that the board should develop a rating sheet for each board member to use in evaluating the candidate's credentials and his performance in an interview. He listed the

following eight factors that the candidate should be rated on with a 1-5 scale:

1. Professional preparation
2. Successful administrative preparation
3. Personal appearance
4. Ability to communicate
5. Ability to make decisions under pressure
6. Understanding of people
7. General attitudes toward life
8. Common-sense answers during the interview

Staires also felt a time table or calendar should be developed by the board of education for the hiring process. The board should allow the consultant-panel approximately six weeks to publicize the vacancy, collect all required data, and make recommendations to the board. This consultant-panel would screen all candidates and reduce the number to be considered by the board to approximately five or six. The board should then invite these candidates for interviews. After narrowing the candidates down to two, it is important to invite an applicant's wife for the final interview. Then, after interviewing the final two candidates, a committee from the board should visit the home community of the first-choice candidate. The final selection by a unanimous vote of the board is a good policy and gives the new superintendent encouragement and a sense of teamwork in the job ahead.

Fowler (1983) reported on research he conducted in New York in 1981 to study procedures followed and criteria established by

school boards in selecting a superintendent. Two years after a superintendent was hired, he checked back with the same boards to see if they were satisfied with the person they had hired and in what ways they were not satisfied. Four of the most significant findings were:

1. School boards that seek applicants from a wide geographic area (coast to coast) are most likely to be satisfied with the overall performance of the person they hire.

2. School boards that plan their selection procedures carefully, and use printed materials to describe their district in some detail, are likely to be most satisfied with the performance of the superintendent.

3. School boards that determine in advance, and in writing, the personal qualities they want in their superintendent are more likely to be pleased with the performance of their superintendent.

4. School boards that place emphasis on a detailed interview format when hiring a superintendent are more likely to be pleased later with the winning candidate's performance.

A valid conclusion that may be drawn from this study is that school boards engage in certain self-fulfilling wishes when they set out to hire a superintendent. The effort may be a subconscious one, but boards do seem to design their selection procedures to identify certain qualities they most want in a candidate.

The formal evaluation of administrators is becoming much more prevalent today. This evaluation of administrators, especially of the

superintendent, is receiving increasing attention by state legislatures, the public at large, and the education profession.

In the 1982 AASA survey, three-fourths of the superintendents reported that they had job descriptions. Of those who had them, roughly 60% said that they were evaluated according to those descriptions, and 70% were evaluated annually.

The major reasons superintendents cited for this evaluation were "to provide periodic and systematic accountability," "to help establish relevant performance goals," and "to identify areas needing improvement." Since similar data were not collected in the past, trends are not yet discernible. It is possible that the numbers of superintendents evaluated formally will increase. "Evaluation of staff and administrators," another internal concern, ranked fifth among the issues and challenges of great or significant importance to superintendents in 1982.

In researching information about superintendent evaluations, several articles contained some thought-provoking statements. Writing in the 1976 Illinois School Board Journal, Warner and Genck said that:

The educational process centers on two key relationships. One is between pupil and teacher, where the teaching/learning transaction takes place. All other activities must contribute to the effectiveness of this relationship.

The other key relationship is between school board and the superintendent, who shows responsibility not only for management of the educational institution and the quality of its product, but also for accountability to the society it serves.

The effectiveness and productivity of these two relationships determine the quality of a public school system.

With respect to the second of these relationships, it is widely seen both by board members and superintendents as less effective than it should be--and could be--despite goodwill and dedicated efforts on both sides. Each is seeking a better

understanding of what is taking place in education, a classification of their respective responsibilities, a clearer definition of problems, and a better overall model of operation and cooperation.

Writing in the 1980 American School Board Journal, Dickenson

(1980) said:

Casual, unspecified evaluations of a superintendent don't work. They won't head off misunderstandings that develop between a board and its chief executive officer and they don't facilitate the efficient conversion of board policy into school system practice. What you need is an evaluation process that's formal, specific, and structured—and one that follows a set timetable.

The Educational Research Service (1976) summarized many of the reasons why school boards conduct formal and informal evaluations of their superintendents of schools:

- Evaluation serves as a means for determining whether or not the school system is achieving previously stated educational goals.
- Evaluation of results is the responsibility of any corporate body that delegates its authority to an executive. School boards, therefore, must constantly, formally and informally, judge the work done by the superintendent.
- Evaluation instruments provide useful information for analyzing the effectiveness of programs, policies and school personnel.
- Evaluation results can aid in deciding whether programs and personnel in the system are accountable in terms of dollars and cents spent.
- Evaluation results can assist boards in policy review.
- Evaluation periods serve as times to give encouragement and commendation for work well done.
- Evaluation offers an opportunity for the superintendent's self-appraisal of his or her own characteristics and skills.
- Evaluation serves to replace opinion with fact.

There is a lack of consensus as to what is the best way for the school board to review the superintendent's performance. Theory and practice seem to go in opposite directions, according to an informal survey conducted by Aaron Cohodes (1973), chairman of the Nation's Schools advisory board. Cohodes observed that the model contract of the AASA supplies the approach that the board should provide the superintendent with periodic opportunities to discuss superintendent-board relationships and should inform him, at least annually, of any inadequacies as perceived by the board. While this regularly scheduled review may be all right as a concept, in practice it appears to be a poor strategy, in the view of the superintendents whom Cohodes questioned. In general, the superintendents who were interviewed supported the notion of a review process, but they believed that a superintendent should avoid being locked into a set time and place for this review.

Turner (1971) felt that the evaluation of the superintendent's performance is a responsibility that many school boards handle poorly, infrequently, or not at all. Yet, he felt that a board is shirking its responsibility if it does not reward a superintendent who merits it, if it does not recharge a superintendent who needs it, and if it does not discharge a superintendent who deserves it.

The Fort Worth School district has developed an appraisal instrument that is somewhat unique. The school board sets aside an annual period for the purpose of evaluating the superintendent. This is an objective composite evaluation in that individual board members

grade the superintendent, using an A through F scale, on 21 qualifications. The individual appraisal forms are then delivered to the secretary of the board, who plots the results on a composite graph. The result is a composite board's-eye view of the superintendent's performance, indicating whether he should be rewarded financially, recharged, or discharged (Turner, 1971).

Most school boards and superintendents agree at the beginning of each school year on a set of objectives that they jointly hope to accomplish. These objectives should be spelled out in detail in order that they may be measured objectively. Then, at the end of the school year, the superintendent and the board should set aside sufficient time for an extended conference focusing on how much overall progress has been attained. Each board member should individually rank in what order the objectives have been met. Should the performance of the superintendent be adjudged as satisfactory, his term contract should be extended an additional year and his salary increased accordingly. If the superintendent's performance is not up to standard, the nature of the financial adjustment might be more or less severe, depending on the outcome of the evaluation, and, in extreme cases, it might lead to loss of the position. In any event, the superintendent knows where he stands with his board, and he is better equipped to improve his performance (McCarty, 1981).

It is the view of the Michigan Association of School Boards (1972) that board members, as a total board, have an obligation to annually evaluate the effectiveness of their superintendent and to

make their findings known to him. Praise should be given where praise is warranted; criticism, where honest criticism is necessary. Also, any time that the school board seriously questions the professional leadership qualities of the superintendent, it is time for forthright talks between the board and its chief executive officer. Heart-to-heart talks between the two parties should be the first step toward corrective action. At least, from such talks should come a better understanding of the nature of the friction or the problem.

The Kalamazoo, Michigan, Board of Education implemented a salary-risk clause in the superintendent's contract. The superintendent is evaluated annually, and his salary may be increased or decreased, based on his attainment of the performance spelled out in the contract. Dale E. Pattison, president of the Kalamazoo Board of Education, stated:

If a school board wants to get rid of a superintendent who hasn't worked out, but who has a year or more left in his contract, the performance contracting scheme can save taxpayers a few thousand dollars and the board a great deal of face. It's a fact that cleaning house can be expensive, but it's something that happens frequently across the country and especially in Michigan. Some districts I know of had to pay up to \$100,000 to break their superintendent's contract. With a salary risk clause, the board can invoke a negative percentage and save taxpayers that amount for each year remaining in the contract. (Jones, 1974, p. 36)

It is obvious from the review of the literature that there are several types of appraisal instruments being used across the country for the purpose of evaluating the performance of the superintendent. To complete the discussion on evaluation, it is well to consider "How to Evaluate Your Superintendent," which was published in the August 1965 issue of School Management. The instrument presented in that

issue was developed by board members and superintendents in California, which allowed a response of "yes" or "no" on answers to predetermined points for consideration. Since it has great bearing on this research study, the evaluation instrument is presented in Appendix A.

The Dismissal of the Superintendent

The purpose of this study was to determine the underlying reasons why school superintendents are dismissed or encouraged to leave. It appears, as this review of the literature has indicated, that the position of superintendent is one in which frequent dismissals occur. This section reviews the literature written on why superintendents are dismissed and the manner in which this action is taken. According to the 1982 AASA survey, several of the issues that would cause superintendents to leave have changed over the decade. In 1971, "social-cultural issues such as race relations, integration or desegregation" ranked first. Ten years later it ranked eighth.

The significant new data include the high rankings given to issues of tension between school board members and superintendents. Three of the top four issues related to matters involving the board members and superintendents of education. Each of these three had much lower rankings in 1971. These rankings appear to be an accurate reflection of the 1980s, which have brought more and more discussion of problems involving the roles and functions of board members and superintendents.

As school districts encounter more and more severe financial difficulties and bouts with the spin-offs of decline, the pressure on boards and superintendents is likely to intensify. The obvious consequence is an increased need to specify responsibilities more clearly for both the executive and policy persons in school districts. Clarifying those functions and responsibilities, as wholesome as the process is, often results in tensions.

The 1980s might bring a renewed emphasis on the development of strength in the board-superintendent relationships, based on clearer specifications of what the partners in the governance and management of education have a right to expect of one another.

Berger's 1983 study offered three possible explanations for superintendent dismissal: poor performance, district response strategies, and the politics of the superintendent's relationship with the school board. He analyzed superintendent turnover in the context of declining enrollment and found that the superintendent's relationships with the board and the community are of particular political significance and that bold administrators' response strategies tend to result in superintendent dismissal.

Frequently, boards give reasons indicating that the board wants to get rid of the superintendent in as palatable a fashion as possible. These are often artificial reasons. The trouble is, after repeating them often enough, board members sometimes make the mistake of starting to believe them (Talbot, 1966).

At the 1973 meeting of the National Association of School Boards, board members found it easier than ever to contain their enthusiasm for the superintendent they hire and fire. Most of the complaints about superintendents fell into the category of the feeling that their superintendent was performing well in some areas, but their particular school district needed someone who could perform well in other areas. Many of the boards acted as if they wanted the superintendent to change everything while really changing nothing. They rarely thought through the implications that change brings, including the right and need to make a few mistakes. The boards, in effect, were saying that they wanted changes in the program, but they did not want to upset anyone (Cohodes, 1973).

Betchkal (in Cohodes, 1973) wrote that he felt the firing of a superintendent of schools is like sex. This is because people are a lot more interested in it than they will admit. He warned that unless a school board really knows why they fired their past superintendent, they are likely to find themselves firing the next and the one after, as well. This series of dismissals will probably end with the third dismissal because the community will have become fed up with the endless commotion and will have replaced some board members. Unless at least a majority of the board members accept in their own minds whatever part of the guilt is theirs, a school district is many years from building the kind of board-superintendent relationship that is essential if energies are to be directed to strengthening the program instead of being squandered in family battles.

Burbank (1978) felt that the success of the superintendent will depend more on his skill in selecting, improving, and dealing with the human element than on any other factor. Studies and experience in this area have indicated that only a small percentage of school superintendents lose their jobs because of inept budgeting, pupil accounting, or building planning. They lose their positions because they cannot seem to acquire the skill to deal adequately with the human element of board members, citizens, teachers, and students. It is for this reason that emphasis is needed on the human-relations phase of the administrator's responsibilities.

It is not the function of board members to compare their own skills with those of the superintendent. But this often happens. Board members often play a competing game with the superintendent. This attitude leads to resenting the superintendent for a lot of reasons that have nothing to do with his ability (Cohodes, 1973).

Moffitt (1975) reported that an informal study he conducted in 1965 to determine why superintendents get fired revealed the following four reasons were most often listed by board members:

1. For trying to do their jobs in a piebald community; i.e., the particular community where the superintendent works is simply not his piece of pie.

2. Because they are prone to hardening of the arteries--they cannot keep up with change.

3. Because automation has contributed to the speed-up of the firing process.

4. Because they build personality cults.

Dana M. Cotton ("The Letters for Administrators," 1975), Harvard placement officer whose business it is to interview and find positions for unemployed superintendents, said the following are the ten most common reasons why a superintendent gets fired:

1. He could not live with reasonable compromise. Everything had to be done his way or not at all.

2. He failed to give high priority to educating his board members to the separate functions of the board and the administration. Consequently, the board usurped his job and he assumed the board's work—to everyone's dissatisfaction.

3. He failed to make decisions when they needed to be made. As a result, pressures of time often forced him into making unwise decisions.

4. He was unable to see, or to adapt himself and his educational goals to, the changing needs of his community and its youths.

5. He was overly possessive about his school system, often taking the attitude that he was right and the board wrong.

6. He refused to delegate authority, and his workload consequently overwhelmed him. He became a bottleneck to the entire school system.

7. He became a superintendent in the first place because he wanted status. He was later surprised and dismayed to learn (though he never did learn the half of it) what the job entailed.

8. He neglected to teach his community what public education means, what it involves, and why it is important. As a result, he was without a strong base of community support.

9. He lacked the courage to take a stand when necessary, and important principles were often compromised as a result.

10. He took the view that his personal life (which sometimes lacked discretion) was his own business. The board and the public disagreed.

The editor of the same Educator's Dispatch added these comments:

The hazards and complexities of the superintendent's job are increasing at a geometric rate. The problems are greater in number and different in kind, as well as more difficult. The opposition is much tougher. The opportunities for failure are much more numerous, and so are the critics.

A study conducted by Carolyn Mullins (1975), formerly a school board member and education writer in the Midwest, called on 15 of the most prominent and experienced past and present school board members in the United States and Canada (their combined service on school boards totaled more than 300 years) to list the actions by superintendents that they felt were intolerable and a basis for dismissal. The following four reasons appeared most frequently:

1. Communication gaps by not telling board members everything they want to know about what is going on in their schools and why.

Nothing so antagonizes school board members as first learning that a problem exists in their district from second-hand sources.

2. Divide-and-conquer techniques in which the superintendent plays on the political differences, philosophical disagreements, and/or personal antipathies among board members in an attempt to manipulate the board. This may be trying to manipulate the board by vote, involving the calling of board members in advance to sound them out or enlisting support for a proposal until he is sure of obtaining the winning number of votes.

3. Omitting information about possible and, in his eyes, less desirable alternatives. By the time the information gets to the board, alternative solutions have already been sifted out, and what is left is not really a package of choices. This often involves the omission of items on the board agenda.

4. Supporting candidates for the school board is considered intolerable. The 15 board members involved in the study all felt that the superintendent should have no part in determining who serves on the board.

Nolte (1974b) discussed a new dance step in education circles called the "Superintendent's Shuffle." He cited the cases of four superintendents of some of the nation's largest school districts who have been caught up in the shuffle.

