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**Self-reported significant career and life experiences among  
selected Michigan school superintendents**

**Dowrick, Todd Kendall, Ph.D.**

**Michigan State University, 1992**

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**SELF-REPORTED SIGNIFICANT CAREER AND LIFE EXPERIENCES  
AMONG SELECTED  
MICHIGAN SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS**

By

Todd K. Dowrick

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to  
Michigan State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
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1991

**ABSTRACT**  
**SELF-REPORTED CAREER AND LIFE EXPERIENCES**  
**AMONG SELECTED**  
**MICHIGAN SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS**

**By**  
**Todd K. Dowrick**

Leadership development has been researched extensively and is perhaps one of the least understood concepts of organizational theory. Many studies have explored the characteristics of effective leaders. An extensive amount of literature exists regarding the management styles and effectiveness of school superintendents. However, little research has focused on the development of superintendents based on the effect of experiences on a personal and professional basis and the lessons learned as a result of those experiences.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of informal learning and self-directed learning experiences from earlier professional and personal experiences that have contributed to superintendents' leadership development. The study was conducted to describe and explain those events reported by the superintendents and to classify the key events into themes if themes existed.

The population from which the sample was taken is school superintendents from the state of Michigan. The researcher conducted the study with a sample population of 15 superintendents. Superintendents were interviewed from districts representing stratified student enrollments. Structured interview

questions were developed to conduct the research. The questions were designed to allow the superintendents to respond to open-ended questions.

Data analysis revealed that personal life experiences contributed significantly to the development of Michigan public school superintendents. Professional experiences prior to and during their current superintendencies also facilitated the development of the superintendents. Former supervisors, usually superintendents and principals served as positive or negative role models. Formal training, on-the-job training, and personal life experiences were perceived as providing significant learning experiences. The superintendents were not self-made. A variety of individuals provided learning opportunities and support for the superintendents. Patterns of experiences and lessons learned were identified. Patterns of experiences included personal experiences before and after age 18 and professional experiences before and during the current superintendency. Patterns of lessons learned included basic values and ethics, management philosophy, initiating change, school and community relations, and personal attributes and limitations. The superintendents in the sample had philosophical beliefs as a result of events experienced and lessons learned that guide their actions in their role as superintendent.

Dedicated to my grandparents,  
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Strengberg,  
who have always been there  
for me and my family;  
your love and encouragement  
has been a tremendous influence  
in my life.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Background

The position of superintendent of schools for the 557 public school districts in the state of Michigan is essential for the kindergarten through twelfth grade academic development of children and youth. To be a successful superintendent one must possess skills in curriculum, leadership, finance, public relations, management, and organization. Many of the State's superintendents will be retiring in the next decade. Where did current superintendents develop the necessary skills to function as a chief executive officer of a school district? Also, where will future superintendents develop the necessary skills?

Leadership development has been researched extensively and is perhaps one of the least understood concepts of organizational theory. Leadership is a complex and disconcerting subject. It is difficult to state why one individual is considered an effective leader while another individual is not. Janda (1960) stated, "What do people mean when they speak of a leader? Studies begin with a conceptual or empirical definition of leader and then proceed to determine correlates or consequences of leadership so defined. Even a cursory review of these investigations show that leadership means many different things for different people" (p. 345).

Many studies have explored the characteristics of effective leaders. Halpin and Croft (1962) found that effective leaders established the importance of organizational climate. Effective leaders have the ability to create a climate in which the leader can initiate and implement his or her leadership style. Bennis (1984) suggested that when effective leadership exists in an organization, employees feel important and know what they do has meaning and is significant.

An extensive amount of literature exists regarding the development of school superintendents. Tillman and Rencher (1976) studied organizational production and the needs of people with a high achieving group of superintendents. The results of the study showed that the high achieving superintendents choose the management style of 9.9 as per (Blake and Mourtton, 1964). The basic aim of the 9.9 manager is to develop cohesive work teams that can achieve both high productivity and high morale. By showing a high concern for both people and production, managers allow employees to think and influence the organization. Blake and Mourtton developed a managerial grid to help supervisors understand their managerial style. The managerial grid postulates two basic assumptions about managerial behavior; concern for production and concern for people. Managers can be viewed on a scale of one to nine in the two areas. One is considered low and nine is considered high. Duke (1987) followed the school superintendency as it developed through changes in the concept of leader effectiveness. The traditional concepts of a leader included images of the superintendent as a father, general, and coach.

Randall (1967) stated that the development of leaders occurs in three ways: formally, through degree programs, courses, and seminars; informally, with on the job training; through self-directed learning based on events and experiences. However, Livingston (1971) believes that formal training programs for management are not successful developing the skills necessary for career success. He also believes that the most important job tasks are learned on the job, not in the classroom. White (1957) stated that the majority of an administrator's education is learned by being an administrator. "Most of this education will come from his day-to-day and week-by-week experience. Each decision made, each issue faced, each problem solved, even each mistake (and there will be plenty of them) will contribute to this education" (p. 10).

A great deal of research has been conducted to describe and explain the characteristics of an effective leader. However, little research has focused on the development of leadership skills and professional development of superintendents.

The focus of this study was to investigate the effect of informal learning and self-directed learning experiences and the lessons learned from earlier professional and personal experiences that have contributed to superintendents' leadership development. The researcher believed that informal learning from professional and personal experiences and the subsequent lessons learned contributed significantly to the development of public school superintendents. In a similar study by Dotterer (1989), informal learning experiences and the subsequent

lessons learned contributed to the development of Michigan community college presidents.

### Statement of the Problem

Studies have investigated the formal academic programs and career paths followed by school superintendents. Jaaskelainen (1984) conducted a study to determine if superintendents tried to hire principals with similar backgrounds as the superintendents including formal academic programs and career paths.

Studies have also focused on the characteristics of effective administrators. Higgins (1988) investigated the decision-making styles preferred by selected Michigan school superintendents. Villarreal (1984) sought to identify differences in the self-perceived leadership behavior of a representative sample of Michigan public school superintendents according to the variables of age, level of education, tenure in position, and in size and complexity of school district served. Duke (1987) traced the development of the school superintendency through changes in concepts of leadership. The traditional concept of leader effectiveness included images of the school leader as a father, general, or a coach. Duke found that traditional school leaders embodied moral qualities such as goodness and virtue.

However, few studies have examined the effect of informal learning and self-directed learning experiences or the lessons learned from earlier professional and personal experiences that have contributed to superintendents' leadership development. Little data have been collected which address the lessons of experience that were learned by school superintendents during their earlier professional experiences as teachers or administrators.



It is not known how or to what degree personal life experiences affect the performance of school superintendents. Sufficient data have not been collected to provide a sense of the nature of those life experiences that contribute to the development of school superintendents. Questions such as the following arise: Do certain types of experiences encourage and enhance growth opportunities for school superintendents, including (a) formal learning opportunities (classes, seminars, degree program, workshops, conferences); or (b) informal learning experiences (specific job tasks, family members, friends, mentors, failures, new projects)? If common patterns exist, they should be identified and explored.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the effect of informal learning and self-directed learning experiences and the lessons learned from earlier professional and personal experiences that have contributed to superintendent's leadership development. This study was conducted to identify and explain those events reported by the superintendents and to classify the key events into themes, if themes existed. Subjects were asked to identify events that made a significant impact on them and were perceived by them as being helpful in preparing them for their roles as chief executive officers of Michigan public school districts.

The superintendents were also asked to identify lessons learned from specific events. The lessons learned could be helpful in understanding the management/leadership style of the superintendent. The key lessons learned were classified into themes.

The development of school superintendents includes formal and informal sources. Formal training includes degree programs, conferences, and workshops. Informal sources include work and life experiences. This study was designed to get public school superintendents to describe and explain the kinds of events and the lessons learned from those events that helped develop them as public school superintendents.

### Significance of the Study

The research in two major fields of study was reviewed and combined for this study; the school superintendency and administrator and leadership development. Gordon (1988) believed that management skills and development training includes such topics as time management, leadership training, hiring and selection, stress management, listening, team building, motivation, delegation, conducting meetings, finance, and ethics.

In this study one of the possible ways school superintendents develop their administrator/leadership skills was explored. It is hoped that this research will be useful in the following ways:

1. Individuals wishing to be school superintendents could use the results of the research to help develop their administrator/leadership skills.
2. Individuals in educational leadership positions or wishing to be in educational leadership positions could avoid some of the same mistakes made by the superintendents in this study and become familiar with lessons learned by practicing school superintendents.

3. Analysis of the research findings may assist in the understanding of school superintendents and their complex leadership positions.
4. School superintendents could use the data of the study to analyze their leadership style and explore their own personal and professional development.
5. School superintendents could use the results of the study as a means of developing employees or assisting colleagues who wish to upgrade their administrative skills. For example, the data might be used by superintendents in the development of mentors and mentoring programs. Robinson (1979) stated that because of their life experiences, adults themselves are a rich resource for one another's learning.
6. Those in universities, colleges, professional development organizations, and responsible for administrative/leadership training programs could utilize the data in developing curricula for conferences, courses, and seminars. As a result, students and participants would be exposed to the learning experiences and lessons learned from leaders in the field of education administration.
7. New questions and possibly new research topics about the school superintendency and administrative leadership development might unfold as a result of the study.
8. Superintendents participating in the study and superintendents who become familiar with the results of the study might identify their leadership strengths and weaknesses and focus on future growth.