1. George Garver was hired by the Houston, Texas, School District from Walled Lake, Michigan, on a 4-3 vote. After one year on the job, even though the school district had been awarded the 1971

"Lamp of Learning" award by the National Education Association, he was fired by a 4-3 vote. Six months later, with a new school board in office, Garver was rehired. Two and one-half years later, after yet another power shift on the Houston School Board, Garver was fired a second time.

2. Hugh Scott was ousted as Superintendent of the Washington, D.C., School District for what he reported as reforming actions. Scott contended that the innovative superintendent can expect to stay only three years. The first year is a learning process, the second year recommendations are made, and the third year it is time for the superintendent to leave.

3. Mark Shedd, Superintendent of the Philadelphia Schools, had his contract bought up by the school board. It was his contention that power struggles between superintendents and school boards are a growing dilemma, and any time the superintendent's views are not consistent with the board's policies, it is best for everyone that the contract be terminated.

4. Norman Drachler, former Superintendent of the Detroit Schools, felt that the source of the shuffle problem facing school superintendents is that of dwindling power and time to get things done at the top of the administrative ladder.

Former U.S. Commissioner of Education, Harold Howe II, argued that the shuffle of superintendents is sometimes necessary because a strong system of checks and balances between school boards and their increasingly professional staff is necessary. Howe argued:

A school superintendent is no more exempt from becoming a hometown Hitler than the most pompous and arrogant Babbit who ever headed a school board. Left unchecked the superintendent is liable to become a dictator. (quoted in Nolte, 1974b, p. 44)

It is sometimes necessary to recognize that, in most instances, when school boards finally file charges against a superintendent, the prospect of a fair trial at the board level will not become a reality. When this occurs, the honeymoon is over and the superintendent must recognize that he has the options of resigning or resisting dismissal. Normally, he can only be a loser if he fights the dismissal (Nolte, 1974a).

In discussing the manner in which the power of superintendents is slipping away, Nolte (1974a) offered the following letter, which was actually received by a Minnesota school superintendent from his board of education:

Dear Mr. _____,

You are hereby notified that at the special meeting of the school board of Independent School District _____ held on March 5, 1974, a resolution was adopted by a majority roll-call vote of school board members present to terminate your contract effective at the end of the current school year.

Said action of the board was taken pursuant to Minnesota Statute 125.12 and said proposed termination of your contract shall be upon the following grounds, to wit:

1. That you did within the past two years employ teachers who are clearly not accountable to the general community and to their students for performance objectives which constitute an "education" as defined on board minutes and official policy;
2. That you have, within the past two years, allowed students to get by with murder insofar as making them abide by reasonable rules of conduct and dress within the high school of Independent School District _____;
3. That you have made no effort to discharge teachers and employees in the district who are obviously unfit to teach, in that they have demonstrated laxness in being accountable for their teaching;
4. That you have within the last three years failed to keep the board fully informed concerning matters vital to the proper

administration of the district's schools, and other items of business of the board and district, such as cost/benefit ratios for certain educational programs offered by this district; and finally.

5. That your conduct as superintendent of schools in the performance of your duties thereof has disrupted the required normal operations of the schools, has defeated the cooperation ordinarily existing and required between teachers, employees and the board, and that such conduct and performance of duties has impaired the educational effectiveness necessary to and required of the position of superintendent of schools. (p. 46)

The fact that school superintendents' positions may be threatened by many forces, even those external to the school board, was witnessed by Kanawha County, West Virginia, School Superintendent Kenneth Underwood in the 1974 controversy over textbooks in the school system. He and three of his board members were under direct attack in the crusade led by local clergy and other special-interest groups. Superintendent Underwood's life was threatened and his resignation demanded by angry mobs. It was necessary for him to request round-the-clock police protection for his family (Jones, 1974).

There are those who feel that the conflict that arises over the dismissal of a school superintendent may produce some positive outcomes. Richard Wynn (1972), Department of Education Chairman, University of Pittsburgh, contended that if such a conflict is resolved with justice and dispatch, it often leaves the organization stronger than before. Many organizations have developed a more wholesome climate following conflict.

Summary

There is an abundance of literature available dealing with the role of the superintendent of schools, and also a great deal has been

written describing the process and procedures used by boards of education across the country in the selection of a chief executive officer. From this abundance of literature in these areas, one would anticipate that there is little reason to believe that conflict between a superintendent and a board of education should occur. Nevertheless, conflict does occur, and the literature available recommending the means of resolving this conflict is almost negligible. Research results are available regarding the mobility of superintendents and also the most commonly listed reasons for dismissal as provided by boards of education. However, these reasons appear to be commonly given to the general public and not the specific or latent reasons that initiated the action. Although the general public may never know the specific reasons why the superintendent is dismissed, those specific reasons should be known by the superintendent involved and by other superintendents, in order that they may avoid committing similar errors.

The general consensus of the literature was that school boards and superintendents function best when the board and the superintendent view their respective roles in a similar light. Superintendents and board of education members in California developed a very straightforward approach for measuring the effectiveness of the superintendent in his role. This appeared in School Management ("How to Evaluate Your Superintendent, 1975), and, with some modifications, this instrument could readily be adapted to a study of specific conflict situations. This instrument includes nearly all of the specific

statements and remarks that have been attributed throughout the literature to the causes of school board-superintendent friction.

Finally, an overall summary of the literature would indicate that if an executive and his board of directors hold similar ideas about who should do what, and if they agree on policies and programs for their organization, then the most crucial ingredient is present for a smoothly working relationship. When this smoothly working relationship begins to break down, there is need for immediate appraisal of the relationship by both parties. It must become reality to all that, in some instances, it is best for all concerned if the relationship is terminated. The how and the why of this termination was the basis of the present research study.

CHAPTER III

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Introduction

The design of the project and the order of research are described in this chapter. These are described under the following headings: Procedural Steps and Methods, Study Population, Instrumentation, Analysis of the Data, Research Questions, and Summary. This chapter also describes the manner in which the five research questions were tested. Chapter IV provides the specific data that were used to either support or reject each research question.

Procedural Steps and Methods

The initial step in this study was to obtain the names of school superintendents who had been dismissed or encouraged to leave their positions during the time period from July 1, 1980, to June 30, 1985. The study was limited to the state of Michigan.

To obtain these names, a personal contact was first made with placement officials in the seven major universities to Michigan to solicit their cooperation. A letter was then sent to each of the following university placement officials:

Mr. Charles Alexander, Director
Placement & Career Information Services
Central Michigan University
Mt. Pleasant, Michigan 48858

Dr. Harold Fowler, Consultant
Career Planning & Placement
The University of Michigan
3200 Student Activities Bldg.
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104

Dr. Theo Hamilton, Assistant Director
Career Planning & Placement
Eastern Michigan University
Ypsilanti, Michigan 48197

Dr. Patrick Sheets, Assistant Director
Placement Services
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan 48824

Mr. Leon Burgoyne, Associate Director
University Placement Services
Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49008

Mr. Keith Forsberg, Director
Career Planning & Placement
Northern Michigan University
Marquette, Michigan 49885

Dr. Duane Peterson
Administrative Placement
College of Education
Wayne State University
Detroit, Michigan 48202

A letter was also sent to each of the 58 intermediate school district superintendents in Michigan, requesting that they provide names for the study. Also, fellow superintendents, school board members, and friends informally provided additional names for the study. It was believed that for a superintendent to be included in this study, it was necessary that the dismissal be validated by at least two sources.

To secure names and addresses of board members who served at the time the incidents in this study occurred, contacts were made with

the Michigan Department of Education, intermediate school district superintendents, and the present superintendents of the school districts where the incidents occurred. This name and address search was conducted by personal interview, personal record search, by telephone inquiry, and by mail. The names and addresses were carefully tabulated to determine if enough board members for each case could be located. It was deemed necessary that for a case to be included in the study, a response must have been received from at least two members who had served on the board at the time the incident occurred.

The instrument sent to board members was revised several times and then pretested with board members before finalizing. It was necessary to develop an instrument that would provide sufficient information and be brief enough that cooperation in responding would be encouraged. An open-ended portion of the questionnaire was developed to allow participants to go as far as they desired in presenting information. (See Appendix B for a copy of the questionnaire used in this study.)

Two letters were included with the questionnaire when it was mailed to the board member. The first letter was attached to the questionnaire, addressed personally to the board member, and gave the name of the superintendent being included in the study. The second letter was signed by Dr. Normal P. Weinheimer, Executive Director of the Michigan Association of School Boards, encouraging each board member to respond to the questionnaire because of the value the

findings of the study would have for board members in Michigan. (Correspondence is contained in Appendix C.)

A validated list of cases studied disclosed that, in some instances, some school districts appeared more than once.

Study Population

The population for this study comprised those superintendents of schools in Michigan who were dismissed or encouraged to leave their positions between July 1, 1980, and June 30, 1985. Names were validated by at least two sources and constituted the subjects of this research.

The population that was used to respond to the instrument in this study involved those board of education members who served on a particular board of education at the time the superintendent was dismissed or encouraged to leave. It was determined before commencing with the study that it would be necessary to receive responses from at least two board members from each district involved for a case to be included in the study. It was also determined that a minimum of 25 cases would constitute an adequate sample. With no less than two board members responding per case, the minimum number of board-member responses required was established at 50.

Since all confirmed cases were included in the study, it was not necessary to select a random sample. The study included all the geographic locations of school districts in Michigan, overall student enrollment of school districts in Michigan, and overall percentage of

minority students enrolled in school districts in the state. Data to support this are provided in Chapter IV.

Instrumentation

Classification of Cases

To determine whether or not the termination of the tenure of a superintendent was under the conditions required to be included in this study, it was decided to initiate the questionnaire with a forthright question to encourage board members to commit themselves. The first question was:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. When you were a member of a board of education the superintendent of schools was | ☐ Dismissed during the contract period.
☐ Contract not renewed.
☐ Eased out conveniently.
☐ None of the above, please explain. |
|---|---|

To confirm the date the dismissal or termination of contract occurred, Question 5 asked:

5. What was the approximate date that this occurred? _____

Determining Support or Nonsupport of Board Members

It seemed necessary that board members recall the particulars of the case before answering the checklist of items. Therefore, the following question was asked:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 7. What were your feelings about the board's action at the time? | ☐ Support
☐ Nonsupport |
|--|---|

Description of Boards of Education

The composition of the boards of education involved in the cases studied was important, and because the information might prove valuable for future comparative studies, the following questions were included:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 2. What was your position on the board at the time the action was taken? | ☐ President
☐ Vice-President
☐ Secretary
☐ Treasurer
☐ Trustee |
| 3. What was your age at the time the action was taken? | ☐ Up to 25
☐ 26 thru 35
☐ 36 thru 45
☐ 46 thru 55
☐ Over 55 |
| 4. How many years had you served on the board at the time the action was taken? | ☐ Up to 2
☐ 3 thru 5
☐ 6 thru 10
☐ Over 10 |

Evidence of the reliability of this study rested somewhat on the proportionate distribution of ballots cast by various members of the board of education. This distribution was to be evidenced as follows:

1. Each board of education had one president out of seven members; thus approximately 14% of the returns should have come from presidents.

2. Each board of education was allowed one vice-president. However, it has been mandatory to select vice-presidents of fourth-class districts for only the past three years. Therefore, the number of returns from vice-presidents was expected to be approximately 10%.

3. Each board of education had one secretary; hence, approximately 14% of the returns should have come from secretaries.

4. Each board of education had one treasurer; hence, approximately 14% of the returns should have come from treasurers.

5. Nearly all boards of education had three trustees. However, since some boards would not have had vice-presidents, the number of trustees would be increased. Trustees are normally the newer members of the board and possibly may not be as communicative as the older members. Approximately 43% of the returns should have come from trustees.

6. Persons not committing themselves on this particular question were estimated at approximately 5%.

Length of Tenure of Superintendent

To determine if there was any pattern developing as far as the length of time superintendents had served in their positions before being dismissed or encouraged to leave, the following question was included:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 6. What were the approximate number | ☐ 0 thru 3 |
| of years this person served as | ☐ 4 thru 6 |
| superintendent? | ☐ 7 thru 9 |
| | ☐ 10 thru 12 |
| | ☐ 13 thru 15 |
| | ☐ Over 15 |

Reasons Given for Removal and Length of Notice Time

It was necessary to determine if board members felt that the reasons for removal of the superintendent were vague, very specific,

or in a range somewhere between. Also, it was felt that it was important to determine the length of notice time that boards of education gave before removing a superintendent. The following questions were included to provide this information:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 8. What kind of reasons did the board give the superintendent for the action taken? | ☐ Very specific
☐ Specific
☐ General
☐ Vague
☐ None |
| 9. If the superintendent was dismissed or encouraged to leave, what was the length of notice time given of his pending dismissal, release or desire that he should leave? | ☐ None
☐ 1 month
☐ 3 months
☐ 6 months
☐ 1 year
☐ Other, please explain |

The Superintendent and Managing Decline

Since it was assumed that declining enrollment and economic decline have had a major effect on the role of the superintendency in the 1980s, it was important to determine what role the superintendents in this study played in the declining enrollment and economic decline process. To gather this information, the following questions were included:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 10. Did your school district experience a continuous drop in the number of students enrolled, resulting in the closing of school buildings? | Peak Enrollment_____ Year_____
Present Enrollment_____
Buildings closed:
☐ Elementary
☐ Jr. high-middle school
☐ Senior high |
|---|--|

11. Did your school district, through the loss of enrollment and increased costs, find itself in a situation where there were not ample funds to meet costs? ☐ Yes
☐ No
12. If the superintendent served as the primary person managing decline, what is your assessment of his competence in this role? ☐ Very Good
☐ Average
☐ Poor

Procedure in Selecting a Superintendent

Since several different procedures are followed by boards of education in screening and selecting a superintendent, it was important to determine if there was any significant relationship between the procedure of selection and the action to dismiss or encourage to leave. The following question was included to obtain this information:

13. If the superintendent was dismissed or encouraged to leave, what process was utilized in his selection? ☐ Board screening all applicants
☐ Placement bureau team screening applicants
☐ Paid consultant
☐ Other, please explain

Description of School District

To determine if there was a significant relationship between student enrollments or percentage of minority students and the dismissal of a superintendent or encouragement to leave, the final three questions were included:

14. As an overall appraisal of the superintendent, please indicate the following:
S for his strongest area of activity (1 only)
W for his weakest area of activity (1 only)
- [] Relationship with the board
 [] Community relationship
 [] Business and finance
 [] Staff and personnel relationships
 [] Educational leadership
 [] Personal qualities
15. What was the student enrollment of the district at the time the action was taken?
- [] 0 thru 1,000
 [] 1,001 thru 2,500
 [] 2,501 thru 5,000
 [] 5,001 thru 10,000
16. What was the percentage of minority students enrolled in the district at the time the action was taken?
- [] 0 to 5 percent
 [] 6 to 15 percent
 [] 16 to 25 percent
 [] Over 50 percent

Evaluation of Superintendent

It was vital to this study to determine if the superintendents included in the study were formally evaluated. If they were formally evaluated, it was also important to determine if they were evaluated orally or in writing and how often evaluation took place. The following question was included to obtain this information:

17. Was a formal evaluation of the superintendent conducted?
- [] Yes
 [] No
- a. If yes, what was the type of evaluation that was utilized?
- [] Written
 [] Oral
- b. How often was he evaluated?
- [] Annually
 [] At end of multiyear contract
 [] Whenever necessary

General Reasons for Termination

An overall appraisal of the superintendent was asked of each board member. The checklist items provided a means for board members

to appraise a superintendent in six general areas. It was considered important for board members to appraise the weakest and the strongest areas of responsibility of the six general areas. To determine the weakest and strongest areas, it was determined that there must be agreement on the part of the majority of the board members responding for the data to be included.

Specific Reasons for Termination

Each of the six selected generalized reasons for termination of the superintendent was broken down into separate and distinct specific reasons. Each board member had the opportunity to appraise the superintendent in each of these specific areas on a rating scale from 5 to 0. Zero was designated to indicate that this was a "Partial Reason for Release." Ratings of 1 through 5 were not analyzed to a great extent in this study, as the purpose of the study was to determine underlying causes of termination. Zero was the indication of a specific underlying cause. Table 3.1 is a sample breakdown of one of the six generalized areas into specific component parts.

A generous amount of space was provided at the bottom of each classification of checklist items. The design of the instrument was psychologically intended to stimulate the board members to add comments that could be correlated with the checklist items.

Table 3.1.--Sample of one of the six generalized classifications as broken into specific parts for questionnaire purposes.

A. RELATIONSHIP WITH THE BOARD	Excel.	Good	Ave.	Poor	Very Poor	Partial Reason for Release
	5	4	3	2	1	0
1. Supported board policy and board actions to the staff and to the public.						
2. Clearly understood his role as an administrator of board policy, not a policy maker.						
3. Kept the board informed on issues, concerns, needs and general operation of the school system.						
4. Offered professional advice and recommendations, based on thorough study and analysis, to board on items needing action.						
5. Sought and accepted constructive criticism of his work.						
6. Provided well-planned meeting agendas.						
7. Had information readily available for the board on agenda items.						
8. Had a harmonious working relationship with the board.						

Correlating Remarks With the Checklist

It was predicted that a sufficient number of board members would make added comments in each of the six areas to the extent that these comments could be classified and placed in categories to either substantiate or contradict check-mark classifications. It was presumed that the reliability of the instrument would be strengthened if the remark classifications coincided with the specific "partial cause of dismissal" check classifications. However, it was not considered that the instrument was invalid if this did not occur. Also, there existed the possibility that the remarks would uncover another general classification or specific reasons not already included in the instrument.

Analysis of the Data

Research questions were formulated before collecting the data for this study. Although there was no adequate theoretical basis for predicting the outcome of this study, the findings of the Holloway study were used as a basis for the research questions. To draw useful inferences from the present study, it was desirable that the research questions be confirmed.

The analysis of the data for the purpose of testing the research questions was founded on the assumptions adopted earlier: (a) that more than an adequate sample of subjects was used and was sufficient from which to draw inferences, (b) that board members would provide a true and honest expression of their opinions, and (c) that

the combination of a checklist and comment-type instrument would provide a more intimate and detailed expression of the board members' opinions.

Research Questions

Research Question 1: Of the six general classifications in the survey, would Community Relationships be appraised by board members as the weakest area of responsibility of those superintendents who were dismissed or encouraged to leave?

Question 1 was designed to determine whether or not board members accepted the six general classifications of reasons for dismissal. In determining the weakest and strongest areas of activity, it was decided that it was necessary for a majority of the board members responding from a particular board to check an area for it to be considered the weakest or strongest area for that superintendent.

It was predicted that more superintendents would be rated weakest in Community Relationships as compared to any of the other general areas. If this occurred, the research question was not rejected. If it did not occur, the research question was rejected.

Research Question 2: Of the six general classifications in the survey, would Business and Finance be appraised by board members as the strongest area of responsibility of those superintendents who were dismissed or encouraged to leave?

Question 2 predicted that more superintendents would be rated strongest in Business and Finance in comparison to any of the other general areas. If this occurred, the research question was not rejected. If it did not occur, the research question was rejected.

Research Question 3: Of all the specific reasons listed in the general classifications of the survey, would the one specific reason appraised by board members as the most predominant factor in termination of tenure of a superintendent be the lack of maintaining a high standard of professional ethics, honesty, and integrity in all professional matters?

Tabulations were made for each superintendent individually. A statistical count of the evaluation check marks given by board members in the specific area "maintained high standard of ethics, honesty, and integrity in all professional matters" provided evidence. If the respondents provided this as a "Partial Reason for Release" for more superintendents than any other specific area, the research question was not rejected. If it did not occur, or if there was a uniform distribution of checks for partial reason for dismissal, the research question was rejected.

Specific statements in the open-ended questions also were used in testing this research question. Since these comments were correlated with the checklist items, they were used in testing this research question.

Research Question 4: Of those superintendents who served as the primary person managing decline for management, would a majority of those who were dismissed or encouraged to leave be appraised by board members as having performed poorly in this role?

If a majority of those superintendents classified by board members as the primary person managing decline for management were assessed as performing poorly in this role, the research question was not rejected. If a majority of the superintendents who performed in this role were assessed as having average or very good performance, the research question was rejected.

Research Question 5: Would a majority of those superintendents who were dismissed or encouraged to leave not be evaluated in a formal written manner at least annually?

Questionnaire Item 17 was designed to test this research question. If a majority of those superintendents included in this study were checked by board members to (a) not have been evaluated formally; (b) have been evaluated orally, but not in writing; or (c) have been evaluated in a formal, written manner, but less frequently than annually, the research question was not rejected. If a majority of those superintendents were checked to have been evaluated formally in a written manner at least annually, the research question was rejected.

Summary

The population of this study comprised those superintendents of schools in Michigan who were dismissed or encouraged to leave their positions between July 1, 1980, and June 30, 1985.

The instrument used in this study contained two parts. The first part included 17 questions that were used to gain information that described the board member responding, described the specific school district, specified the date of termination of the superintendent and length of time notice was given in termination, identified the role the superintendent played in managing decline, specified the existence or nonexistence and manner of evaluation of the superintendent that was used, the procedure that was used in selecting the superintendent, and an appraisal of the weakest and the strongest of six general areas of responsibility of the superintendent.

The second part of the instrument consisted of checklist items in which board members were requested to evaluate the superintendent specifically as the six general areas were broken down. This part of the instrument also included an open-ended-comment section following each general area. A careful tabulation of remarks and classification of those remarks, where classification was possible and where remarks could be properly identified, were compared to the statistical checks--"Partial Reason for Release."

A statistical tabulation of all the check marks placed in the column entitled "Partial Reason for Release," along with the remarks in the additional comments, indicated whether or not there were specific factors involved that precipitated the action of dismissal or encouragement of a superintendent to leave his position. Also, these two parts of the instrument were used to indicate whether or not there was more than likely one that occurred more predominantly than all others.

Inferences were drawn from the relationship of the specific and general factors as they were analyzed. The data were interpreted, and from all possible interpretations, the most reliable factors that explained the causes of school board-superintendent friction were exposed.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter discusses the analysis of data obtained in this study under the same headings as were presented in Chapter III: Population, Instrumentation, Research Questions, Analysis of the Data, and Summary. The chapter also presents specific data concerning the acceptance or rejection of the six research questions.

Population

Chapter III described the procedural steps and methods used in obtaining the names of the superintendents to be included in this study. Questionnaires were sent to members of 92 boards of education. It was determined that for a case to be included in the analysis of the results, it was necessary for a response to be received from at least two board members. It was determined that a minimum of 25 cases would constitute an adequate sample. Since board-member response permitted 70 of the 92 cases (76%) to be included in the analysis of results, the minimum requirement for sampling of the cases was met.

Questionnaires were mailed to 460 members of the 92 boards of education. There were 204 board members who responded (45%) with a completed questionnaire. Eight additional board members from two

districts responded that their cases were in litigation and they could not complete the instrument. Six other board members from two districts responded that their superintendents had not been dismissed or encouraged to leave. Thus, 208 board members (45%) responded to the questionnaire. Since it had been determined that a minimum of 50 responses would constitute an adequate sample, the minimum was met.

Cases from all geographic areas of Michigan, including the Upper Peninsula, were included in the study. The areas of the state where the greatest number of school districts are located were represented by the greatest number of cases. Thus, the data indicated there were no geographic factors present in the dismissal or encouragement of a superintendent to leave during this five-year period. Because of the confidential nature of the study, the exact location of the cases is not reported. Table 4.1 presents the dates of release and the number of superintendents involved.

Table 4.1.--Dates superintendents were released.

Date of Action	Number Involved
1981	8
1982	22
1983	16
1984	17
1985	7
Total	70

Instrumentation

Classification of Cases

Question 1 was included to determine whether or not the termination of the tenure of the superintendent named in the letter to the board member was under the conditions included in this study. This question also required board members to commit themselves before answering the remainder of the questionnaire. The question was answered as follows:

1. When you were a member of a board of education, the superintendent of schools was:

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Dismissed	18	26
Contract not renewed	36	51
Eased out conveniently	14	20
None of the above	2	3
Total	70	100

The two board members who checked the column "None of the Above" added comments that clearly indicated that their superintendent had left his position under conditions that would permit inclusion of the case in this study. In 51% of the 70 cases, the superintendent was released by refusal of the board of education to renew the contract. Eighteen (26%) superintendents were dismissed, and only 14 (3%) were quietly eased out conveniently.

Determining Support or Nonsupport of Board Members

To encourage board members to recall the particulars of the case before answering the checklist of items, it was necessary for

them to indicate whether or not they had supported the action taken.

A summary of the response to Question 7 follows.

7. What were your feelings about the board's action at the time?

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Support	142	75
Nonsupport	39	21
No response	9	4

The greatest number of responses (75%) were received from board members who supported the board action, whatever the action was, whereas 21% did not support the board action.

Description of Board of Education

It was of interest to know something of the composition of the boards of education involved in these cases. This need was predicated on the possibility of future studies necessitating comparative information. Questions 2, 3, and 4 sought information regarding the composition of the boards. These questions were answered as follows:

2. What was your position on the board at the time the action was taken?

	<u>Number</u>
President	27
Vice-President	29
Secretary	28
Treasurer	22
Trustee	44

Evidence of the reliability of this study rested somewhat on the distribution of responses by various members of the boards of education. It was presumed that a necessary balance of responses of a typical board of education should be required. Question 2 provided

the data for this analysis. Estimates as explained in Chapter III were compared with the responses received in Table 4.2. In all cases, the presumed and the actual positions on the board provided an acceptable number of responses for each position.

Table 4.2.--How board members responded to questionnaire by board-position estimates compared with actual position.

Office	Percent Responses		Acceptable?
	Presumed	Actual	
Presidents	14	18	Yes
Vice-presidents	10	19	Yes
Secretaries	14	19	Yes
Treasurers	14	15	Yes
Trustees	43	29	Yes
Total	100	100	

3. What was your age at the time the action was taken?

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Up to 25	0	0
26 thru 35	23	16
36 thru 45	60	41
46 thru 55	42	28
Over 55	14	9

The greatest number of those board members who served on boards of education when action was taken to terminate a superintendent were in the 36 through 45 year age range (41%), whereas 16%

were in the 26 through 35 year age range, and 28% were 46 through 55 years of age. Nine percent were over 55 years of age.

4. How many years had you served on the board at the time the action was taken?

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Up to 2	50	36
3 thru 5	42	30
6 thru 10	31	22
Over 10	15	11

The greatest number (36%) of those board members who served on boards of education when action was taken to terminate a superintendent had served on the board two years or less. A total of 66% had served five years or less, whereas only 11% had served more than ten years.

Length of Tenure of Superintendent

It was necessary for board members to indicate the number of years their superintendent had served before his termination from this position. This information was necessary to determine if there was any particular pattern developing regarding length of tenure before termination. This information was obtained from Question 6, which was answered as follows:

6. What were the approximate number of years this person served as superintendent?

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
0 thru 3	29	27
4 thru 6	30	28
7 thru 9	23	21
10 thru 12	12	11
13 thru 15	9	8
Over 15	4	4

The greatest number (55%) of the superintendents who were terminated from their positions had served six years or less in that position. Twenty-one percent had served seven through nine years, whereas 23% had served over ten years before termination.

Twenty-seven percent of the superintendents had served three or fewer years, whereas 28% had served four through six years. In other words, 55% of the superintendents had served six or fewer years. At the other end of the scale, only 12% had served 13 years or more. The data showed that the tenure of superintendents was somewhat short.

Reasons for Removal and
Length of Notice Time

It was necessary that board members indicate if they felt the reasons that were given for removal of the superintendent were vague, very specific, or in a range somewhere in between. Question 8 provided this information, and it was answered as follows:

8. What kind of reasons did the board give the superintendent for the action taken?

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Very specific	28	29
Specific	28	29
General	21	21
Vague	15	15
None	6	6

The greatest number (58%) of the board members felt that the reasons for termination that they gave their superintendent were very specific or specific. Twenty-one percent of the board members felt the reasons given were general, and 15% felt the reasons given were

vague. Only 6% of the respondents said no reason had been given for the board's action.

To determine the length of notice time that boards of education gave before removing their superintendent, Question 9 was included. The responses were as follows:

9. If the superintendent was dismissed or encouraged to leave, what was the length of notice time given of his pending dismissal, release or desire that he should leave?

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
None	10	10
1 month	6	6
3 months	32	33
6 months	22	22
1 year	27	28
Other, please explain: More than one year	1	1

Ten percent of the superintendents were given notice of dismissal effective immediately. Six percent were granted a one-month notice, whereas 33% were given three months' notice of their impending dismissal. Twenty-two percent were notified of their release with six months' notice, and 28% of the superintendents received a one-year notification of their release by the boards of education. It is interesting that a total of 83% of the dismissals were accompanied by three months' to one year's notice before the actual dismissal.

Superintendent Managing Decline

It was important to determine what role the superintendents included in this study had played in managing the decline many school districts have experienced, in order to determine if there was a

relationship between performance in the role of managing decline and removal from the superintendency. Research Question 5 was based on a prediction of this relationship. Questions 10 and 11 provided the data necessary to determine this relationship. These questions were answered in the following manner:

10. Did your school district experience a continuous drop in the number of students enrolled, resulting in the closing of school buildings?

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Yes	47	48
No	51	52
Buildings closed: Elementary	55	
Junior high-middle	11	
Senior high	6	

The greatest number (52%) of school districts included in the study did not experience an enrollment decline resulting in the closing of school buildings. Forty-seven percent of the school districts did experience enrollment decline resulting in the closing of school buildings.

The school districts that experienced a continuous drop in the number of students enrolled closed a total of 55 elementary schools, 11 junior high or middle schools, and 5 senior high schools. One school district had a decline in enrollment from a peak enrollment of 11,000 in 1975 to a present enrollment of 4,000, causing the closing of eight elementary schools, two junior high or middle schools, and one senior high school.

11. Did your school district, through the loss of enrollment and increased costs, find itself in a situation where there were not ample funds to meet costs?

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Yes	50	56
No	39	44

Fifty-six percent of the school districts did find themselves in a situation where there were not ample funds due to the loss of enrollment. Forty-four percent did not find themselves in a financial crisis due to enrollment decline.

12. If the superintendent served as the primary person managing decline, what is your assessment of his competence in this role?

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Very good	16	22
Average	37	51
Poor	19	26

Of the 72 superintendents who served as the primary person managing decline, 73% were appraised by board members as having average or very good performance in this role, whereas 26% were appraised as performing poorly.