9. Superintendents participating in the study may reflect upon and recall previous learning experiences and benefit from and perhaps enjoy forgotten experiences.
10. Teachers, school board members, community members, and other school employees could become familiar with the results of the study and become more sensitive to the role of school superintendents.

### Research Questions

The objective of the study was to gain an understanding of how school superintendents' leadership qualities develop from informal and self-directed learning experiences and lessons learned from earlier professional and personal experiences. Therefore, it was important to identify lessons learned from past formal and informal experiences which contributed to the evolution of superintendents' personal leadership characteristics. What were the major lessons learned that enabled the school superintendents in the sample to cultivate their own leadership development? Which was more beneficial; formal learning experiences, such as administrative/leadership degree programs and workshops, or on-the-job situations that arose? Did mentors play a major role in the development of the superintendents? Which positions were most helpful in the development of the individuals for their role as superintendent? Which professional responsibilities were most helpful in the development of the individuals for their role as superintendent? Did the superintendents experience

similar lessons learned that they felt were beneficial to their professional development?

According to Harris, McIntyre, Littleton, and Long (1985), inservice training, generally has not enjoyed the best of reputations – for obvious reasons in many instances. The same pattern of perceived dullness and irrelevancy that has characterized the practitioners' view of preservice training has been all too applicable to inservice training as well. Owens (1981) indicates that since very little is known about changing the personality characteristics of people through training, he sees the role of training as being limited to improving the leader's skill at diagnosing the favorableness of situations, and improving skills in interpersonal relations, structuring tasks, and technical areas.

Based upon the concerns expressed above, the major research questions of this study included the following:

1. What were the perceived effects of work and other life experiences on the professional development of school superintendents?
2. What experiences had a perceived effect on school superintendents from the areas of: (a) formal training, (b) informal on-the-job training experiences, or (c) personal life experiences?
3. What perceived lessons were learned from professional experiences that the superintendents felt better prepared them for the job tasks associated with the role of school superintendent?
4. Did patterns or themes arise from the kinds of experiences and the lessons learned as perceived by the group of superintendents sampled?

5. If patterns of experiences or lessons learned arise, what perceived effects could these results have for the professional development of prospective school superintendents?

The major research questions of the study were developed after reviewing a somewhat similar study by Dotterer (1989). Dotterer conducted a study regarding significant career and life experiences and subsequent lessons learned for Michigan community college presidents. The researcher modified the research questions to address self-reported career and life experiences among selected Michigan school superintendents.

#### Limitations of the Study

The study involved an interview process based on perceptions and self-reported experiences of Michigan school superintendents. The sample include 15 superintendents out of a population of 557 superintendents. The 15 superintendents were not selected randomly. As a result, several limitations exist. The limitations are presented to provide the reader some guidelines for interpretation of the data. The study limitations include the following:

1. The study included 15 superintendents out of a population of 557 superintendents. The research was not designed to achieve statistically significant findings. Thus, generalizations of the study are affected.
2. Superintendents were not selected on a random basis. Superintendents were selected to participate based on recommendations from the researcher's guidance committee, recommendations by respondents of the

study, willingness to participate in the study, and proximity to the researcher.

3. The study reflected the perceptions of the school superintendents who chose to participate. Superintendents who did not choose to participate may have had different perceptions.
4. Superintendents who were pursuing a doctorate degree at Michigan State University were not asked to participate in the study. The researcher's guidance committee felt the experience of pursuing a doctorate degree was very intensive, therefore, potentially biasing the perceptions of the superintendents.
5. The length of time since an event took place could have influenced the lesson learned. Perhaps the lesson remembered could have changed over years. The superintendent may have needed time away from the experience before he or she could have identified the experience as a learning opportunity. In addition, some lessons may have occurred without the superintendent being able to determine the triggering event.
6. The memory of the subjects, the choice of emphasis of the researcher when reporting data, and the selective perceptions of the subjects are limitations of the study. Readers of the study may not agree with the interpretations of the researcher.

### Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined in the context in which they are used in this dissertation:

School superintendent. The chief executive officer of the kindergarten through twelfth grade public school district; the person appointed by the governing body to represent it in day-to-day operations.

Key events/experiences. Occurrences that affected the leadership style of the school superintendent: particular job tasks; interactions with specific people; hardships; or other significant events or periods of transition (including formal course work, early jobs, personal experiences, and others).

Lessons learned. Leadership skills or patterns of thinking as perceived to be acquired as a result of the events/experiences –in other words, the information learned as a result of having experienced the event or transition.

Michigan public kindergarten through twelfth grade school district. One of the 557 institutions in Michigan providing comprehensive educational services for kindergarten through twelfth grade students on a public basis, funded by state and local taxes.

Respondents. The Michigan public school superintendents who participated in the study by granting an interview.

### Organization of the Dissertation

The dissertation includes five chapters. Chapter I introduces the study providing the purpose and basic concepts for the project. Chapter I includes the



background, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, research questions, limitations of the study, definition of terms, and organization of the dissertation.

Chapter II contains a review of literature and research pertinent to the topic under investigation. The literature review includes three sections. The first section pertains to the development of school superintendents. The second section explores the literature regarding the study of leadership development. In the third section, the concept of mentoring is discussed.

Chapter III provides specific information about methodology and procedures of the study. Chapter III includes an introduction, sample population, project design, data collection, the interview process, data analysis, and summary of methodology.

The results of the data analysis are included in Chapter IV. The specific groups of experiences and lessons learned are categorized and identified. Frequency tables and lists of examples are utilized to answer the research questions presented in Chapter I.

Chapter V contains results, conclusions, discussion of results and conclusions, implications for future research and reflections.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### Introduction

This chapter contains a review of literature and research pertinent to the topic under investigation. The literature review includes three sections. The first section pertains to the development of school superintendents. The second section is related to the literature regarding the study of leadership development. In the third section, the concept of mentoring is discussed.

#### Development of School Superintendents

An extensive amount of literature exists regarding the development of school superintendents. However, literature that specifically examines the effects of informal learning and self-directed learning experiences or the lessons learned from earlier professional and personal experiences that have contributed to superintendents' leadership development is very limited. The development of school superintendents' section of the literature review will begin by developing a profile of superintendents of public school systems in the state of Michigan. This section will then examine decision-making styles of superintendents followed by leadership effectiveness of superintendents.

Keidel (1977) conducted a study to expand the body of knowledge concerning those individuals who serve as superintendents in the state of Michigan. Data was gathered by means of a survey instrument modeled after a previous study conducted by the American Association of School Administrators in 1970. The survey was sent to 511 superintendents. The findings were based on a return of 355 surveys, which was a 69.5 percent return rate.

The study helped to develop a profile of Michigan school superintendents. The study resulted in the following conclusions:

1. Over 80 percent of the superintendents began as secondary school teachers at a median age of 23.9. Superintendents spent a median of five years as a classroom teacher.
2. The most common first assignment after serving as a classroom teacher was a building principal. Superintendents of larger districts tended to be appointed to their first administrative position earlier than superintendents of smaller districts.
3. The average superintendent was appointed to his or her first superintendency just before the thirty-seventh birthday, with 91 percent having been appointed before the age of forty-five. The larger the enrollment of the superintendent's current district, the larger the enrollment of the district of the initial superintendency tended to be.
4. Boards of education of larger districts were more likely to hire superintendents from out-of-state. The salaries of superintendents are highly related to the student enrollment of the district.

5. Graduate study programs were rated positively, particularly courses in personnel administration, school business management, public relations and school finance.
6. The two most significant issues perceived by superintendents were inadequate financing of schools and labor relations.
7. The superintendents felt positively toward their work. Three-fourths of the group indicated they would again choose the superintendency as a career.

Duke (1987) followed the school superintendency as it developed through changes in the concept of leader effectiveness. The traditional concept of a leader included images of the superintendent as a father, general, and coach. Traditional school leaders were perceived to possess qualities such as goodness and virtue. Management of the schools was seen as important, however management was seen to have a secondary purpose.

In 1970, Conner described the superintendency as a position which was continuing to evolve after 125 years. In a comprehensive survey, Conner stated that:

. . . the evolution of the superintendency, a position born more than 125 years ago, is not yet complete. It will never be complete as long as the schools remain decentralized in a free and changing society. What form the superintendency will take will depend, in great part, upon the professional vision, enterprise, statesmanship and courage of individuals in the generations of superintendents and board members still to come.

The American Association of School Administrators conducted studies in 1960 and 1971. The studies revealed some extensive changes in the decade between the reports. The tenure for superintendents on an average was reduced by 33 percent, from nine years to six years. The mean salary rose by almost 50 percent. The number of superintendents holding earned doctorates rose from slightly less than 22 percent in 1960 to more than 29 percent ten years later.