Procedure in Selecting Superintendent

It was important to determine the procedure that boards of education had used in screening and selecting the superintendents included in this study. With this information, it was possible to determine if there was any significant relationship between the procedure of selection and the action to dismiss or encourage to

leave. Question 13 sought this information and was answered as follows:

13. If the superintendent was dismissed or encouraged to leave, what process was utilized in his selection?

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Board screening all applicants	45	54
Placement bureau team screening all applicants	22	26
Paid consultant	14	17
Other, please explain	3	4

Fifty-four percent of the superintendents included in this study were selected in a manner in which the board of education screened all applicants and did not involve a placement bureau team or other consultants in the selection process. Twenty-six percent used college placement bureau screening, and 17% paid a consultant to screen and select their superintendent.

Student Enrollment

To determine the student enrollment in the districts that were managed by the superintendents included in this study, Question 15 was included. The responses to this question were as follows:

15. What was the student enrollment of the district at the time the action was taken?

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
0 thru 1,000	18	20
1,001 thru 2,500	31	35
2,501 thru 5,000	28	31
5,001 thru 10,000	11	12
Over 10,000	1	1

The greatest number (35%) of the superintendents included in this study managed districts that had student enrollments of from

1,001 through 2,500 students; 20% managed districts with student enrollments of 1,000 or less; 31% managed districts with student enrollments of 2,501 through 5,000; 12% managed districts with student enrollments of 5,001 through 10,000; and 1% managed districts with student enrollments over 10,000.

Superintendent Release in
Relation to Enrollment

Figure 4.1 shows the percentage distribution of the superintendents released in relation to student enrollment in the districts involved. Termination of superintendents in school districts with student enrollments of 1,001 through 2,500 and 2,501 through 5,000 was higher (35% and 31%, respectively) than in school districts with student enrollments of 5,000 and above (12% and 1%, respectively). Apparently, superintendents from middle-sized school districts experienced greater job termination than those in small and large school districts.

The Michigan Department of Education (1984) has provided information that 63% of the school districts in 1983-84 enrolled from 1,000 to 5,000 students, and only 4% of the school districts had enrollments over 10,000 students. These statistics (see Table 4.3) indicate the fact that only 4% of the school districts in Michigan have student enrollments over 10,000 students and is therefore not significant in determining a relationship between superintendent dismissal and student enrollment.

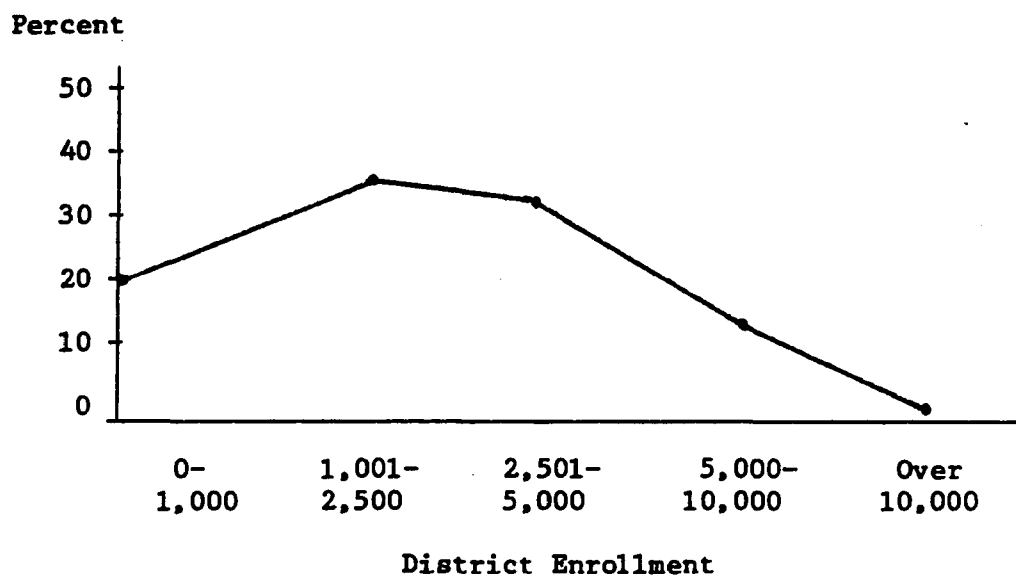


Figure 4.1: Distribution of superintendents released in relation to student enrollment of districts (in percent).

Table 4.3.--Selected data for Michigan's 528 K-12 school districts, grouped by membership, for 1984.

Membership	No. of Districts	Percent
0-1,000	133	25
1,001-2,500	214	41
2,501-5,000	114	22
5,001-10,000	47	9
Over 10,000	20	4

Source: Michigan Department of Education, "Michigan K-12 School Districts Ranked by Selected Financial Data." Bulletin 1014 (Lansing: Michigan Department of Education, 1984), p. 7.

Percentage of Minority Students

Question 16 sought information regarding the percentage of minority students enrolled in the districts that were managed by superintendents included in this study. This information was necessary to determine if there was a significant relationship between the percentage of minority students in a district and the release of the superintendent. This question was answered as follows:

16. What was the percentage of minority students enrolled in the district at the time the action was taken?

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
0 to 5 percent	73	93
6 to 15 percent	6	7
16 to 25 percent	5	6
26 to 50 percent	2	2
Over 50 percent	0	0

The greatest number (90%) of superintendents included in the study had served in districts with a 0% to 5% minority student population. The Michigan Department of Education (1981) has provided information that ten school districts in 1980-81 enrolled 74% of the total minority-group students in Michigan public schools and that 82% of Michigan's minority students attended school in metropolitan areas. These statistics would indicate that the fact that 80% of the superintendents included in the study served in districts with from 0% to 5% minority students would be expected and is not significant in determining a relationship between superintendent dismissal and the percentage of minority students enrolled in these districts.

General Reasons for Termination

Board members were requested to provide an overall appraisal of the superintendent in six general areas. They were requested to select the weakest and strongest areas of responsibility of the six general areas. It was necessary that there be agreement on the part of the majority of board members for the data to be included in the results. Research Question 5 was based on a prediction of the manner in which the superintendents would be appraised.

14. As an overall appraisal of the superintendent, please indicate the following:

S for his strongest area of activity (1 only)

W for his weakest area of activity (1 only)

	<u>Strongest</u>	<u>Weakest</u>
Relationship with board	2	23
Community relationships	6	19
Business and finance	40	3
Staff and personnel relationships	4	16
Educational leadership	6	6
Personal qualities	12	3

Fifty-seven percent of the superintendents were appraised as being strongest in the area of business and finance. Personal qualities was the next strongest area, where 17% of the superintendents were appraised as being the strongest.

Thirty-three percent of the superintendents were appraised as being weakest in the area of relationship with the board. The next weakest area was community relationships, where 27% of the superintendents were appraised as being the weakest.

Evaluation of a Superintendent

Question 17 was included in the questionnaire to determine if the superintendents included in this study had been formally evaluated. Also, if they had been formally evaluated, the question sought information as to whether they had been evaluated orally or in writing and how often evaluation had taken place. Research Question 5 was based on a prediction of the number of superintendents who had been formally evaluated. The responses to this question were as follows:

7. Was formal evaluation of the superintendent conducted?
A. If yes, what was the type that was utilized?

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Yes	34	49
No	36	51
Written	22	65
Oral	12	35
Annually	25	74
At end of multiyear contract	1	3
Whenever necessary	8	24

It is interesting that 27% of the superintendents in the study had were been not formally evaluated. Of the 34 superintendents who had been formally evaluated, only 22 (65%) had been evaluated in writing. Also, of the 34 superintendents who had been formally evaluated, 25 (74%) had been evaluated annually.

Specific Reasons for Termination

Checklist items--The mean of appraisals. The questionnaire provided board members with an opportunity to appraise the superintendent in six specific areas. The six generalized reasons for

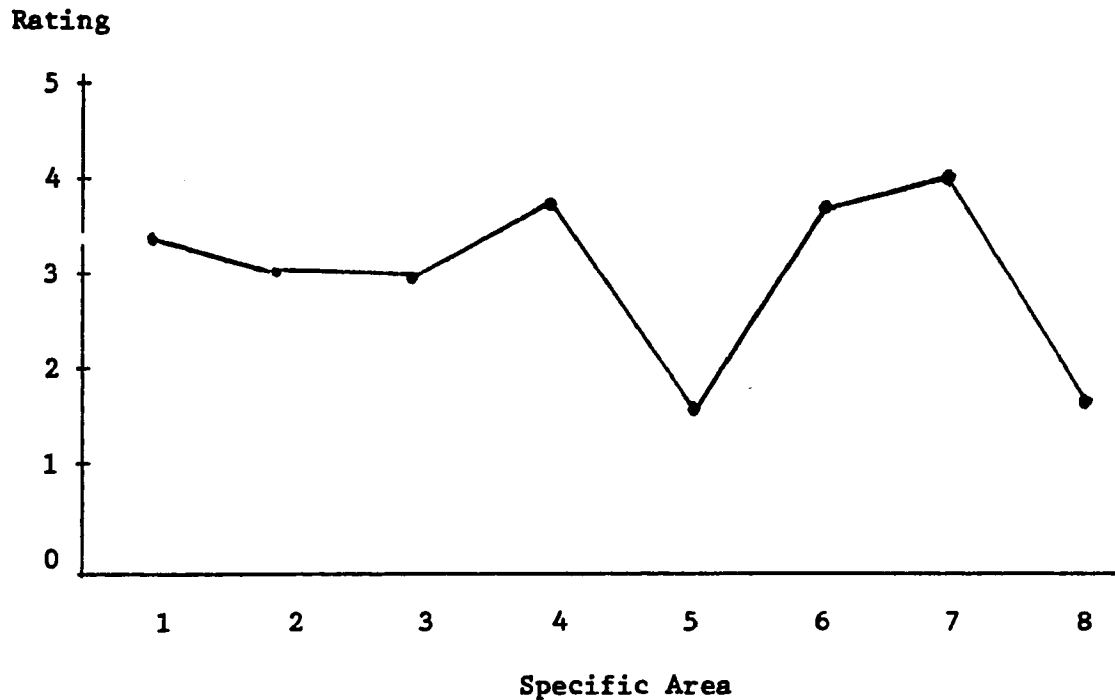
termination that were listed in Question 14 were further broken down into specific areas. Board members appraised the superintendent on a scale from 0 to 5. A 5 indicated that the superintendent was appraised as excellent in the specific area. A 0 indicated this specific area was a "Partial Reason for Release."

It was necessary to compute a mean of the responses of all board members responding for each individual case. A mean of the total responses was then computed. The percentage distribution of the responses for each of the six general areas is also included in Figures 4.2 through 4.7.

1. Relationship with the board. Figure 4.2 indicates that the lowest average rating (1.5, poor) for all superintendents in the general area of relationship with the board was in the specific areas "sought and accepted constructive criticism of his work" and "had a harmonious working relationship with the board."

Figure 4.2 also indicates that the highest average rating (3.5, average to good) for all superintendents in the general area of relationship with the board was in the specific areas "supported board policy and actions to the staff and public," "offered professional advice and recommendations, based on thorough study and analysis, to board on items needing attention," and "had information readily available for the board on agenda items."

Additional written comments regarding the areas under the general category relationship with the board made by board members indicated that five superintendents "didn't follow instructions of the



- Area 1: Supported board policy and board actions to the staff and to the public.
- Area 2: Clearly understood his role as an administrator of board policy, not a policy maker.
- Area 3: Kept the board informed on issues, concerns, needs, and general operation of the school system.
- Area 4: Offered professional advice and recommendations, based on thorough study and analysis, to board on items needing action.
- Area 5: Sought and accepted constructive criticism of his work.
- Area 6: Provided well-planned meeting agendas.
- Area 7: Had information readily available for the board on agenda items.
- Area 8: Had a harmonious working relationship with the board.

Figure 4.2: Checklist item distribution--The mean of all superintendents on relationship with the board.

board," two superintendents "didn't understand their role in administering policy," nine superintendents "gave only part of the facts," three superintendents "didn't give the board recommendations," three superintendents "went into a shell when criticized," four superintendents "had long meetings due to poorly planned agendas," and seven superintendents "played board members against each other."

2. Community relationships. Figure 4.3 indicates that the lowest average rating (1.0, poor) for all superintendents in the general area of community relationships was in the specific area "had the respect and support of the community in the operation of the school system."

Figure 4.3 also indicates that the highest average rating (2.5 to 3.0, poor to average) for all superintendents in the general area of community relationships was in the specific areas "developed friendly and cooperative relationships with the news media," "was recognized in the community as a leader in public education," "actively participated in community organizations," and "gave attention to problems and opinions of community groups and individuals."

Additional written comments regarding the specific areas under the general category of community relationships made by board members indicated that two superintendents "were loners and not visible," "community relations were nonexistent," and "his actions divided the community." The most frequent written comment regarding the general area of community relationships was that six superintendent "didn't reside in the community."



Area 1: Was recognized in the community as a leader in public education.

Area 2: Developed friendly and cooperative relationships with news media.

Area 3: Sought and gave attention to problems and opinions of community groups and individuals.

Area 4: Actively participated in community organizations.

Area 5: Had the respect and support of the community in the operation of the school system.

Figure 4.3: Checklist item distribution: The mean of all superintendents on community relationships.

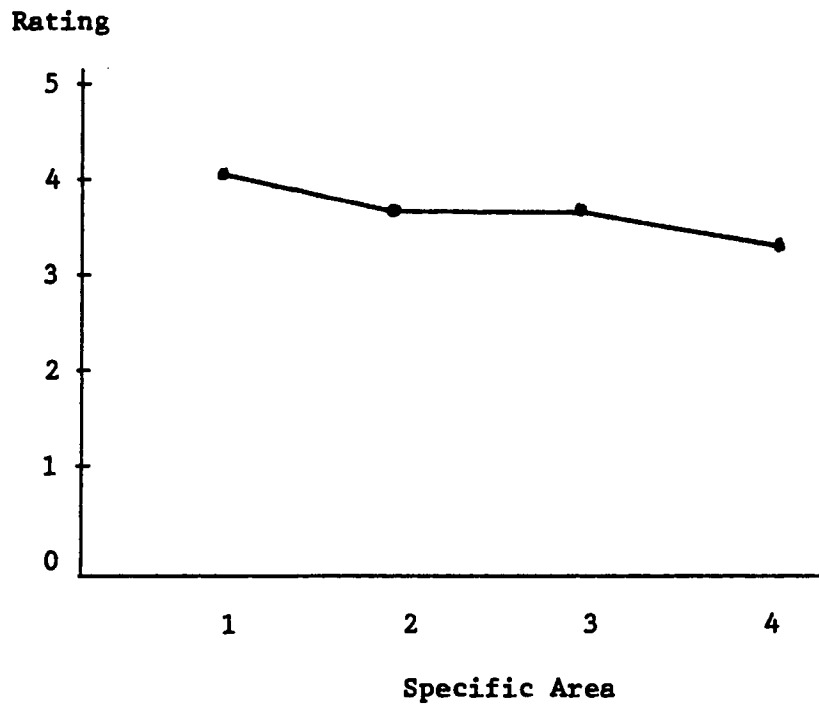
3. Business and finance. Figure 4.4 indicates that the lowest average rating (3.5, above average) for all superintendents in the general area of business and finance was in the specific area "required that funds were spent wisely."

Figure 4.4 also indicates that the highest average rating (3.8 to 4.0, above average to good) for all superintendents in the general area of business and finance was in the specific areas "evaluated financial needs and made recommendations for adequate financing," "kept the board informed on needs of the school program, plant, facilities, equipment and supplies," and "required adequate control and accounting of funds."

Additional written comments regarding the specific areas under the general category of business and finance made by board members indicated that four superintendents "didn't know how to prepare a budget," and five superintendents "did not adjust financially when the district went through economic decline."

4. Staff and personnel relationships. Figure 4.5 indicates that the lowest average rating (1.0, very poor) for all superintendents in the general area of staff and personnel relationships was in the specific areas "developed good staff morale and loyalty to the organization" and "was highly respected by school personnel at all levels."

Figure 4.5 also indicates that the highest average rating (3.0, average) for all superintendents in the general area of staff and personnel relationships was in the specific areas "recruiting and



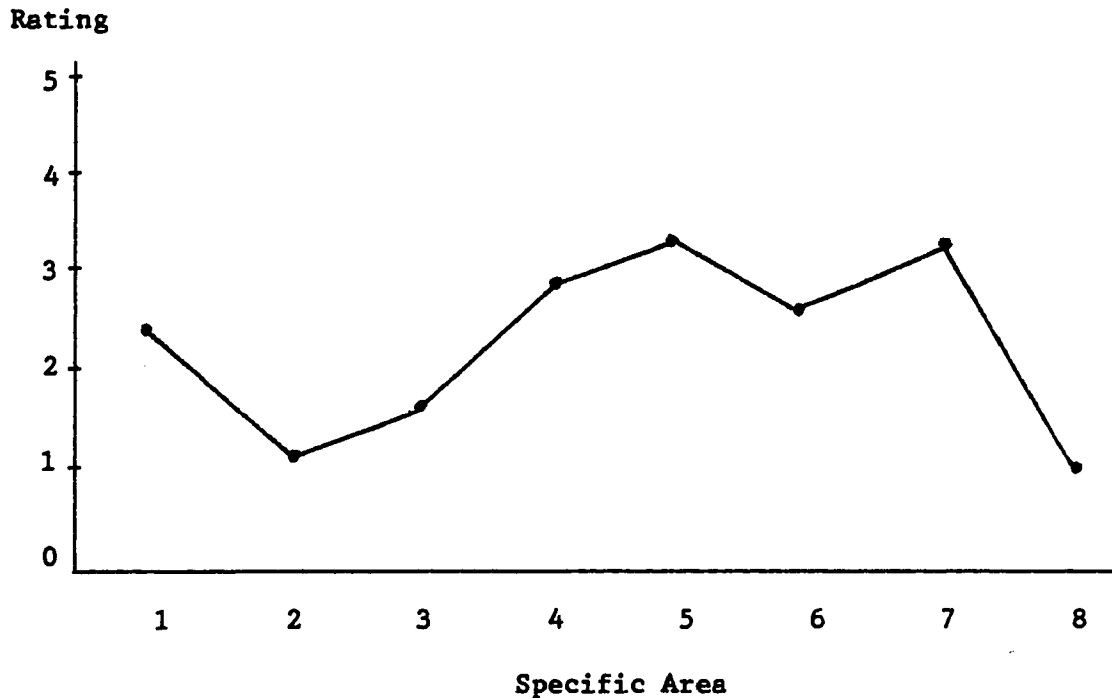
Area 1: Evaluated financial needs and made recommendations for adequate financing.

Area 2: Kept informed on needs of the school program, plant, facilities, equipment and supplies.

Area 3: Required adequate control and accounting of funds.

Area 4: Required that funds were spent wisely.

Figure 4.4: Checklist item distribution: The mean of all superintendents on business and finance.



- Area 1: Encouraged appropriate staff members to participate in planning and decision making and then accepted their suggestions.
- Area 2: Developed good staff morale and loyalty to the organization.
- Area 3: Treated all personnel fairly without discrimination or favoritism.
- Area 4: Delegated authority to appropriate staff members.
- Area 5: Recruited and assigned the best available personnel in terms of their competencies.
- Area 6: Evaluated performance of staff members and provided constructive criticism that was acceptable.
- Area 7: Provided an active role in developing salary schedules and recommending personnel procedures and policies.
- Area 8: Was highly respected by school personnel at all levels.

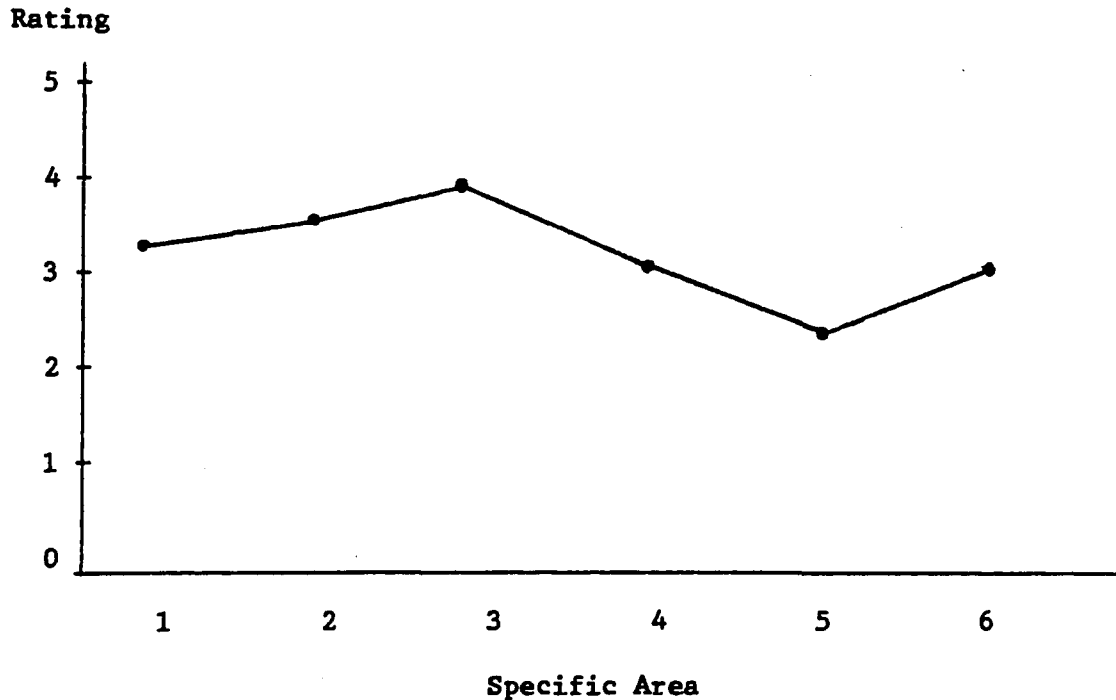
Figure 4.5: Checklist item distribution: The mean of all superintendents on staff and personnel relationships.

assigning the best personnel in terms of their competencies" and "providing an active role in developing salary schedules and recommending personnel procedures and policies." Below-average ratings (2.5) were in the specific areas "encouraging appropriate staff to participate in planning and decision making," "delegating authority," and "evaluating performance of staff and providing constructive criticism."

Additional written comments regarding the specific areas under the general category of staff and personnel relationships made by board members indicated that three superintendents "always blamed staff members for [their] problems," seven superintendents "had favorites on the staff," four superintendents "were afraid to delegate authority," and two superintendents "didn't evaluate teachers or administrators."

5. Educational leadership. Figure 4.6 indicates that the lowest average rating (2.5) for all superintendents in the general area of educational leadership was in the specific area "provided democratic procedures in utilizing the abilities and talents of staff members and citizens."

Figure 4.6 also indicates that the highest average ratings (2.3 to 3.8, above average) for all superintendents in the general area of educational leadership were in the specific areas "being involved in educational conferences and keeping abreast of current educational practices," "keeping informed regarding all aspects of the instructional program," and "providing leadership to implement



- Area 1:** Provided the leadership to implement innovative programs and initiate educational progress.
- Area 2:** Kept informed regarding all aspects of the instructional programs of the district.
- Area 3:** Was involved in educational conferences and read considerably in order to keep abreast of current educational practices.
- Area 4:** Required an organized and planned program of curriculum development, evaluation, and improvement.
- Area 5:** Provided democratic procedures in utilizing the abilities and talents of staff members and citizens.
- Area 6:** Maintained political awareness and was proficient in working with local and state legislators.

Figure 4.6: Checklist item distribution: The mean of all superintendents on educational leadership.

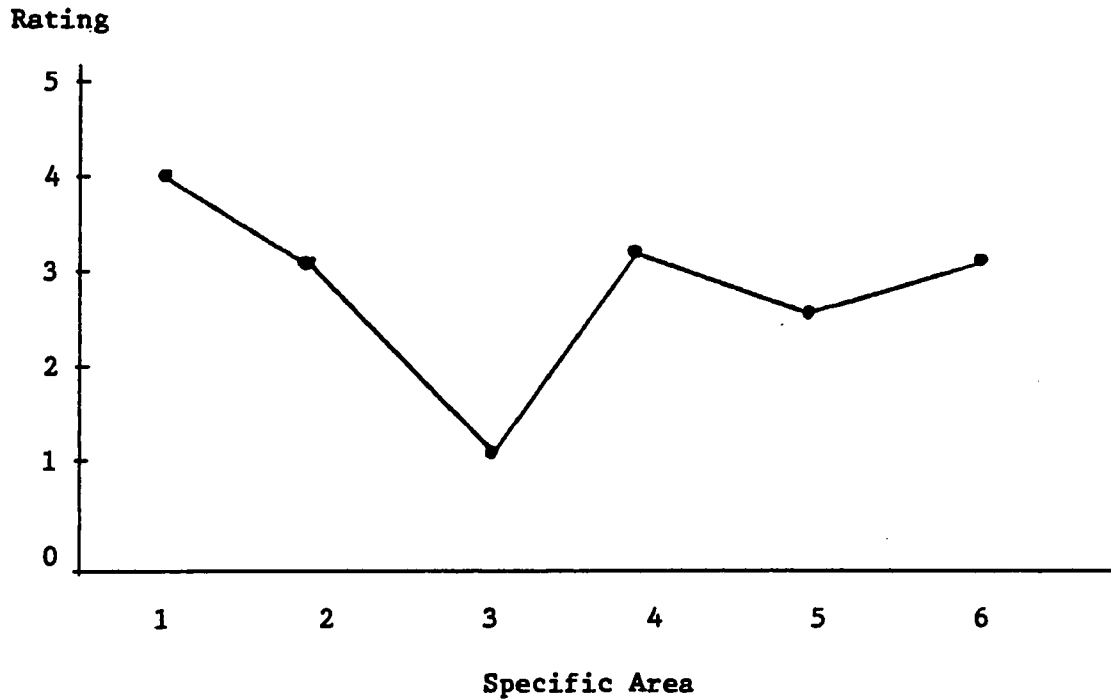
innovative programs." Average ratings (3.0) were in the specific areas "requiring an organized and planned program of curriculum improvement and evaluation" and "maintained political awareness and was proficient in working with local and state legislatures."

Additional written comments regarding the specific areas under the general category of educational leadership made by board members indicated that four superintendents "provided no leadership in the area of curriculum." Also, written comments indicated that six superintendents' "only priority was keeping the district financially afloat."

6. Personal qualities. Figure 4.7 indicates that the lowest average rating (1.0, poor) for all superintendents in the general area of personal qualities was in the specific area "had the respect of school personnel."

Figure 4.7 also indicates that the highest average rating (4.0, good) for all superintendents in the general area of personal qualities was in the specific area "was not afraid to make decisions and defend his convictions in the face of pressure." Also, 3.0 (average) ratings were given in the specific areas "devoted his time and energy effectively," "had the respect of his professional colleagues in area school districts," and "possessed a pleasing personality and reflected personal charisma."

Additional written comments regarding the specific areas under the general category of personal qualities made by board members indicated that four superintendents "couldn't make a decision."



- Area 1: Was not afraid to make decisions and would defend his convictions in the face of pressure and partisan influence.
- Area 2: Devoted his time and energy effectively to the responsibilities of his position.
- Area 3: Had the respect of school personnel.
- Area 4: Had the respect of his professional colleagues in area school districts.
- Area 5: Maintained high standard of ethics, honesty, and integrity in all personal and professional matters.
- Area 6: Possessed a pleasing personality and reflected personal charisma.

Figure 4.7: Checklist item distribution: The mean of all superintendents on personal qualities.

three superintendents "worked hard but spun their wheels," five superintendents "had alcohol problems," three superintendents "were involved with other women," and six superintendents "were poor public speakers."

In summary, the highest average rating for all superintendents in all areas was in the general area of business and finance, in the specific area "evaluated financial needs and made recommendations for adequate financing." The lowest average ratings for all superintendents in all areas were in the general area of personal qualities, in the specific area "had the respect of school personnel"; and in the general area of staff and personnel relationships, in the specific areas "was highly respected by school personnel at all levels" and "developed good staff morale and loyalty to the organization."

Checklist items--Partial reason for release. It was necessary to determine whether or not there was a specific area, or a group of specific areas, in each of the six general areas, that could be categorized as specific reasons for release. Zero was the indicator of a specific underlying cause, as it was labeled "Partial Reason for Release" on the checklist portion of the questionnaire. Tables 4.4 through 4.9 provide a statistical summary of the superintendents included in this study who were checked by board members in the "Partial Reason for Release" column.

Table 4.11 indicates that the specific area under the general area of relationship with the board that was checked most often (23

times) as a partial reason for release was "had a harmonious working relationship with the board."

Table 4.4.--Tabulation of checklist items: "Partial Reason for Release," as reported by board members for relationship with the board.

Specific Area	Partial Reason for Release
1. Supported board policy and board actions to the staff and to the public.	10
2. Clearly understood his role as an administrator of board policy, not a policy maker.	7
3. Kept the board informed on issues, concerns, needs, and general operation of the school system.	14
4. Offered professional advice and recommendations, based on thorough study and analysis, to board on items needing action.	13
5. Sought and accepted constructive criticism of his work.	17
6. Provided well-planned meeting agendas.	2
7. Had information readily available for the board on agenda items.	5
8. Had a harmonious working relationship with the board.	23

Total = 70 superintendents.

Table 4.5 indicates that the specific area under the general area of community relationships that was checked most often (25

times) as a partial reason for release was "had the respect and support of the community in the operation of the school system."

Table 4.5: Tabulation of checklist items: "Partial Reason for Release," as reported by board members for community relationships.

Specific Area	Partial Reason for Release
1. Was recognized in the community as a leader in public education.	17
2. Developed friendly and cooperative relationships with news media.	9
3. Sought and gave attention to problems and opinions of community groups and individuals.	17
4. Actively participated in community organizations.	10
5. Had the respect and support of the community in the operation of the school system.	25

Total = 70 superintendents.

Table 4.6 indicates that there was no one specific area under the general area of business and finance that was checked most often.

Table 4.6.—Tabulation of checklist items: "Partial Reason for Release," as reported by board members for business and finance.

Specific Area	Partial Reason for Release
1. Evaluated financial needs and made recommendation for adequate financing.	11
2. Kept informed on needs of the school program, plant, facilities, equipment and supplies.	8
3. Required adequate control and accounting of funds.	10
4. Required that funds were spent wisely.	8

Total = 70 superintendents.