Although there were many changes, some characteristics remained the same. For example, superintendents were generally content with their graduate classes, they followed similar career patterns, and they reported that if they had it to do over again, they would again choose the superintendency as their career.

Jaaskelainen (1984) conducted a study to determine if superintendents tend to hire principals with similar needs and thinking styles. The five characteristics tested for needs were achievement, autonomy, affiliation, dominance, and abasement. The five characteristics tested for thinking styles were pragmatist, idealist, realist, synthesist, and analyst. A demographic checklist consisted of six biographical characteristics. To determine and measure similarities and differences among the variables of this study, two instruments were used. The Personal Preference Schedule measured the manifest needs, and the Inquiry Mode Questionnaire measured the thinking styles. Both superintendents and the principals they had hired completed these two tests along with a demographic checklist. Selected administrators in the Michigan Middle Cities Association were participants.

The major findings included the following:

1. The superintendents' and principals' manifest needs of achievement, autonomy, affiliation, dominance, and abasement showed no significant difference.
2. The superintendents' and principals' thinking styles, pragmatist, idealist, synthesist, and analyst, showed no significant difference.
3. The superintendents' and principals' thinking style, realist, showed a significant difference.

Jaaskelainen concluded that superintendents did tend to hire principals with similar needs and thinking styles.

Higgins (1988) conducted a study of the decision-making styles of selected Michigan superintendents. The purpose of the study was to examine whether the decision-making styles preferred by selected Michigan school superintendents were related to demographic traits of their school districts or personal idiosyncrasies of the superintendents. The results of the study indicate that the decision-making style of superintendents are affected less by their personal idiosyncrasies than by the characteristics of a given situation in which they are required to make a decision. An earlier researcher stressed the importance of studying observable behavior.

Haplin (1966) suggested that the study of administrative behavior is very much the same across different institutional categories of administration. Examples include school, city, and hospital administration. Haplin suggested that it is

important to study the observable behavior of the administrator, not the statements by an administrator regarding how they function and make decisions.

School board members and superintendents often disagree regarding who has the authority to make decisions. Researchers from the American School Board Journal and the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University surveyed a representative national sample of 2,488 school board members and 2,488 superintendents, of whom 535 board members and 817 superintendents responded (Alvey & Underwood, 1985). The purpose of the study was to determine where school board members and superintendents agreed and disagreed about the responsibilities of school leadership and decision making. One of the greatest areas of disagreement was personnel. School board members wanted their superintendents to have less responsibility in the hiring process while the superintendents wanted more responsibility. Additional areas of disagreement included day-to-day administration, business and financial operations, and curriculum matters.

Simon (1945) described decision making as a process that approaches but does not become completely rational behavior. Simon states that the process of choosing among alternative strategies will always be flawed because all of the alternatives are never known by the decision maker. He believes that decisions are made with knowledge of the consequences. Values, personal preferences, and influences within the organization are also key factors.

Brown, Newman, Rivers (1985) conducted a survey of 178 school board members from 56 schools. It was determined that the superintendents' position

on issues affected the board members' need for more time to make a decision, their need for more information, their need for informal contacts, and the use of their own experiences. Conflict among board members and the superintendent affected the decision-making of the superintendent.

The concept of leadership effectiveness has been studied by many researchers. Models of effective leadership are varied but in general terms have the following commonalities. Human relations skills, exhibiting consideration for employees and democratic decision making results in high morale and thus high productivity. A concern for people and a concern for completing tasks results in high morale and high productivity. Effective leadership needs to be tailored to the situation such as group task, structure, timing, and stress (Perrow, 1972).

Campbell, Bridges, and Nystrand (1977) described the leadership role in terms of abilities, roles, and behavior:

1. Two abilities, at least, characterize the leader. He or she has a goal for the future and a plan for achieving it. In addition to this, he or she understands that effective planning for the achievement of goals involves the people who are affected by those goals. The leader marshals the intelligence of these people to get the job done. The leader is expected to furnish ideas. He or she in turn expects to receive ideas from his or her associates. He or she inspires people to cooperate in dealing with these ideas, so that the purposes of education are served.
2. The interpersonal role that has received the most attention in the literature is the leader role. As the leader of the organization, the administrator guides and motivates subordinates. He or she attempts to harness the energies of subordinates by effecting an integration between the purposes of the organization and the motives of the individual. Leadership permeates a great many of the administrator's activities. It is evident in what appear to be casual encounters, for example, when the manager greets a subordinate, asks about his or her work and compliments him or her on achievements.



3. Consistent with the general usage of the term leader, we define a leader as an administrator who has a mission or a special sense of direction for the organization and who is able to secure the commitments and efforts of subordinates in service of this mission. (pp. 22, 176, 268)

Tillman and Rencher (1976) studied organizational production and the needs of people with a high achieving group of superintendents. The results of the study showed that the high achieving superintendents choose the management style of 9.9 as per (Blake and Morton, 1964). The 9.9 management style includes a high regard for completing tasks and a high regard for people. The high achieving group of superintendents had a concern for production, a concern for the efficiency of educational personnel, a concern for cooperation among subordinates, and a concern for the needs of people. Tillman and Rencher recommended that superintendents utilize the 9.9 managerial leadership style.

In a successful organization the leader is viewed as an individual who is successful establishing a high level of expectational performance for employees.

Tosi and Hamner (1974) stated,

Leadership is the process by which an individual influences the behavior of another person or group. . . . Leadership occurs when an individual is able to influence another person or group to go beyond the boundaries of the psychological contract. Compliance with directives falling within the psychological contract is administration. To move an individual or group beyond those boundaries is leadership. (p. 424)

McMaster (1985) conducted a study to determine the problems experienced by superintendents in Michigan between 1972 and 1984 that negatively affected their ability to provide leadership in their districts. The problems experienced by the superintendents resulted in turnover of superintendents. The study involved

selected job related factors and their degree of relationship to the superintendents' effectiveness and turnover. The total population included the 521 Michigan superintendents. A total of 366 surveys were returned which was a 70 percent return rate.

The major findings were as follows:

1. Problems experienced in board-superintendent relations had a significant influence on reasons for turnover.
2. Board member elections, specifically board incumbent defeats, had a significant effect on turnover of superintendents.
3. Superintendency turnover was found to be independent of problems experienced in communications/public relations.
4. Public pressure applied through special interest groups had no significant effect on turnover.
5. Turnover was found to be independent of problems experienced in staff conflicts.
6. Financial difficulties were found to have no significant relationship to turnover.
7. Turnover was independent of difficulty experienced in management problems.
8. No statistically significant relationship was found between previous superintendency experience and perceptions of the seven variables.

Evaluating the leadership skills of an individual appears to be difficult.

Petrullo (1961) identified three methods that are typically utilized:

1. Through the use of standard proficiency test, usually called a situational test.
2. Observations of performance records of typical leadership performance.
3. Evaluation of the production of the group.

The Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) was developed as an outgrowth of the Ohio State Leadership Studies. The LBDQ is considered a situational test which was used to measure twelve dimensions of leadership behavior.

Christner and Hemphill (1955) utilized the LBDQ in a study which compared the scores of 132 military aircraft commanders and 64 school superintendents. The aircraft commanders and superintendents completed the LBDQ-Ideal and were described on the LBDQ-Real by members of their staffs. The results of the study showed that the educational administrators exhibited greater consideration and less initiation of structure than the aircraft commanders. The researchers suggested that the difference in scores may be a result of the philosophical differences in schools versus the military. The schools place an emphasis on consideration while the military stresses the initiation of structure.

Haplin (1971) utilized the LBDQ to examine the performance of fifty Ohio superintendents from rural school districts. Haplin looked at the relationship between superintendents' self-perceptions regarding consideration and initiating structure. The self-perceptions of the superintendents were compared with the perceptions of the school board and staff. Halpin concluded the following:

The leadership ideology of board and staff members, and of the superintendents themselves, is essentially the same. Effective or desirable leadership behavior is characterized by high scores on both Initiating Structure and Consideration. Conversely, ineffective or undesirable leadership behavior is marked by low scores on both dimensions. These findings on the leadership ideology of superintendents, staff members, and board members agree with the results of an earlier Air Force study in which it was found that aircraft commanders rated effective by both supervisors and crew score high on both leader behavior dimensions. These results are also consistent with Hemphill's findings that college departments with a campus reputation for being well administered are directed by chairmen who score high on both leader behavior dimensions. (p. 18)

Schug (1974) researched the perceptions of leadership behavior of selected Michigan superintendents as seen by the superintendents, principals, teachers, and school board members. The LBDQ was utilized. Schug wanted to explore the perceptions of leadership by the various groups compared to the size of the school districts. The study included twenty-one school superintendents. Ten of the superintendents were selected from districts of 10,000 or more students while eleven superintendents were selected from districts of 3,000 or less students. Ten people from each district participated in the study. The three major research questions of the study included the following:

1. Is there interaction between the factors of positions and the size of the districts?
2. Will there be significant differences in Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire Subscale scores between large and small districts?