Table 4.7 indicates that the specific area under the general area of staff and personnel relationships that was checked most often (35 times) was "highly respected by school personnel at all levels."

Table 4.8 indicates that the specific area under the general area of educational leadership that was checked most often (11 times) was "provided democratic procedures in utilizing the abilities and talents of staff members and citizens."

Table 4.9 indicates that the specific area under the general area of personal qualities that was checked most often (25 times) was "had the respect of school personnel."

Table 4.7.—Tabulation of checklist items: "Partial Reason for Release," as reported by board members for staff and personnel relationships.

Specific Area	Partial Reason for Release
1. Encouraged appropriate staff members to participate in planning and decision making and then accepted their suggestions.	10
2. Developed good staff morale and loyalty to the organization.	28
3. Treated all personnel fairly without discrimination or favoritism.	22
4. Delegated authority to appropriate staff members.	13
5. Recruited and assigned the best available personnel in terms of their competencies.	5
6. Evaluated performance of staff members and provided constructive criticism that was acceptable.	10
7. Provided an active role in developing salary schedules and recommending personnel procedures and policies.	3
8. Was highly respected by school personnel at all levels.	35

Total = 70 superintendents.

Table 4.8.—Tabulation of checklist items: "Partial Reason for Release," as reported by board members for educational leadership.

Specific Area	Partial Reason for Release
1. Provided the leadership to implement innovative programs and initiate educational progress.	9
2. Kept informed regarding all aspects of the instructional programs of the district.	5
3. Was involved in educational conferences and read considerably in order to keep abreast of current educational practices.	4
4. Required an organized and planned program of curriculum development, evaluation and improvement.	8
5. Provided democratic procedures in utilizing the abilities and talents of staff members and citizens.	11
6. Maintained political awareness and was proficient in working with local and state legislators.	5

Total = 70 superintendents.

Table 4.9.—Tabulation of checklist items: "Partial Reason for Release," as reported by board members for personal qualities.

Specific Area	Partial Reason for Release
1. Was not afraid to make decisions and would defend his convictions in the face of pressure and partisan influence.	7
2. Devoted his time and energy effectively to the responsibilities of his position.	7
3. Had the respect of school personnel.	25
4. Had the respect of his professional colleagues in area school districts.	12
5. Maintained high standard of ethics, honesty, and integrity in all personal and professional matters.	22
6. Possessed a pleasing personality and reflected personal charisma.	8

Total = 70 superintendents.

There was no relationship between the size of the district's student enrollment and the areas that were checked "Partial Reason for Release" by board members.

Correlating Remarks With Checklist

Space was provided at the bottom of each general area of the checklist items for board members to write in remarks regarding the specific areas listed under each general classification. As was

predicted, board members added comments that were classified and placed in categories to substantiate check-mark classifications.

Board members did not always write comments under the proper general classification. It was obvious that board members often wrote thoughts on the paper as they came to mind. Therefore, to analyze the written remarks it was necessary to classify them under the proper general area. A complete rearrangement of remarks by general category was completed before tabulating them.

It was presumed in Chapter III that the reliability of the instrument would be strengthened if the remark classifications coincided with the specific "Partial Reason for Release" checklist classifications. Tables 4.10 through 4.15 provide evidence that remark classifications coincided to a great extent with "Partial Reason for Release" classifications.

As discussed in Chapter III, the possibility existed that the remarks might uncover another general classification or specific reasons not already included in the instrument. Additional specific reasons were found in four of the general classifications. These are listed at the bottom of Tables 4.11, 4.13, 4.14, and 4.15.

Summary of Remark Classifications

Only those remarks that appeared for more than one superintendent were included in Tables 4.10 through 4.15. There were additional comments on the questionnaire that were not included in the tabulation. If there was not a distinct similarity to a response for at least one other superintendent, these comments were not tabulated.

In the general area of relationship with the board, nine superintendents were appraised as "providing only part of the facts," seven superintendents were appraised as "playing board members against each other," and five superintendents were appraised as "not following instructions of board members." See Table 4.10.

In the general area of community relationships, there were very few written remarks. Two superintendents were appraised as "being loners," "providing no community relations," and "dividing the community with their actions." Six boards of education commented that their superintendent "didn't reside in the community." There was no specific classification for this remark. See Table 4.11.

In the general area of business and finance, five superintendents were accused of "not adjusting financially when the district and Michigan went through economic decline," and four superintendents were appraised as "not knowing how to prepare a budget." See Table 4.12.

In the general area of staff and personnel relationships, seven superintendents were accused of "having favorites on the staff," four superintendents were accused of "being afraid to delegate authority," and three superintendents were accused of "blaming staff members for their problems." Four boards of education remarked that "negotiating contracts was his downfall." There was no specific classification for this remark. See Table 4.13.

In the general area of educational leadership, four superintendents were appraised as "providing no leadership in curriculum." Six boards of education commented that "keeping the district

Table 4.10.--Comparison of remarks with checklist item: "Partial Reason for Release," as reported by board members for relationship with the board.

Checklist Item	Remark	Partial Reason for Release, as Reported by Board Members
1. Supported board policy and board actions to the staff and to the public	Didn't follow instructions of board. (5 superintendents)	10
2. Clearly understood his role as an administrator of board policy, not a policy maker.	Didn't understand role in administering policy. (2 superintendents)	7
3. Kept the board informed on issues, concerns, needs and general operation of the school system.	Gave only part of the facts. (9 superintendents)	14
4. Offered professional advice and recommendations, based on thorough study and analysis, to board on items needing action	Didn't give the board recommendations. (3 superintendents)	13
5. Sought and accepted constructive criticism of his work.	Went into shell when criticized. (3 superintendents)	17
6. Provided well-planned meeting agendas.	Long meetings due to poorly planned agendas. (4 superintendents)	2
7. Had information readily available for the board on agenda items.	No additional comments made.	5
8. Had a harmonious working relationship with the board	Played board members against each other. (7 superintendents)	23

Total = 70 superintendents.

Table 4.11.—Comparison of remarks with checklist item: "Partial Reason for Release," as reported by board members for community relationships.

Checklist Item	Remark	Partial Reason for Release, as Reported by Board Members
1. Was recognized in the community as a leader in public education.	No additional comments made.	17
2. Developed friendly and cooperative relationships with news media.	No additional comments made.	9
3. Sought and gave attention to problems and opinions of community groups and individuals.	No additional comments made.	17
4. Actively participated in community organizations.	Was a loner, not visible. (2 superintendents)	10
5. Had the respect and support of the community in the operation of the school system.	Community relations were nonexistent. (2 superintendents) His actions divided the community. (2 superintendents)	25
No specific classification.	Didn't reside in the community. (6 superintendents)	

Total = 70 superintendents.

Table 4.12.--Comparison of remarks with checklist item: "Partial Reason for Release," as reported by board members for business and finance.

Checklist Item	Remark	Partial Reason for Release, as Reported by Board Members
1. Evaluated financial needs and made recommendations for adequate financing.	Didn't know how to prepare a budget. (4 superintendents)	11
2. Kept informed on needs of the school program, plant, facilities, equipment, and supplies.	No additional comments made.	8
3. Required adequate control and accounting of funds.	Not adjusting financially when district went through economic decline. (5 superintendents)	10
4. Required that funds were spent wisely.	No additional comments made.	8

Total = 70 superintendents.

Table 4.13.—Comparison of remarks with checklist item: "Partial Reason for Release," as reported by board members for staff and personnel relationships.

Checklist Item	Remark	Partial Reason for Release, as Reported by Board Members
1. Encouraged appropriate staff members to participate in planning and decision making and then accepted their suggestions.	Always blamed staff members for his problems. (3 superintendents)	10
2. Developed good staff morale and loyalty to the organization.	No additional comments made.	28
3. Treated all personnel fairly without discrimination or favoritism.	Had favorites on the staff. (7 superintendents)	22
4. Delegated authority to appropriate staff members.	Was afraid to delegate authority. (4 superintendents)	13
5. Recruited and assigned the best available personnel in terms of their competencies.	No additional comments made.	5
6. Evaluated performance of staff members and provided constructive criticism that was acceptable.	Didn't evaluate teachers or administrators. (2 superintendents)	10
7. Provided an active role developing salary schedules and recommending personnel procedures and policies.	No additional comments made.	3
8. Was highly respected by school personnel at all levels.	No additional comments made.	35
No specific classification.	Negotiating contracts was his downfall. (4 superintendents)	

Total = 70 superintendents.

financially afloat was the only priority." There was no specific classification for this remark. See Table 4.14.

In the general area of personal qualities, five superintendents were appraised as "having an alcohol problem," four superintendents were appraised as "not being able to make a decision," and three superintendents were accused of "being involved with another woman." Six superintendents "displayed a poor image as a public speaker." There was no specific classification for this remark. See Table 4.15.

The purpose of classifying and tabulating these remarks was not to provide additional numbers for the specific areas marked "Partial Reason for Release." It was the purpose of classifying and tabulating these remarks to correlate the remarks with the checklist items and to uncover other general or specific reasons than those included in the instrument.

Research Questions

Five research questions were formulated before collecting the data for this study. It was predicted that the analysis of the data would confirm these research questions and provide evidence from which to draw further inferences.

Research Question 1: Of the six general classifications in the survey, would Community Relationships be appraised by board members as the weakest area of responsibility of those superintendents who were dismissed or encouraged to leave?

The responses to Question 14 of the instrument were analyzed to determine which of the six general classifications of the survey

Table 4.14.—Comparison of remarks with checklist item: "Partial Reason for Release," as reported by board members for educational leadership.

Checklist Item	Remark	Partial Reason for Release, as Reported by Board Members
1. Provided the leadership to implement innovative programs and initiate educational progress.	No additional comments made.	9
2. Kept informed regarding all aspects of the instructional programs of the district.	No additional comments made.	5
3. Was involved in educational conferences and read considerably in order to keep abreast of current educational practices.	No additional comments made.	4
4. Required an organized and planned program of curriculum development, evaluation, and improvement.	Provided no leadership in the area of curriculum. (4 superintendents)	8
5. Provided democratic procedures in utilizing the abilities and talents of staff members and citizens.	No additional comments made.	11
6. Maintained political awareness and was proficient in working with local and state legislators.	No additional comments made.	5
No specific classification.	Keeping the district financially afloat was the only priority. (6 superintendents)	

Total = 70 superintendents.

Table 4.15.--Comparison of remarks with checklist item: "Partial Reason for Release," as reported by board members for personal qualities.

Checklist Item	Remark	Partial Reason for Release, as Reported by Board Members
1. Was not afraid to make decisions and would defend his convictions in the face of pressure and partisan influence.	Couldn't make a decision. (4 superintendents)	7
2. Devoted his time and energy effectively to the responsibilities of his position.	Worked hard but spun his wheels. (3 superintendents)	7
3. Had the respect of school personnel	No additional comments made.	25
4. Had the respect of his professional colleagues in area school districts.	No additional comments made.	12
5. Maintained high standard of ethics, honesty and integrity in all personal and professional matters.	Had an alcohol problem. (5 superintendents) Was involved with another woman. (3 superintendents)	22
6. Possessed a pleasing personality and reflected personal charisma.	Was not a warm person. (2 superintendents)	8
No specific classification.	Was a poor public speaker. (6 superintendents)	

Total = 70 superintendents.

were appraised by most board members as the weakest area of responsibility for superintendents included in this study. It was necessary that a majority of the board members responding from a particular board check a specific area of weakness for it to be considered the weakest for that superintendent.

As was indicated in the analysis of the responses to Question 14, 33% of the superintendents were appraised as being weakest in the area of relationship with the board. The next weakest area was community relationships, where 27% of the superintendents were appraised as weakest.

Research Question 2: Of the six general classifications in the survey, would Business and Finance be appraised by board members as the strongest area of responsibility of those superintendents who were dismissed or encouraged to leave?

The responses to Question 14 of the instrument were analyzed to determine which of the six general classifications of the survey was appraised by most boards of education as the strongest area of responsibility for superintendents included in this study. It was necessary that a majority of the board members responding from a particular board check a specific area of strength for it to be considered the strongest for that superintendent.

It was determined that if more superintendents were appraised as strongest in the area of business and finance, Research Question 3 would not be rejected. As was indicated in the analysis of the responses to Question 14, 57% of the superintendents were appraised as being strongest in the area of business and finance. The next

strongest area was personal qualities, where 17% of the superintendents were appraised as being strongest.

Research Question 3: Of all the specific reasons listed in the general classifications of the survey, would the one specific reason appraised by board members as the most predominant factor in termination of tenure of a superintendent be the lack of maintaining a high standard of professional ethics, honesty, and integrity in all professional matters?

It was necessary to tabulate the responses for each superintendent individually. If the respondents checked the specific area "maintained high standard of ethics, honesty, and integrity in all personal matters for more superintendents as a partial reason for release than any other specific area, the research question was not rejected.

Tables 4.4 through 4.12 provided evidence that the specific area "maintained high standard of ethics, honesty, and integrity in all personal matters" was not checked for more superintendents as a partial reason for release than any other specific area. This specific area was checked for 22 superintendents. Six other specific areas were checked for more superintendents than was "maintained high standard of ethics, honesty, and integrity in all personal matters." The specific area "was highly respected by school personnel at all levels" was checked as a partial reason for release for more superintendents than was any other specific area.

Research Question 4: Of those superintendents who served as the primary person managing decline for management, would a majority of those who were dismissed or encouraged to leave be appraised by board members as having performed poorly in this role?

The responses to Questions 10 and 11 were tabulated to test this research question. It was determined that if a majority of those superintendents who were classified by board members as the primary person managing decline were appraised as performing poorly in this role, the research question would not be rejected. If a majority of the superintendents who performed in this role were appraised as having average or very good performance, the research question was rejected.

The tabulation of the responses to Questions 10 and 11 indicated that of the superintendents who had served as the primary person managing decline for management, only 26% were appraised as performing poorly in this role. Seventy-three percent were appraised as having average or very good performance in this role.

Research Question 5: Would a majority of those superintendents who were dismissed or encouraged to leave not be evaluated in a formal written manner at least annually?

The responses to Question 12 were tabulated to test this research question. If a majority of those superintendents included in the study were checked by board members to (a) not have been evaluated formally, (b) have been evaluated orally, but not in writing, or (c) have been evaluated in writing less frequently than annually, the research question was not rejected.

As discussed earlier, only 35 of the 70 superintendents included in this study had been formally evaluated. Twenty-two of these had been evaluated in writing. Also, of the 34 superintendents who had been formally evaluated, 25 had been evaluated annually. A

summary of these tabulations indicated that 22 (31%) of the 70 superintendents included in the study had been evaluated in a formal, written manner at least annually.

Summary

Chapter IV has presented the analysis and findings of the data collected from 70 boards of education that were contacted. This represents a return of 76% of the potential. Of the 460 members of boards of education who were contacted, 204 responded to the questionnaire. This represents a return of 45% of the potential.

Most of the action to dismiss or encouragement of the superintendents included in this study to leave their positions occurred between July 1, 1981, and June 30, 1985. Tabulation of the responses received to the questions in Part I of the questionnaire revealed the following:

1. Most superintendents were released by refusal of the board of education to renew their contracts.
2. The greatest number of respondents to the questionnaire supported the action of the board of education at that time.
3. The greatest number of those board members who served on boards of education when action was taken to terminate a superintendent were in the 36 through 45 year range at the time the action was taken.
4. The greatest number (36%) of those board members who served on boards of education when action was taken to terminate a superintendent had served on the board two years or less.