3. Will there be significant differences in the Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire in subscale scores between administrative positions the persons have in the school district?

Schug drew several conclusions based on the study. First, there were no differences in the perceptions of leadership behavior because of the size of the district or the position a person holds within the district. Second, the subscales used may not have been sufficiently sensitive to these differences and that the use of other subscales might have been of benefit in identifying differences. Third, the LBDQ may not be the most appropriate instrument to use in testing for differences in perceptions. Fourth, he believed that there are differences in leader behaviors between large and small district superintendents. Fifth, it would appear to be difficult if not impossible to isolate fully these differences with the use of a situational instrument such as LBDQ. Sixth, subjective observations may be a more sensitive approach to identifying these differences in small and large district superintendents. And finally, the present research did tend to support the notion that there is much empirical work yet to be done regarding the perceptions of the position of superintendent of schools. (p. 109-111)

### Study of Leadership Development

Leadership development has been researched extensively and is perhaps one of the least understood concepts of organizational theory. Leadership is a complex and disconcerting subject. It is difficult to determine why one individual is considered an effective leader while another individual is not. This section of

the literature review will examine definitions of leadership followed by characteristics of effective leaders and finally, the development of leaders.

It is difficult to define leadership because it means different things to different people. Janda (1960) elaborates on this topic:

Not much smaller than the bibliography on leadership is the diversity of views on the topic. Many of the studies essentially ask: What do people mean when they speak of a leader? Other studies begin with a conceptual or empirical definition of leadership and then proceed to determine correlates or consequences of leadership so defined. Even a cursory review of these investigations show that leadership means many different things to different people. (p. 345)

The word "leader" appeared in the English language as early as 1300, yet it wasn't until 1800 that the variation "leadership" occurs in this language (Stogdill, 1974, p. 7).

Stogdill (1974) provides a simple definition for the term leader. Stogdill states that a leader is the person whose behavior exercises a determining effect on the behaviors of group members.

Bowers and Seashore (1966) identified attributes of leadership. The first attribute is that leadership is only meaningful in the context of two or more people. The second attribute is that leadership consists of behavior: behavior by one member of the group toward other members of the group which advances some joint aim.

A comprehensive view of leadership is offered by Franklyn Haiman. "In the broadest sense, leadership refers to that process whereby an individual directs, guides, influences, or controls the thoughts, feelings, or behavior of other human beings" (Haiman, 1951, p. 4).

Tead (1935) writes from the organizational viewpoint. He feels leadership is the activity of influencing people to cooperate toward some goal which they come to find desirable.

James Lundy defines leadership as principally a task of planning, coordinating, motivating, and controlling the efforts of others toward a specific objective (Lundy, 1957). Mitton (1969) also defines leadership from the perspective of the business world. Mitton defines leadership as the conception of a goal and a method for achieving it; the mobilization of the means necessary for attainment; and the adjustment of values and environment factors in the light of the desired end.

A final definition of leadership which the researcher chose to include in the literature review is by (Zalenik, 1967, p.59). Zalenik states that the essence of leadership is "choice, a singularly individualistic act in which an administrator assumes responsibility for a commitment to divert an organization along a particular path."

Many studies have explored the characteristics of effective leaders. Halpin and Croft (1962) found that effective leaders established the importance of the organizational climate. The effective leader has the ability to create a climate in which the leader can initiate and implement his or her leadership style. The Halpin and Croft studies found that the leaders' behavior has a significant impact on the formation of a school climate.

Fiedler (1967) studied two different approaches to leadership style which include task orientation and relationship orientation. The two approaches were

studied within three kinds of situations, favorable, unfavorable, and moderately favorable. Favorable was defined as the quality of relationships among staff, the power of the leader, and the extent of structure in the task. Fielder found that task-oriented leaders worked best when the situation was very favorable or very unfavorable. Fielder's efforts developed into what is known as the contingency theory.

Manasse (1984) examined the effectiveness of school principals. Manasse found that goal-setting played a major role for an effective principal. For principals to experience success in the goal-setting process and achieve support from staff, the principal must know the direction the school is going based on the values of the staff involved in the particular goal. Manasse specified that an effective principal incorporated the following goal-setting behaviors:

1. A personal vision of their school as they want it to be at some point in the future.
2. The development of an agenda of actions toward the implementation of that vision.
3. Management of the goal setting process to generate commitment to the vision on the part of all participants in the school community.
4. Expert information sensing and analysis skills, used to develop agendas, monitor programs, and provide feedback.
5. Timely use of conflict management and problem solving, as dictated by the information sensing activities. (p. 14-15)



Hollingsworth (1974) conducted a study regarding effectiveness of formal leaders of a utility company. The study investigated the extent to which a relationship existed between the effectiveness of a formal leader and the informal organization. The study found that effective leaders are those who accurately perceive the strength of the informal organization with the work setting. Hollingsworth also studied the leader's membership within the informal organization finding that there is a slight association between membership in the informal organization and formal leader effectiveness. Membership of the leader within the informal organization may allow the leader to use the informal information system and may allow the leader to achieve acceptance of ideas with the informal group.

Argyris (1961), in a study of leadership within organizations, stated that an effective organizational leader understands the informal elements within the organization. Argyris feels that the most important components of an organization are high human loyalty and high productivity. Effective leaders promote productivity by control, internal influences, and problem solving skills. Also, an effective leader will find ways to allow employees to contribute to the organization and insure self-expression. An effective leader lets employees know what helps and hinders productivity within the organization.

A study was conducted which correlated traits of leadership with management performance ratings and organizational levels. The leadership traits that correlated were intelligence, supervisory ability, initiative, self-assurance, and individuality (Ghiselli, 1963).

Bennis (1985) interviewed 90 chief executive officers from some of the nation's largest corporations, university presidents, public officials, newspaper publishers, and coaches with winning records. Bennis identified five traits that these leaders had in common. They include:

1. Vision - the capacity to create a compelling picture of the desired state of affairs that inspires people to perform.
2. Communication - the ability to portray the vision clearly and in a way that enlists the support of their constituencies.
3. Persistence - the ability to stay on a course regardless of the obstacles encountered.
4. Empowerment - ability to create a structure that harnesses the energies of others to achieve the desired result.
5. Organizational ability - the capacity to monitor the activities of the group, learn from the mistakes and use the resulting knowledge to improve the performance of the organization.

Bennis stated that the effective leaders studied were from diverse backgrounds and did not have common patterns of psychological makeup.

When effective leadership exists in an organization, employees feel important and know what they do has meaning and is significant; learning and mastery are valued; there is a team, a family, a unity; work is stimulating, challenging, fascinating, and fun because people are motivated and identify with the ideals of the organization (Bennis, 1984, p. 8-11).

The focus of this study concerns the leadership development of school superintendents. A great deal of time and money is utilized in the development of leaders who operate within organizations. Gordon (1988) stated that American organizations would spend almost 1.2 billion hours of training 37.5 million employees in 1988. Middle level managers are the recipients of the majority of the training. Gordon reported that management skills and development training was the most common area of leadership development. Included within this topic area is team building, motivation, delegation, conducting meetings, stress management, time management, listening, leadership training, and finance. The majority of these training opportunities include internal training programs as well as classes and conferences.

Servais (1990) commented about the frequency of companies forming their own training program.

Training and retraining people for productive and satisfying work lives is an important segment of adult education today. More and more companies are developing their own training and education programs in order to meet growing demands of global competition and rapidly evolving technologies. While some companies rely on in-house training and education, a large number combine in-house programs with offerings from community colleges, universities, technical schools and customized training and education. The more we, as educators, know about the continuing education needs of organizations, the better prepared we will be to mesh our expertise with theirs to provide the best possible opportunities for employees to develop to their full potential. The research context is broad, covering not only the multitude of possible arrangements of the elements of training and education, but also the varied organizational contexts within which employee development occurs. However, it is only by piecing together the results of highly-focused research that we can begin to understand the big picture. (p. 1)

Randall (1967) stated that the development of leaders occurs in three ways:

1. formally, through degree programs, courses, and seminars
2. informally, with on the job training
3. through self-directed learning based on events and experiences.

According to Gordon (1988), informal training occurs in every organization. It takes place between co-workers, supervisors, and employers, and between manager and supervisor. "It occurs during the simple accumulation of experience on the job. It's real, it's valuable, and it represents an enormous hidden investment in training and development" (p. 52).

Livingston (1971) believes that most formal training programs for management are not successful at developing the skills necessary for career success. He also believes that the most important job responsibilities are learned on the job, not in the classroom.

In 1982, a study was conducted by McCall, Lombardo, and Morrison regarding how managers learn to be leaders. A total of 86 executives were interviewed. The purpose of the study was to find out from the executives what experiences in their lives and careers helped them to be successful. The executives described "the three most important events in their development as leaders, a description of the event, and a statement of what they had learned from the event" (p. 7).

Lindsey, Homes, and McCall (1987) studied 112 other leaders using an open-ended survey developed from the initial interviews. The data was combined into four major categories:

1. developmental assignments
2. hardships
3. other people
4. other significant events.

Five types of development assignments were identified. They were the project/task force assignments, line to staff switches, start-ups, fix-its and assignments involving a major change in scope. The key events regarding hardships include business failures, demotions, lousy (sic) jobs, subordinate performance problems, and personal trauma. The key events involving other people were good and bad bosses, and role models. Lastly, the key events regarding other significant events included course work, early work experiences, and personal events involving a diverse array of off-the-job experiences.

### Mentoring

The term mentor originated from Homer's Odyssey in which Athene served as a mentor for Telemachus when his father Ulysses left to fight in the Trojan war (Homer, 1911).

Research on the concept of mentoring has increased in the past decade. The mentoring relationship assists the mentee in psychological development and entry to a career and continued advancement. Recent studies have addressed career mentoring and the nature of the mentor-mentee relationship. Studies have investigated the mentoring concept with adult education. Additional studies

explore the motivation for the formation of relationships, positive and negative consequences, and the conclusion of the relationship.

Levinson (1978) has done considerable analysis of mentoring among young males. He identified mentoring as a component of the adult development process. Levinson coined the phrase "Entering the Adult World". In "Entering the Adult World, a young man has to fashion and test out an initial life structure that provides a viable link between the valued self and the adult society" (p. 79). Levinson also stated that, "the distinctive character of this developmental period lies in the coexistence of its two tasks: to explore, to expand one's horizons and put off making firmer commitments until the options are clearer; and to create an initial adult structure, to have roots, stability and continuity. Work on one task may dominate, but the other is never totally absent. The balance of the two tasks varies tremendously" (p. 80).

"The true mentor fosters the young adult's development by believing in him, sharing the youthful dream and giving it his blessing, helping to define the newly emerging self in its newly discovered world, and creating a space in which the young man can work on a reasonably satisfactory life structure that contains the dream" (Levinson, 1978, p. 98-99).

Levinson felt the term mentor could be exchanged for other roles based on the function of the relationship. Other roles where the mentor concept may be utilized include teacher, coach, sponsor, counsel, and guide. The mentor relationship may last from two to ten years, ending subtly or traumatically.

Weber (1980) felt that mentors encouraged mentees with their pursuit of "hopes, objectives, plans, events, and actions" (p. 20). Weber identified dangers with the mentoring relationships. Weber felt negative results could develop with a desire to "live vicariously through an alter ego, to recreate themselves in an attempt to gain some sort of corporate immortality" (p. 23).

Bova and Phillips (1984) gathered definitions for the term mentor which describe the relationship of the mentor and mentee. The definitions include the following:

1. One of relatively high organization status who by mutual consent takes an active interest in the career development of another person. (Sheehy, 1976, p. 151)
2. A guide who supports the person's dream and helps put it into effect in the world. (Woodlands Group, 1980, p. 131)
3. One defined not in terms of the formal role, but in terms of the character of the relationship and the function it serves. A mentor's primary function is to be a transitional figure, one who fosters the younger person's development, a mixture of parent and peer. (Levinson, 1978, p. 98)
4. A non-parental career role model who actively provides guidance, support and opportunities for the protege. The function of a mentor consists of role model, consultant/advisor and sponsor. (Sheehy, p. 131)
5. One who personalized the modeling influences for the protege by a direct involvement not necessarily implied by a role model. Thus, in addition to being a role model, the mentor acts as guide, a tutor or coach, and a confidant. (Bolton, 1980, p. 198)
6. One who possess sincere generosity, compassion and concern. They listen in the best Rogerian sense, displaying feelings as well as ideas. (Woodlands Group, 1980, p. 920)
7. One who is receptive to looking objectively at accomplishments and giving encouragement, and also running interference for proteges being groomed for higher level jobs. (Thompson, 1976, p. 30)

8. A mentor may act as a host and guide welcoming the initiate into a new occupational social world and acquainting the protege with its values, customs, resources, and cast of characters. (Levinson, 1978, p. 98)
9. A mentor is a person who shares "the dream," not necessarily a consciously formulated career goal, but rather a cherished perception of self (ego ideal). (Misserian, 1982, p. 87)
10. Mentors are influential people who significantly help proteges reach major life goals. They have the power, through who or what they know, to promote welfare, training, or career. (Phillips-Jones, 1982, p. 21).

Schmoll (1981) examined the relationship of mentors and mentees in the preparation for and advancement in professional careers. Schmoll studied the qualities of the relationship, the personal qualities of each party, and how the relationship developed. Schmoll identified characteristics of the mentor/mentee relationships:

1. friendship
  2. professional and personal
  3. informal
  4. comfortable
  5. open
  6. accepting of differences
  7. trust
  8. commitment
  9. caring
  10. mutual sharing
  11. mutual respect
  12. mutual admiration
  13. mutual satisfaction
  14. compatibility
- (Schmoll, 1981, p. 92-93)



### Chapter Summary

Three areas of study were reviewed in this chapter. The areas of study in the review of literature and research were pertinent to the topic under investigation. The development of the school superintendents literature review uncovered an extensive amount of literature. However, the researcher was unable to find literature that specifically addresses the effect of informal learning and self-directed learning experiences or the lessons learned from earlier experiences concerning superintendent development. The development of school superintendents section included a profile of Michigan school superintendents, decision-making styles of superintendents, and leadership effectiveness of superintendents.

The second section of the literature review was the study of leadership development. Leadership development has been extensively researched and is considered to be a complex concept. Definitions of leadership were provided followed by characteristics of effective leaders and the development of leaders. Leadership is difficult to define and identify because it means different things to different people.

The final section of the literature review explored the research concerning mentoring. The mentoring relationship assists the mentee in psychological development and entry to a career and continued advancement. Levinson (1980)

feels the term mentor could be exchanged for other roles based on the function of the relationship. Other roles where the mentor concept may be utilized include teacher, coach, sponsor, counsel, and guide.

## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

#### Introduction

The design of this study was descriptive and exploratory, and the interview process was used for data collection.

The population from which the sample was taken is school superintendents in the state of Michigan. The researcher conducted the study with a sample population of 15 superintendents. Superintendents were interviewed from districts representing a stratified student enrollment. Members of the researcher's doctoral committee recommended superintendents who they felt would be interesting to study. Superintendents who were interviewed recommended colleagues to participate in the study.

Structured interview questions were developed to conduct the research. The questions were designed to allow the superintendents to respond to open-ended questions. Follow-up questions were utilized in an effort to collect as much pertinent data as possible.

Superintendents were contacted by telephone. If the superintendent agreed to participate in the study an interview was scheduled at a date and time convenient to both parties. The interviews were scheduled for and lasted one and one-half hours to two hours. The interviews were tape recorded with permission of the

interviewee. The researcher took notes during the interviews. The interviews were conducted in a professional and confidential manner. The identities of the superintendents and the school districts were not disclosed.

This chapter includes the following topics: sample population of the study; project design, data-collection procedures, the interview process, and the data-analysis procedures utilized in the study.

### Sample Population

The population from which the sample was taken was school superintendents from the State of Michigan. The researcher conducted the study with a sample population of 15 superintendents. Efforts were made to select a sample which was representative of the population of school superintendents in Michigan. School superintendents were asked to participate in the study based on the student enrollment of their school district, gender, and race. Participation was based on invitations offered to selected superintendents. Members of the researcher's doctoral committee recommended superintendents they felt would be interesting to study. Superintendents who were interviewed were asked to recommend colleagues who were well respected and might be willing to participate in the study.

Three superintendents were interviewed from districts with each of the following student enrollments: districts with two or more class A high schools, districts with one class A high school, districts with one class B high school, districts with one class C high school, and districts with one class D high school.

The Michigan Department of Education (1991) reports that 17 of the 557 school districts in the state have female superintendents. The department also reports that 16 of the 557 school districts in the state have superintendents who represent ethnic minorities including 1 American Indian, 1 Oriental, and 14 Blacks. The sample included one female and one person who is an ethnic minority.

### Project Design

This research project titled, Self-Reported Significant Career and Life Experiences Among Selected Michigan School Superintendents should be considered to be a qualitative study. The project design is similar to a study conducted by Dotterer (1989). Dotterer studied significant career and life experiences and subsequent lessons learned for Michigan Community College Presidents.

Putman (1986) indicated that the qualitative method is an umbrella term covering many different interpretive techniques, most of which describe, translate, or otherwise enhance the meaning, not the frequency, of natural occurring phenomena in the social world. (p.98) Mintzberg (1979) expressed his concern about research designs that are significant only in the statistical sense of the word. Mintzberg feels it is important to get out into the real organizations and interact with the people within the institutions and organizations. He believes qualitative studies are a valuable method of research design.

The focus of this study was to bridge the research of two major fields of study; the school superintendency and administrator and leadership development. The

qualitative method was selected to provide an in-depth investigation of the subject. Structured interview questions were developed to conduct the research. The open-ended questions serve as a means to acquire as much pertinent data as possible.