5. The greatest number (55%) of superintendents who were terminated from their positions had served six years or less in those positions.

6. The greatest number (58%) of the boards of education included in this study felt that the reasons for termination that they gave their superintendents were specific.

7. Ninety percent of the superintendents included in this study were given six months or less notice of their pending dismissal, release, or desire by the board that they leave.

8. The greatest number of the superintendents included in this study had served as the primary person managing decline for management. Seventy-three percent of those who had served as the primary person managing decline were appraised as having average or very good performance in this role.

9. Only 22 of the 70 superintendents included in this study had been evaluated annually in a formal, written manner.

10. Forty-five of the 70 superintendents included in this study were selected in a process in which the board of education screened all candidates and made the selection with no help from university placement officials.

11. The release of superintendents from school districts with student enrollments of 1,001 through 5,000 was significantly higher than the percentage distribution of actual student enrollment of state school districts. The opposite was true in school districts with student enrollments of 5,001 through 10,000.

12. The greatest number (93%) of superintendents included in this study had served in districts with a 0% to 5% minority student population.

Analysis of the responses to the checklist items indicated that the lowest average ratings for all superintendents in all areas were in the general area of relationship with the board, in the specific area "sought and accepted constructive criticism of his work," and in the general area of staff and personnel relationships, in the specific area "was highly respected by school personnel at all levels." The highest average rating for all superintendents in all areas was in the general area of business and finance, in the specific area "evaluated financial needs and made recommendations for adequate financing."

The data for the research questions showed the following conclusions:

Research Question 1: Superintendents included in this study were appraised by board members as being weakest in the area of relationship with the board, of six general classifications provided in the survey.

Research Question 2: Superintendents included in this study were appraised by board members as being strongest in the area of business and finance, of six general classifications provided in the survey.

Research Question 3: Of all the specific reasons listed in the general classifications of the survey, the one specific reason

that was appraised by board members to be the most predominant factor in termination of tenure of a superintendent was not the lack of maintaining a high standard of professional ethics, honesty, and integrity.

Research Question 4: Of those superintendents who served as the primary person managing decline, a majority of those who were dismissed or encouraged to leave were not appraised by board members as having performed poorly in this role.

Research Question 5: A majority of those superintendents who were dismissed or encouraged to leave had not been evaluated in a formal, written manner at least annually.

Chapter V presents a summary of this study, along with a report of the findings and conclusions. Observations are provided with implications for further research.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, OBSERVATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to discover new knowledge about superintendent-board of education relationships, especially as they pertain to the severance of the tenure of superintendents in Michigan. General and specific reasons for the removal of superintendents from their positions were sought.

The names of Michigan superintendents of schools who were dismissed or encouraged to leave their positions during the period from July 1, 1980, to June 30, 1985, were obtained from several sources. The names and addresses of the members of the boards of education who served on the respective boards at the time action was taken to release these superintendents were then obtained, and these board members were the source of information for the study.

A research instrument was used that requested answers to specific questions and also included a checklist appraisal of the superintendent, with an opportunity to provide written comments.

Three basic assumptions were made in the collection and analysis of the data. The assumptions were: (a) that the number of cases involved in the study provided more than an adequate sample, (b) that board members would provide accurate and honest expressions

of opinion in responding to a survey, and (c) that the personalized response of the comment-type answer would generate a more intimate and detailed expression of the board members' opinions.

Conclusions

Five research questions were formulated before gathering the data. Two of the research questions were rejected and three were not rejected through analysis of the data.

Research Question 1 postulated that of the six general classifications that were listed in the survey, board members would appraise those superintendents who were dismissed or encouraged to leave as weakest in the area of community relationships. The data showed that the weakest area of responsibility for superintendents was community relationships.

Research Question 2 postulated that of the six general classifications that were listed in the survey, board members would appraise those superintendents who were dismissed or encouraged to leave as strongest in the area of business and finance. The data supported this research question. Tabulation of the responses to Question 14 indicated that business and finance was appraised as the strongest area of responsibility for more than twice as many superintendents included in this study as the next strongest area.

Research Question 3 postulated that of all the specific reasons listed in the checklist section of the survey, the one specific reason that would be appraised by board members as the most predominant factor in termination of tenure of a superintendent would

be the lack of maintaining a high standard of professional ethics, honesty, and integrity in all professional matters. The data did not support this research question. Analysis of the checklist responses indicated that six other specific areas were checked for more superintendents than was "maintained high standard of ethics, honesty, and integrity in all personal matters."

Research Question 4 postulated that of those superintendents who were dismissed or encouraged to leave who had served as the primary person managing economic decline for management, a majority would be appraised by board members as having performed poorly in this role. The data did not support this research question. Tabulation of the responses to Questions 10 and 11 indicated that 73% of those superintendents included in this study who had performed in the role as the primary person managing economic decline for management were appraised as having average or very good performance in this role.

Research Question 5 postulated that a majority of those superintendents who were dismissed or encouraged to leave had not been evaluated in a formal, written manner at least annually. The data supported this research question. Tabulation of the responses to Question 12 indicated that only 22 of the 70 superintendents included in this study had been evaluated in a formal, written manner at least annually.

Conclusions From the Data

1. When a superintendent of schools in Michigan was dismissed or encouraged to leave his position, even though the public reason that was given was general, there were specific factors that precipitated this action.

2. Superintendents in Michigan who were dismissed or encouraged to leave were considered to be most proficient in the area of business and finance.

3. In the area of relationship with school board, more superintendents in Michigan who were dismissed or encouraged to leave were criticized for not having a harmonious working relationship with the board than for any other item.

4. In the area of community relationships, more superintendents in Michigan who were dismissed or encouraged to leave were criticized for failure to gain the respect of the community in the operation of the school system than for any other item.

5. Whereas superintendents in Michigan who were dismissed or encouraged to leave were appraised as performing well in the area of business and finance, the most-criticized factor was the failure to evaluate financial needs and make recommendations for adequate financing.

6. In the area of staff and personnel relationships, more superintendents in Michigan who were dismissed or encouraged to leave were criticized for not gaining the respect of school personnel at all levels than for any other item in this category.

7. In the area of educational leadership, more superintendents in Michigan who were dismissed or encouraged to leave were criticized for failure to provide democratic procedures in using the abilities and talents of staff members and citizens than for any other item in this category.

8. In the area of personal qualities, more superintendents in Michigan who were dismissed or encouraged to leave were criticized for the lack of respect by school personnel than for any other item in this category.

9. Performance as the primary person managing decline during enrollment for management in the economic decline of the 1980s was not a major factor in the release of Michigan superintendents.

10. The greatest percentage of superintendents and boards of education in Michigan where superintendents were failing were not requesting a formal, written evaluation of the superintendent at least annually.

Further Conclusions

Further examination of these data suggested the following conclusions:

1. Geographic location of a school district in Michigan was not a significant factor in the release of the superintendent. Cases reported in this study came from all geographic locations of the state. The southeastern part of Michigan, where the greatest number of school districts are located, was represented by the greatest number of cases.

2. The size of the school district was a significant factor in the release of Michigan superintendents. The data indicated that superintendents of school districts with student enrollments of 1,001 through 5,000 students were most susceptible to release. Those superintendents in school districts with student enrollments of 1,000 or less and in districts with from 5,000 through 10,000 students were least susceptible to release.

3. The percentage of minority students enrolled in the school district was not a significant factor in the release of Michigan school superintendents. Even though 93% of the superintendents included in this study had served in districts with from 0% to 5% minority students, Michigan Department of Education statistics indicate that over 74% of the total minority group students in Michigan's public schools in 1980-81 were enrolled in ten school districts.

4. The release of Michigan school superintendents has not increased significantly over the past five years. The data indicated that 79% of the cases included in this study occurred during the three-year period from 1981 through 1983. Although one might infer that the individual cases that occurred in the first year of this study may have been forgotten more easily by those providing information, one must also recognize that the cases included in the study for 1985 did not include the two cases that were in litigation.

5. The procedure used most often by Michigan boards of education in releasing a superintendent was the refusal to renew the

contract. The data indicated that 51% of the superintendents included in this study were released in that manner.

6. Michigan school superintendents who are released can expect a short advance notice. Seventy-one percent of the superintendents included in the study were given six months or less advance notice, and 10% were given no advance notice at all.

7. During the economic and enrollment decline experienced by Michigan school districts in the early 1980s, the superintendent's role in managing this decline was not a significant factor in the release of Michigan superintendents. Board members responding to the survey indicated that 73% of the superintendents included in the study had average or better performance in this role.

8. There was a significant relationship between the dismissal or encouragement of a superintendent to leave and the lack of an annual written evaluation. Only 22 (31%) of the 70 superintendents included in this study had been evaluated by the board of education in a formal, written manner at least annually.

9. There was a significant relationship between the dismissal or encouragement of a superintendent to leave and the procedure used in the selection process. Fifty-four percent of the superintendents included in this study were selected in a manner in which the local board of education secured no assistance in the screening or selection process from university placement officials or outside consultants.

10. Performance in the area of business and finance was not a significant factor in the release of Michigan school superintendents.

Superintendents included in this study were appraised by board of education members as performing most strongly in the area of business and finance, of six general classifications.

11. Performance as an educational leader was not a significant factor in the release of Michigan school superintendents. The second strongest general area of responsibility of superintendents included in this study, as appraised by board of education members, was educational leadership. Also, specific areas of educational leadership received the lowest average number of responses regarding "Partial Reason for Release."

12. Poor relationship with the board of education was the most dominant underlying reason for the release of Michigan school superintendents. Although board members included in the study indicated the weakest general area of responsibility of released superintendents was staff and personnel relationships, an analysis of the checklist items and written remarks provided evidence that the most dominant underlying reason for release was the superintendent's relationship with the board of education. A combination of the checklist items marked "Partial Reason for Release" and the written comments indicated that the most dominant specific reasons for release of a superintendent in the area of relationship with the board of education was in (a) the lack of a harmonious working relationship with the board, (b) the refusal to seek and accept criticism, and (c) failure to keep the board informed on issues, concerns, needs, and general operation of the school district.

13. Lack of respect by school personnel was a significant underlying reason for the release of Michigan school superintendents. The specific area "was highly respected by school personnel at all levels" was given an average rating of 1.0 (very poor) by board members for superintendents included in this study. The only other specific area to receive this low an average rating was "developed good staff morale and loyalty to the organization." The area "was highly respected by school personnel" was checked for 25 superintendents as a partial reason for release. Only one other specific area received more responses as a partial reason for release. The data would indicate that unless the superintendent gains and retains the respect of school personnel at all levels, he will be unable to survive in the long run.

14. Poor communications was a significant underlying reason for the release of Michigan school superintendents. The failure of the superintendent to communicate properly appeared several times in responses to the survey. In the area of relationship with the board, 14 superintendents were checked in the specific area "failure to keep the board informed" as a partial reason for release, and nine superintendents received written comments that they had given board members only part of the facts. Also, 17 superintendents were checked in the specific area "sought and accepted constructive criticism of his work" as a partial reason for release. In the area of personal qualities, six superintendents received written comments that they were poor speakers.

15. Michigan school superintendents must become more proficient in the area of interpersonal relationships if they are to retain their positions. As discussed earlier, few Michigan superintendents were released for performing poorly in the areas of business and finance or educational leadership. It was in the area of interpersonal relationships that the underlying reason for release existed. Superintendents must become more proficient in maintaining a satisfactory relationship with the board of education, school personnel, and members of the community.

Recommendations for Further Research

The following research needs became apparent during the course of this study:

1. Research is necessary to determine what institutions of higher education are doing to prepare superintendents to fulfill the responsibilities of the school superintendency today. More than ever before, external factors are exerting pressures on the position. Conflict management and interpersonal-relations training is of extreme necessity.

2. Research is necessary to determine what are the professional implications of being released from the superintendency. Although observations can be made that released superintendents move either laterally or upward, there is a need for documentation and analysis of this phenomenon.

3. Research is necessary to determine what released superintendents feel were the factors present in their release. The present study provided the factors that board of education members felt were present in the release of superintendents. A comparison of the factors present in the release of superintendents might be made if released superintendents were surveyed and compared with the results of this study.

4. Research is necessary for the comparison of the procedure used in the screening and selection of a superintendent and the appraisal of the superintendent's performance in that position by the board of education two or three years after the superintendent has assumed the position.

5. Research is necessary to determine if there is a significant relationship between the educational training and professional positions held and the ability of superintendents to retain their positions.

Reflections

The nature of this study was such that many interesting reflections were made in the process of conducting the research. Some of the reflections were humorous, some were heart-warming, and others were discouraging. Even though the following reflections cannot be concretely supported by evidence obtained in this study, they should be of interest to school superintendents and board of education members.

1. University placement officials and school superintendents are sincerely interested in obtaining the reasons for superintendent-school board frictions. University placement officials and school superintendents were most cooperative in providing information and validating the names of those superintendents who had been dismissed or encouraged to leave during the five-year period included in this study.

2. Board of education members will be honest and sincere in responding to a survey requesting why superintendents were dismissed or encouraged to leave. Board members were sincere and honest in responding to this survey. Scores of board members wrote remarks on the back of the questionnaire sheets when space provided on the front was not adequate. Seven personal letters from board members were attached to the completed questionnaires when they were returned. These letters expressed personal reasons why they felt their superintendent had been released, which went beyond the questions asked in the survey. These board members were personally concerned that the full story be related.

3. Many board of education members do not comprehend the difference between the role of a board member and that of the superintendent. A common thread appeared in the written remarks of board members, which indicated that many board members felt the need to become involved in the administrative process. These board members did not believe that it was the responsibility of the board of

education to develop policy and the role of the superintendent to administer the adopted policy.

4. Educators who have performed well as teachers, counselors, or building administrators do not necessarily perform well as a superintendent. Many written remarks that board members provided indicated that their superintendents had been very competent in another capacity within their particular school district. However, experience in other educational positions does not necessarily prepare a person for the superintendency.

5. Some school districts are prone to release superintendents. As indicated in Chapter I, superintendents were confirmed by two or more persons as one who had been dismissed or encouraged to leave his position. However, some school districts appeared more than once in this confirmed list, and since it seemed unreasonable to request a board member to complete a questionnaire for more than one superintendent, only 70 cases were included in the study. Seven school districts released two superintendents during this five-year period.

6. School superintendents may perform most competently as educational leaders, but if they do not relate well to members of their board of education, they will not survive in their position. The data, as reported in Chapter IV, indicated the importance of the relationship the superintendent has with the board of education. Even beyond this, however, the written remarks of board members seemed to

establish the high priority they place on the superintendent's ability to relate to individual board members, not play one board member against another, and keep all of them informed.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

SUPERINTENDENT-EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE PUBLISHED

IN SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE USED IN THE STUDY

EVALUATION OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

	Board		Sup't.		Comments
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
A. <u>RELATIONSHIP WITH THE BOARD</u>					
1. Keeps the board informed on issues, needs and operation of the school system.					
2. Offers professional advice to the board on items requiring board action, with appropriate recommendations based on thorough study and analysis.					
3. Interprets and executes the intent of board policy.					
4. Seeks and accepts constructive criticism of his work.					
5. Supports board policy and actions to the public and staff.					
6. Has a harmonious working relationship with the board.					
7. Understands his role in administration of board policy, not policy making.					
8. Keeps the board informed of concerns about the schools expressed by the public.					
B. <u>STAFF AND PERSONNEL RELATIONSHIPS</u>					
1. Develops and executes sound personnel procedures and practices.					
2. Develops good staff morale and loyalty to the organization.					
3. Treats all personnel fairly without favoritism or discrimination, while insisting on performance of duties.					
4. Delegates authority to staff members appropriate to the position each holds.					
5. Recruits and assigns the best available personnel in terms of their competencies.					