### Data Collection Procedure

The plan was to interview 15 school superintendents in Michigan. Selected superintendents initially received a phone call from the researcher explaining the purpose of the study. If the superintendent agreed to participate in the study, an interview was scheduled at a date and time convenient to both parties. The researcher traveled to the location of choice of the superintendent. The interviews were scheduled for one and one-half hours to two hours. In a similar study by Dotterer (1989), one and one-half hours for interviews were sufficient to gather the desired information. Also, Dotterer found that one and one-half hours was the maximum time the majority of subjects would devote to the interviews.

After the interview date, time, and location was determined, the superintendents were asked to submit a resume which would assist the researcher in obtaining background information. Some of the questions were designed around specific job experiences. For example, it was helpful to become familiar with the career patterns of the superintendents. Also, permission was requested to audio tape the interview to ensure that all data was captured for future analysis. The tapes were used to verify interview responses immediately following the interviews and during data analysis. Finally, superintendents were

assured that confidentiality would be maintained by not identifying persons, schools, or districts in the dissertation or further research reports and not allowing anyone other than the researcher access to the tapes and written notes of the interview. At the completion of the data analysis the tapes were destroyed.

After the phone call and agreement of the superintendent to be interviewed, a letter of confirmation was sent immediately. The letter of confirmation reaffirmed the date, time, and location of the interview as well as addressing confidentiality. Along with this letter, an Informed Written Consent Form was included, which requested the superintendent's formal consent to participate in this study. A list of the questions that was used during the interview was also enclosed with the letter. The superintendent received the questions a minimum of one week prior to the interview. The letter thanked the superintendent for his or her willingness to participate in the study and requested if there was a need to reschedule the interview to contact the researcher. (See Appendix A, Appendix B, and Appendix C.)

The interviews were scheduled for the months of July and August, 1991. The data were analyzed during the months of September and October.

Each of the superintendents received a letter of appreciation for their willingness to participate in the study. The results of the study were shared with the superintendents. (See Appendix D.)

The researcher conducted a pilot test with a superintendent in an effort to determine the effectiveness and appropriateness of the data collection procedure.

An emphasis was placed on reviewing the appropriateness of the interview questions.

The superintendent was contacted by telephone and agreed to participate in the study. The superintendent received a letter of confirmation, the Informed Written Consent Form, and the interview questions. The interview was conducted one week later.

The superintendent agreed to allow the researcher to tape the interview. The researcher asked the interview questions and took notes on the responses of the superintendent. The questions were well received by the superintendent who stated that he felt the interview questions were very good. The superintendent stated that he enjoyed the interview. The questions forced him to reflect upon his career and former mentors in his life.

The data collection process was efficient and well received by the superintendents. The interview questions followed a logical order and were effective in gathering pertinent data for the study. During the meeting to request formal permission from the guidance committee to conduct the research, a ninth question was added to the interview questions. The question states, "As you look back to your formal training (degree programs, conferences, workshops), what impact did they have on you in your professional development?"

### The Interview Process

The interview questions were designed to address the research questions presented in Chapter I. The interview questions were developed after reviewing



a similar study by Dotterer (1989). Dotterer conducted a study regarding significant career and life experiences and subsequent lessons learned for Michigan Community College Presidents. Dotterer's interview questions originated from McCall et al.'s (1988) book, The Lessons of Experience and Bennis and Nanus's (1985) book, Leaders. The following questions were used during the interview process:

1. What past events, either professional or personal, have had the most impact on you in your role as a school superintendent?
2. What lessons have you learned from those experiences?
3. Receiving helpful feedback regarding one's professional performance can certainly influence future behavior in the workplace. Please talk about the kind of feedback you receive from others. Is it helpful feedback? Who gives or gave you most of your feedback? What would you change about the feedback you receive from others?
4. When you reflect back over the people who have had an effect on you, which people influenced you the most; i.e., who taught you the most? How did that person/those people teach you? Would you call these people mentors?
5. How do you think you have changed over the years during your tenure as a school superintendent?
6. What part have events in your personal life played in your growth as a leader?
7. What has been the most fun for you in your role as a superintendent? Please give examples of situations you have enjoyed the most.
8. What is the most significant thing you have learned as an adult, the one thing you would pass on to another person if you could?
9. As you look back to your formal training (degree programs, conferences, workshops), what impact did they have on you in your professional development?

An interview schedule was selected because it is flexible and adaptable and follow-up questions could be utilized to collect as much pertinent data as possible. The open-ended questions utilized also assisted with the collection of as much pertinent data as possible. Merriam and Simpson (1984) stated that open-ended questions require that the researcher remain free of preconceived notions of when an appropriate answer might be given. Questions must be carefully formulated in such a manner to avoid leading the respondent in any particular direction. Therefore, the open-ended question "has the advantage of eliciting a wider latitude of possible responses from participants, and consequently, information may result that is anticipated by the researcher" (p. 128-129).

Isaac and Michael (1982) stated that the interview process could help establish rapport and effective communication between the respondent and the interviewer. Kerlinger (1973) suggested that questions which are open-ended "supply a frame of reference for respondents' answers, but put a minimum of restraint on the answers and their expression" (p. 483).

The interview questions initiated discussion about the research questions. Follow up questions were utilized to collect as much pertinent data as possible. The interviews were tape recorded with permission of the interviewee. The researcher took notes during the interview. The superintendents were told they may end the interview any time they wished.

### Data Analysis

Eleven of the 15 interviews were conducted in the superintendents' offices. Three interviews were conducted in restaurants and one interview was conducted in the investigator's office.

The length of the interviews varied from 52 minutes to 1 hour and 42 minutes. The average length of an interview was 1 hour and 18 minutes.

The researcher usually arrived at the site of the interview 20 minutes prior to the interview time. The researcher walked around the school facilities and read literature about the school district. The interviewer reported to the superintendent's office at the scheduled appointment time. The interviews began at the scheduled appointment time except for three occasions. On two occasions the interview began ten minutes late. On one occasion the superintendent stated that he had not had a chance to review the interview questions and requested an alternate interview date. An alternate date was mutually selected at a restaurant near the researcher's office.

Interruptions during the interviews were not a major distraction. Of the fifteen interviews, seven were interrupted at least once. The most interruptions during an interview was three. In most instances the researcher was asked to remind the superintendent about the discussion prior to the interruption. During one interview the researcher overheard a confidential telephone conversation. The researcher was asked to erase the conversation on the tape recorder and keep the conversation confidential.

The interviews typically started with light discussion about the school district, common acquaintances, the research topic, or the researcher's professional position and plans after completion of the doctorate degree program. Following this the researcher asked if the superintendent had any questions about the interview schedule. The researcher also asked if the superintendent had any objections to the tape recording of the interview. None of the superintendents asked that the tape recorder not be used. Three superintendents however, asked for assurance that the interview would remain confidential.

Overall, the superintendents were very candid. They seemed to be comfortable and open. Most of the superintendents spoke directly to the questions. Occasionally the researcher had to redirect the conversation back to the interview questions. The superintendents seemed to enjoy the experience. Eight superintendents stating directly that they found the experience enjoyable. The researcher believed that the interview process was successful gathering pertinent data.

### Summary of Methodology and Procedures

The descriptive and exploratory design of the study was discussed in this chapter. The sample population of school superintendents was presented as well as the project design. The data-collection procedures, the interview process, and data analysis procedures were presented. The researcher's impression of the research methodology and procedures were briefly discussed.

In Chapter IV, the data obtained through the interview process will be presented. Since the data was qualitative, the data analysis is appropriate to qualitative data.

Qualitative data appear in words rather than in numbers. They may have been collected in a variety of ways (observations, interviews,...tape recordings) and are usually "processed"...before they are ready for use (via dictation, typing up, editing or transcription), but they remain words, usually organized into an extended text. (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 21)

Narrative description was used to summarize the data acquired from the interviews. Patterns of experiences and lessons learned were combined into categories. Basic response frequency tables and frequency percentages were calculated for items and total responses for the survey. As a result of the descriptive nature of the study, other statistical techniques were not utilized.

## CHAPTER IV

### Analysis of the Results

#### Introduction

Little research has focused on the development of superintendents based on the effect of experiences on a personal and professional basis and the lessons learned as a result of those experiences. Few data have been collected which collate experiences and lessons learned by superintendents during on-the-job training in other positions, during on-the-job training in the current superintendency, during personal experiences before and after age 18, and during academic experiences. The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of informal learning and self-directed learning experiences from earlier professional and personal experiences that have contributed to superintendents' leadership development. Self-report procedures were utilized to identify experiences and lessons learned that the superintendents felt contributed to their success as a chief executive officer of a school district.

The following research questions were studied:

1. What were the perceived effects of work and other life experiences on the professional development of school superintendents?

2. What experiences had a perceived effect on school superintendents from the areas of: (a) formal training, (b) informal on-the-job training experiences, or (c) personal life experiences?
3. What perceived lessons were learned from professional experiences that the superintendents felt better prepared them for the job tasks associated with the role of school superintendent?
4. Did patterns or themes arise from the kinds of experiences and the lessons learned as perceived by the group of superintendents sampled?
5. If patterns of experiences or lessons learned arise, what perceived effects could these results have for the professional development of prospective school superintendents?

An analysis of the collected data is presented in this chapter. Each research question is specified. Relevant data and results are discussed. The fifth research question addressed the professional development of prospective school superintendents. It is briefly presented in Chapter IV. It is discussed in detail in Chapter V.

#### Research Question 1

What were the perceived effects of work and other life experiences on the professional development of school superintendents?

The 15 superintendents identified 93 work and life experiences that they believed had affected their professional development. Work experiences were identified 34 times. Personal life experiences were identified 59 times. The work

and life experiences stated by the 15 superintendents are presented in Table 4.1. In an effort to protect the identity of the superintendents and their respective districts a letter of the alphabet was assigned to each superintendent. The assigned letter of the alphabet is maintained for the superintendents throughout the dissertation.

The definition of work experiences and life experiences utilized by Dotterer (1989) were utilized. Work experiences were events that the superintendent reported experiencing as part of his or her professional growth. Life experiences were events that took place outside the workplace. The interview questions identified events that were categorized for each superintendent as being work or life experiences.

Table 4.1 shows that each of the superintendents identified experiences that affected their professional development. Fourteen (93%) of the superintendents identified events from professional and personal sources. Only one of the superintendents did not identify an event from both sources with that being an experience from the professional category.

Professional/work experiences included those experiences that took place during on-the-job training in other positions and in the current position. The superintendents reported that their experience being a teacher and serving in a variety of administrative positions provided learning opportunities. Several superintendents reported that their former supervisors had a significant impact on their professional development. Former supervisors often included superintendents and principals. Three superintendents identified job training



Table 4.1.—Number of Experiences Affecting Professional Development of  
Selected Michigan Public School Superintendents.

Superintendent	Type of Experience		Total by Superintendent
	Professional (Work)	Personal (Life)	
A	1	4	5
B	2	1	3
C	3	4	7
D	2	2	4
E	3	5	8
F	3	5	8
G	1	3	4
H	0	8	8
I	4	4	8
J	5	3	8
K	4	6	10
L	1	6	7
M	2	3	5
N	2	1	3
O	1	4	5
Total by type	34	59	93

experiences outside the field of education including pilot training, serving in the Air Force, and running a small business.

Four examples made by superintendents of on-the-job training in positions other than the current superintendency include the following:

My former principal was straight out honest. The people I most admire are straight out honest.

Pilot training and serving as a pilot in the Air Force provided leadership opportunities.

Past superintendents that I worked for have been a model to me. All of the superintendents have been good to me but they had different styles.

When I was a teacher my administrators were fair and equitable.

Professional experiences during on-the-job training in the current superintendent position were also identified. The superintendents talked about dismissing personnel, assistance from other superintendents, and a variety of other experiences.

Examples of on-the-job training during the current superintendency that promoted professional development are as follows:

Trying to fire incompetent teachers.

Two former area superintendents were very helpful to me. I became a superintendent at age 28.

My leadership roles in professional associations.

The Intermediate School District training has been very good.

The superintendents reported that personal experiences before and after age 18 promoted leadership development. Many of the early personal experiences

included the influence of their mother, father, or both parents, athletic experiences, and relationships with relatives and teachers. The most common personal experience before age 18 was their upbringing by one or two parents. Examples of early life personal experiences that were identified by the sample of superintendents as influencing their professional development includes the following:

I was raised in a one parent family. My father left when I was very young.

We were very poor when I was growing up.

I learned from my high school football coach.

A former high school teacher was firm and fair with me. The teacher made me work hard.

I worked for my uncle in the summers. He had high ethical standards.

Personal experiences after 18 that promoted learning opportunities for the group of superintendents were also provided. The most common personal experience was having a wife and kids. Superintendents also talked about relationships with professors at graduate school, college athletics, having kids that went through school, and support from friends and relatives. Examples of personal experiences after age 18 that promoted professional growth in the superintendents are:

My wife and children.

Athletics helped me with the competition of the job.

I have a supportive family and husband which I very much need and appreciate.

The death of my mother and my wife's father.

A list of all quotations are provided in Appendix E. The quotations are categorized based on the type of experience. Patterns pertaining to the kinds of experiences are discussed in detail in answer to Research Question 4.

The experiences identified by the superintendents as being forceful in their professional development ranged from three to ten experiences (see Table 4.1). All of the superintendents identified personal experiences that affected their development with eight being the most identified by any superintendent. The mean number of personal experiences reported was 3.9. All but one of the 15 superintendents identified professional experiences that affected their development. The range was zero to five. The mean number of professional experiences reported was 2.3.

Based on the data presented in response to Research Question 1, it is believed that the professional development of these Michigan public school superintendents was perceived to be affected by their professional and personal experiences. The superintendents identified on-the-job training experiences and personal experiences that they felt contributed to their professional development.

### Research Question 2

What experiences had a perceived effect on school superintendents from the areas of: (a) formal training, (b) informal on-the-job training experiences, or (c) personal life experiences?

To address this research question the investigator postulated that the cumulative frequencies of the experiences recalled would suggest some degree of influence with the three categories of events. The three categories of events are included in Research Question 2. The researcher used the definitions of formal training, informal on-the-job training experiences, and personal life experiences which were used by Dotterer (1989).

Formal training experiences include specific academic programs, seminars, in-service sessions, conferences, institutes, workshops, and other programs offering specific opportunities for knowledge acquisition. Informal, on-the-job training experiences could include being put in charge of a new project, being given progressively more challenging responsibilities in a department or an organization, spending time with peers or supervisors learning about specific job tasks, or interacting with other people either as an observer (mentor) or reaching out to a co-worker in a support-network fashion. Personal life experiences would include those events occurring outside the workplace that in some way affected the superintendent's leadership style. (p.62 - 63)

The number of academic or formal training experiences identified by the superintendents as affecting their professional development positively are presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2.—Frequency Distribution of Academic/Formal Training of Selected Michigan Public School Superintendents.

Superintendent	Number of Academic Experiences Reported	Cumulative Frequency
A	5	5
B	3	8
C	2	10
D	2	12
E	2	14
F	3	17
G	2	19
H	3	22
I	2	24
J	4	28
K	2	30
L	5	35
M	4	39
N	3	42
O	4	46

Every superintendent reported two or more academic experiences as being significant in their professional development. Those experiences are presented in Table 4.3. Appendix E includes the quotations from superintendents regarding academic experiences they considered positive and negative. Conferences and workshops provided significant learning experiences for several of the superintendents in the sample. Superintendents reported that some of their graduate work was helpful while some of it was not. A few superintendents were very pleased with their graduate studies while a few superintendents felt

it was of limited value. Undergraduate studies received a similar review by the sample of superintendents.

**Table 4.3.—Significant Academic Experiences of Selected Michigan Public School Superintendents.**

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My undergraduate class in political science.

My master's degree in speech therapy.

Degree programs had the most impact on me, I like to hear lectures. I get a lot of good information, invaluable information.

The extern program gave me a lot of information. (3 responses)

An undergraduate sociology class was my best class. It opened my mind. I looked at the world differently after that class.

My undergraduate work at the University of Hawaii was very good.

My graduate work emphasis was on leadership. At the time it wasn't helpful but it is now.

My bachelors degree was very good but my education classes were not helpful.

MEIM workshops and state conferences are very good and timely.

My undergraduate work helped me to increase my knowledge in my field. But, what I learned didn't have much of an influence on my teaching.

My graduate work had a positive influence on me. It helped me to develop my leadership style.

Conferences and workshops keep me up to date.

My year of internship was very valuable to me.

Most of the stuff that I have found relevant to me have been in a workshop setting.

Table 4.3.--Continued

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Some of my graduate work was very pertinent, not all of it.

My Mott Internship was very helpful. (3 responses)

Conferences and workshops are extremely helpful. You get things you can bring back to the district and use. (2 responses)

An Adventures in Attitudes class was very helpful.

I try to stay current by attending IDEA fellowship programs and other workshops and conferences.

Degree programs give you the ticket to get there. The value depends on the course and the instructor and how it meets your needs at the time. (2 responses)

Some of my graduate work was helpful. It depends on if the instructor is current or not.

My bachelors degree program gave me the general program I needed. It was not practical for administration.

My master's degree in curriculum and other graduate courses were helpful.

Workshops are most practical. Conferences generally provide current information.

Conferences and workshops have helped mold me to where I am now.

During my graduate studies I came out of my shell. I was able to select courses that I liked. My graduate courses were very much more rewarding than my bachelor's degree.

My relationship with people I have met in my formal training has had the greatest impact on me.

My bachelor's degree provided a foundation. It was very important for my professional career.

My master's degree training was outstanding. I had hands-on experience.



Table 4.3.—Continued

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My specialist's degree training was less profound than my master's degree but you always learn something.

My graduate programs helped me to develop my leadership style.

Conferences and workshops keep me up to date. I meet people I can contact for more information.

Conferences and workshops have been positive and practical. It provides informal discussion with colleagues.

My undergraduate work increased my knowledge base and awareness.