	Board		Sup't.		Comments
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
6. Encourages participation of appropriate staff members and groups in planning, procedures and policy interpretation.					
7. Evaluates performance of staff members, giving commendation for good work as well as constructive suggestions for improvement.					
8. Takes an active role in development of salary schedules for all personnel, and recommends to the board the levels which, within budgetary limitations, will best serve the interests of the district.					
C. <u>EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP</u>					
1. Understands and keeps informed regarding all aspects of the instructional program.					
2. Implements the district's philosophy of education.					
3. Participates with staff, board and community evaluation and improvement.					
4. Organizes a planned program of curriculum evaluation and improvement.					
5. Provides democratic procedures in curriculum work, utilizing the abilities and talents of the entire professional staff and lay people of the community.					
6. Exemplifies the skills and attitudes of a master teacher and inspires others to highest professional standards.					
D. <u>BUSINESS AND FINANCE</u>					
1. Keeps informed on needs of the school program--plant, facilities, equipment and supplies.					
2. Supervises operations, insisting on competent and efficient performance.					

	Board		Sup't.		Comments
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
3. Determines that: a. Funds are spent wisely. b. Adequate control and accounting are maintained.					
4. Evaluates financial needs and makes recommendations for adequate financing.					
E. PERSONAL QUALITIES					
1. Defends principle and conviction in the face of pressure and partisan influence.					
2. Maintains high standards of ethics, honesty and integrity in all personal and professional matters.					
3. Earns respect and standing among his professional colleagues.					
4. Devotes his time and energy effectively to his job.					
5. Demonstrates his ability to work well with individuals and groups.					
6. Exercises good judgment and the democratic processes in arriving at decisions.					
F. COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS					
1. Was recognized in the community as a leader in public education.					
2. Developed friendly and cooperative relationships with news media.					
3. Sought and gave attention to problems and opinions of community groups and individuals.					
4. Actively participated in community organizations.					
5. Had the respect and support of the community in the operation of the school system.					

Comments:

Subject of Evaluation:

Date:

Source: "How to Evaluate Your Superintendent," School Management (August 1975): 43.

QUESTIONNAIRE

WHY SUPERINTENDENTS ARE DISMISSED OR ENCOURAGED TO LEAVE

S T R I C T L Y C O N F I D E N T I A L

1. When you were a member of a board of education the superintendent of schools was:
 - ☐ Dismissed during the contract period
 - ☐ Contract not renewed
 - ☐ Eased out conveniently
 - ☐ None of the above, please explain

2. What was your position on the board at the time the action was taken?
 - ☐ President
 - ☐ Vice-President
 - ☐ Secretary
 - ☐ Treasurer
 - ☐ Trustee
3. What was your age at the time the action was taken?
 - ☐ Up to 25
 - ☐ 26 thru 35
 - ☐ 36 thru 45
 - ☐ 46 thru 55
 - ☐ Over 55
4. How many years had you served on the board at the time the action was taken?
 - ☐ Up to 2
 - ☐ 3 thru 5
 - ☐ 6 thru 10
 - ☐ Over 10
5. What was the approximate date that this termination occurred?
6. What were the approximate number of years this person served as superintendent?

☐ 0 thru 3	☐ 10 thru 12
☐ 4 thru 6	☐ 13 thru 15
☐ 7 thru 10	☐ Over 15
7. Did you support the boards action at that time?
 - ☐ No
 - ☐ Yes
8. What kind of reasons did the board give the superintendent for the action taken?
 - ☐ Very specific
 - ☐ Specific
 - ☐ General
 - ☐ Vague
 - ☐ None

9. If the superintendent was dismissed or encouraged to leave, what was the length of notice given of his pending dismissal release or desire that he should leave?
- ☐ None
☐ 1 month
☐ 3 months
☐ 6 months
☐ 1 year
☐ Other, please explain
- _____
- _____
- _____
10. Did your school district experience a continuous drop in the number of students enrolled, resulting in the closing of school buildings.
- Peak Enrollment _____ Year _____
- Present Enrollment _____
- Buildings closed: ☐ Elementary
☐ Jr. High - Middle
☐ Senior High
11. Did your school district which, through the loss of enrollment and increased costs, find itself in a situation where there were not ample funds to meet costs?
- ☐ Yes
☐ No
12. If the superintendent served as the primary person managing decline, what is your assessment of his competence in this role?
- ☐ Very Good
☐ Average
☐ Poor
13. If the superintendent was dismissed or encouraged to leave, what process was utilized in his selection?
- ☐ Board screening all applicants
☐ Placement bureau team screening applicants
☐ Paid consultant
☐ Other, please explain
- _____
- _____
- _____
14. As an overall appraisal of the superintendent, please indicate the following:
- S for his strongest area of responsibility (1 only)
- W for his weakest area of responsibility (1 only)
- ☐ Relationship with the board
☐ Community relationship
☐ Business and Finance
☐ Staff and personnel relationships
☐ Educational leadership
☐ Personal qualities

15. What was the student enrollment of the district at the time the action was taken?

- ☐ 0 thru 1,000
- ☐ 1,001 thru 2,500
- ☐ 2,501 thru 5,000
- ☐ 5,001 thru 10,000
- ☐ Over 10,000

16. What was the percentage of minority students enrolled in the district at the time the action was taken?

- ☐ 0 to 5 percent
- ☐ 6 to 15 percent
- ☐ 16 to 25 percent
- ☐ 26 to 50 percent
- ☐ Over 50 percent

INSTRUCTIONS: On the following pages, items A through F, you are asked to rate the superintendent in each of six general areas. Please check only one (0 to 5) on each of the sub-items listed.

A. RELATIONSHIP WITH THE BOARD	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Poor	Partial Reason for Release 0
	5	4	3	2	1	
1. Supported board policy and board actions to the staff and to the public.						
2. Clearly understood his role as an administrator of board policy, not a policy maker.						
3. Kept the board informed on issues, concerns, needs and general operation of the school system.						
4. Offered professional advice and recommendations based on thorough study and analysis, to board on items needing action.						
5. Sought and accepted constructive criticism of his work.						
6. Provided well-planned meeting agendas.						
7. Had information readily available for the board on agenda items.						
8. Had a harmonious working relationship with the board.						

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

Please write in any additional comments regarding the superintendent's relationship with the Board of Education. List things that you came to dislike, the things that alienated the superintendent from board members, etc.

B. COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS	Excellent 5	Good 4	Average 3	Poor 2	Poor 1	Partial Reason for Release 0
1. Was recognized in the community as a leader in public education.						
2. Developed friendly and cooperative relationships with news media.						
3. Sought and gave attention to problems and opinions of community groups and individuals.						
4. Actively participated in community organizations.						
5. Had the respect and support of the community in the operation of the school system.						

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

Please write in any additional comments regarding the superintendent's relationship with the community. List things that were disturbing to the community, individuals, etc.

C. BUSINESS AND FINANCE	Excellent 5	Good 4	Average 3	Poor 2	Poor 1	Partial Reason for Release 0
1. Evaluated financial needs and made recommendations for adequate financing.						
2. Kept informed on needs of the school program, plant facilities, equipment and supplies.						
3. Required adequate control and accounting of funds.						
4. Required that funds were spent wisely.						

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

Please write in any additional comments regarding the superintendent's performance in the area of business and finance. List things that were done that you questioned, disapproved of, etc.

D. STAFF AND PERSONNEL RELATIONSHIPS	Excellent 5	Good 4	Average 3	Poor 2	Poor 1	Partial Reason for Release 0
1. Encouraged appropriate staff members to participate in planning and decision making and then accept their suggestions.						
2. Developed good staff morale and loyalty to the organization.						
3. Treated all personnel fairly without discrimination or favoritism.						
4. Delegated authority to appropriate staff members.						

D. STAFF AND PERSONNEL RELATIONSHIPS	Excellent 5	Good 4	Average 3	Poor 2	Poor 1	Partial Reason for Release 0
5. Recruited and assigned the best available personnel in terms of their competencies.						
6. Evaluated performance of a staff member and provided constructive criticism that was acceptable.						
7. Provided an active role in developing salary schedules and recommending personnel procedures and policies.						
8. Was highly respected by school personnel at all levels.						

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

Please write in any additional comments regarding the superintendent's staff and personnel relationships: List all other things that bothered you and school district staff members in this area.

E. EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP	Excellent 5	Good 4	Average 3	Poor 2	Poor 1	Partial Reason for Release 0
1. Provided the leadership to implement innovative programs and initiate educational progress.						
2. Kept informed regarding all aspects of the instructional programs of the district.						
3. Was involved in educational conferences and read considerably in order to keep abreast of current educational practices.						
4. Required an organized and planned program of curriculum development, evaluation and improvement.						
5. Provided democratic procedures in utilizing the abilities and talents of staff members of citizens.						
6. Maintained political awareness and was proficient in working with local and state legislators.						

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

Please write in any additional comments regarding the superintendent's performance as an education leader. List all other things that you felt were weaknesses in this area.

F. PERSONAL QUALITIES	Excellent 5	Good 4	Average 3	Poor 2	Poor 1	Partial Reason for Release 0
1. Was not afraid to make decisions and would defend his convictions in the face of pressure and partisan influence.						
2. Devoted his time and energy effectively to the responsibilities of his position.						
3. Had the respect of school personnel.						
4. Had the respect of his professional colleagues in area school districts.						
5. Maintained high standard of ethics, honesty, and integrity in all personal and professional matters.						
6. Possessed a pleasing personality and reflected personal charisma.						

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

Please write in any additional comments regarding the personal qualities of the superintendent. List those things about his personal qualities that bothered you, that you questioned, etc.

Number _____.

Identification is by number only. You need not sign.

Please check if you wish to receive a copy of the results when the study is completed. _____.

APPENDIX C

CORRESPONDENCE



Michigan Association of School Boards

421 W. KALAMAZOO STREET, LANSING, MICHIGAN 48933 • (317) 371-5700

May, 1985

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Associate Executive Director
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Legal Counsel
 LINDA BRUNN

Dear Board Member or Former Board Member:

This letter is to encourage your response to the enclosed questionnaire. We want to assure you that the Michigan Association of School Boards was in no way involved in identifying superintendents for this study.

The results of the thesis, "Why Superintendents Are Dismissed Or Encouraged To Leave", can be of value to future board members and superintendents in preventing superintendent/board conflicts and misunderstandings. We do have assurance that the individual answers will be kept confidential and be used only to develop general data.

A summary of the results of the study will be made available to the Michigan Association of School Boards.

Hopefully, you will take time from your busy schedule to respond to the questionnaire.

Sincerely,

MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL BOARDS

Norman P. Weinheimer
 Norman P. Weinheimer
 Executive Director

NPW/des

Encl.

Gary C. Roeder
5378 Constance
Saginaw, MI. 48603
March 19, 1984

Dr. Norman P. Weinheimer
Executive Director
Michigan Association of School Boards
Lansing, Michigan

Dear Dr. Weinheimer,

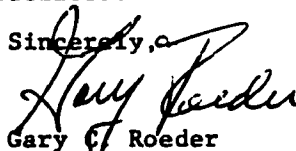
I am presently involved in gathering data for my doctoral thesis. The title of this thesis is Why Superintendents Are Dismissed or Encouraged to Leave Their Positions.

Dr. Louis Romano, Professor, School Administration and Higher Education at Michigan State University, is serving as Chairman of my Doctoral Guidance Committee. Also, Dr. Carl Brautigan, is on my committee and is supportive of the study. The results of the study will be of great value to boards of education and school superintendents in the state of Michigan.

You would be of great help to me if you would write a letter, similar to the one enclosed, encouraging board member response to the questionnaire. After locating the cases for the study, a letter will be sent to the board members who were on each board at the time the incident occurred. The survey will be open-ended in order that the board member may write as much or as little as he pleases. Responses will be treated as STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL.

Your help here will be most appreciated. A summary of the results will be mailed to you following the completion of the study. Any suggestions you may have to add to the effectiveness of the study will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,



Gary C. Roeder
Asst. Principal
Bridgeport-Spaulding Comm.
Schools
Candidate for Ph.D.

Gary C. Roeder
3878 Sherman St.
Bridgeport, MI 48722

Dear Board Member or Former Board Member:

I am presently involved in gathering data for my doctoral thesis. The title of this Thesis is Why Superintendents Are Dismissed or Encouraged to Leave Their Positions.

The purpose of this study is to determine the underlying reasons why superintendents of schools in Michigan have been dismissed or encouraged to leave since July, 1980.

I have received excellent support and cooperation from The Michigan Association of School boards, The Michigan Association of School Administrators, University placement officials, and fellow superintendents. Also, my board of education is supportive of the study and is providing released time in order that I may complete the thesis.

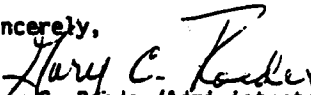
It has been ascertained that _____, who served as superintendent in a school district where you were a board member, can be classified as a member of the group for this study. I would appreciate it greatly if you would complete the enclosed questionnaire for the purpose of providing information for the study.

This survey will be valid only if you will give factual and complete information. Your confidence will be honored, and only the undersigned will know the individual cases concerned. I pledge complete secrecy here. The results will be reported in statistical form only. No individuals or districts will be identified.

The enclosed questionnaire is easy to complete and will require no more than ten minutes of your time. Most importantly, it will help provide information to school board members, administrators, administrator training institutions, and placement officials that can be utilized to reduce friction situations that have resulted in the severance of the tenure of the superintendent.

I will be looking forward to your prompt reply. A self-addressed, stamped envelope is enclosed. I will provide you with a summary of the results of the study if you desire. A space is provided on the last page of the questionnaire for you to indicate this desire. Remember, all information will be held in STRICT CONFIDENCE.

Sincerely,


Gary C. Roeder/Administrator
Bridgeport Community Schools
Candidate for Ph.D



Michigan Association of School Boards

421 W. KALAMAZOO STREET, LANSING, MICHIGAN 48933 - (317) 371-3700

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Legal Counsel
LINDA BRUM

May 16, 1984

Mr. Gary C. Roeder
Assistant Principal
Bridgeport-Spaulling Community Schools
5378 Constance
Saginaw, MI 48603

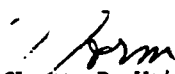
Dear Gary:

I'm happy to inform you that the Board of Directors of the Michigan Association of School Boards, at its May 4, 1984 meeting, gave us approval to endorse your doctoral study relative to Why Superintendents Are Dismissed or Encouraged to Leave Their Positions.

It would seem that a letter very similar to the one which was sent a few years ago over our signature would be appropriate for your study as well. If you would like to make any changes in that letter please let me know.

Best wishes for a successful study.

Sincerely yours,


Norman P. Weinheimer
Executive Director

NPW:sf

Enclosure

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

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