My bachelor's degree prepared me to be a teacher.

Conferences are good because you can talk to other people in the field. Speakers are usually good.

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Informal, on-the-job training opportunities were identified by the superintendents as a significant category of experiences. A frequency distribution for informal, on-the-job training opportunities is shown in Table 4.4. A total of 34 experiences were reported. Twenty six (76%) occurred before the superintendent became the chief executive officer of his or her current institution. Eight (24%) of the events occurred after the superintendent assumed the current superintendency.

Table 4.4.--Frequency Distribution of Informal On-The-Job Training Experiences for Selected Michigan Public School Superintendents.

On-the-Job Training Experiences			
Superintendent	Before Current Position	As Superintendent (Current Position)	Total Cumulative Frequency
A	1	0	1
B	1	1	3
C	2	1	6
D	1	1	8
E	3	0	11
F	3	0	14
G	1	0	15
H	0	0	15
I	1	3	19
J	5	0	24
K	4	0	28
L	1	0	29
M	1	1	31
N	1	1	33
O	1	0	34
Total	26	8	

Table 4.5.--On-The-Job Training Experiences for Selected Michigan Public School Superintendents.

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On-the-Job Training in Other Positions  
(Not Current Superintendency)

My diverse background in education. I was an elementary principal and an assistant high school principal. I also was an assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction in a small district.

My teaching experience and principalship helped in the development of my ability to deal with people.

My former principal was straight-out honest. The people I most admire are straight-out honest.

Evaluating a teacher as a young principal. The teacher asked if she was doing anything right.

I switched from being a high school teacher and became an elementary teacher. It was extremely rewarding.

When I was a teacher my administrators were fair and equitable.

My superintendent when I was a high school principal was my major professional event.

Past superintendents that I worked for have been a model to me. All of the superintendents have been good to me but they had different styles. (5 responses)

I worked with a lot of class people who had a positive effect on me.

I worked for seven summers running a small business. The owner was ethical and treated me well.

A former curriculum director I worked with got me excited about curriculum and instruction.

My experience in community education made me sensitive for students that struggle in the system.

Table 4.5.—Continued

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A prior superintendent had a philosophy of we will do it my way. He went about things the wrong way.

A former community education director I worked with. He got me into administration.

An administrator from a neighboring district. I watched him from a distance.

I worked in a troubled school as the dean of students. I was responsible for straightening out the building.

I obtained a job in a district that was growing rapidly. I was involved in a variety of building projects and curriculum development.

I worked for a district that had a good track record and sought to improve and were willing to experiment.

Pilot training and serving as a pilot in the Air Force provided leadership opportunities.

My Air Force experience included a couple management positions. I had a chance to practice my management skills.

Being a teacher and high school principal.

My first administrative position as an athletic director and assistant principal.

On-the Job Training As Superintendent  
(In Current Position)

When I took the position as superintendent I was unaware of the roles I would be required to assume. I learned a lot from job experiences.

The dismissal of a principal.

The Intermediate School District training has been very good.

Trying to fire incompetent teachers.

Table 4.5--Continued

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Organizing an Early Childhood Center. People felt they were losing their neighborhood school.

A superintendent in a neighboring district held my hand during my first year as a superintendent.

My leadership roles in professional associations.

Two former area superintendents were very helpful to me. I became a superintendent at age 28.

---

Five of the respondents reported that past superintendents they had worked for had been a model to them. The five interviewees felt that although their past superintendents had different styles, they had been good to work for. Some of the sample of superintendents stated that their teaching experience was a significant training opportunity. Former principals and other administrators assisted in providing learning experiences. On-the-job training in positions outside of education were cited by some superintendents. Personal experiences before and after the age of 18 is the last category of events analyzed in response to research Question 2.

Academic and on-the-job experiences were reported by the superintendents as being significant to their professional development. Personal experiences were also identified by the superintendents. A total of 59 personal experiences were reported. Twenty-eight (47%) occurred before the superintendent was 18. Thirty-one (53%) occurred after the age of 18. A frequency distribution is shown in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6.—Frequency Distribution of Personal Life Experiences for Selected Michigan Public School Superintendents.

Superintendent	Personal Life Experiences		Total Cumulative Frequency
	Before Age 18	After Age 18	
A	3	1	4
B	0	1	5
C	4	0	9
D	2	0	11
E	5	0	16
F	2	3	21
G	1	2	24
H	4	4	32
I	1	3	36
J	1	2	39
K	2	4	45
L	2	4	51
M	1	2	54
N	0	1	55
O	0	4	59
Total	28	31	

Table 4.7.—Personal Life Experiences for Selected Michigan Public School Superintendents.

Personal Experiences Affecting  
Superintendents (Before Age 18)

I was raised in a one parent family. My father left when I was very young.

My mother had a tremendous influence on me in getting an education. She didn't have an education herself.

Table 4.7.—Continued

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We were very poor when I was growing up. (2 responses)

My farming background helped me develop a strong work ethic.

My farm background developed the whole notion of solving problems.

When I was 10 years old I was expected to work like a man. I had a feeling of being valued.

There was a lot of conflict in my family between my mom and dad.

My early life upbringing, foundation from parents. (2 responses)

Former teachers served as good role models.

My dad was ill and died when I was early in my teens. I had to be the man of the house.

My dad was a coach. I was involved in athletics in high school and college.

When I was in high school I was put in leadership positions such as athletics and the student council.

When I was growing up people that I associated with had a positive influence on me.

I worked for my uncle in the summers. He had high ethical standards.

My outside interests and hobbies keep me enthusiastic for my job. I believe in life after work.

Playing high school football.

My father accidentally shot his leg off when he was 16 years old. He had hard times getting jobs. He worked his way up. He was a self-made person.

My uncle was a teacher, principal, and superintendent. He was my hero and I wanted to copy him.

A former high school teacher was firm and fair with me. The teacher made me work hard.

Table 4.7.--Continued

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I left school at the age of 12 to enter the seminary. Values, morals and ethics are very important to me.

As a child and student I was in leadership positions. My leadership abilities have developed over a long period of time.

My father influenced me a lot. (2 responses)

I learned from my high school football coach.

My childhood had the greatest impact. Simply learning life's lessons as one grows up.

A former high school wrestling coach.

Personal Experiences Affecting  
Superintendents (After Age 18)

Having children that went through school. It gave me an awareness of the importance of our jobs. (2 responses)

People have been good to me, you can't be successful by yourself.

My grandfather encouraged me to earn a doctorate degree. He said a doctorate degree was like his union card.

A superintendency is a team effort. My wife always supports me. (2 responses)

I spent five years in active duty in the Navy and 24 years in the Navy Reserves.

My wife and children. (6 responses)

An interview experience I had in college. My father's company provided scholarships for employees' children. Interviews were required each year.

Coaching varsity football for eight years.

A relationship with a professor at graduate school. (2 responses)



Table 4.7.—Continued

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I left the school business midway through my career to be a salesman.

I used to be a Catholic priest which has had a profound impact on my views of education.

Getting married was an enormous decision after leaving the church.

A family was living in a car with a young child.

I have a supportive family and husband which I very much need and appreciate.

\_\_\_\_\_ is a good friend and mentor. He gives me good, honest feedback.

Four years of college as a varsity football player provided leadership opportunities.

The death of my mother and my wife's father.

My involvement in athletics put an emphasis on health, including being durable to do the job.

Athletics helped me with the competition of the job.

My relationship with my former college advisor.

Being a football player in college.

Leadership positions in my fraternity.

My wife has her own career. It's healthy, everyone needs their own interdependence.

---

Personal life experiences before the age of 18 included the nurturing of parents. Some of the superintendents referred to their mother or father. Some referred to both parents. The parents influenced the superintendents by

developing values and morals. Relationships with other relatives and school personnel were identified. Experience in athletics was also commonly stated.

Personal life experiences after the age of 18 were varied. The most common event reported was having a wife and children. Superintendents also identified leadership development events as being college athletics, support from family, friends, and college professors.

All three types of events (formal training, informal on-the-job training, and personal life experiences) appeared to effect the leadership development of the sample of school superintendents. The self-report interview procedure showed that the superintendents most often identified personal life experiences, followed by formal training experiences, and then on-the-job training experiences. Table 4.8 reflects the frequencies reported.

Table 4.8.—Experiences Affecting Selected Michigan Public School Superintendents Professionally.

Type of Experience	Frequency Reported
Formal Training	46
On-the-Job Training	34
Personal Life	59

Based on the data presented and in response to Research Question 2, it appears that all three types of experiences were perceived to have affected the

sample of school superintendents interviewed. The interviewees most often identified personal life experiences. The frequencies of the experiences reported does not necessarily indicate which events are most significant for the sample of superintendents.

The third research question addressed perceived lessons learned from professional experiences.

### Research Question 3

What perceived lessons were learned from professional experiences that the superintendents felt better prepared them for the job tasks associated with the role of school superintendent?

The researcher utilized the definition of "lesson" that was used in the study conducted by (Dotterer 1989). The superintendents were asked to define a lesson as being something that was learned from experiencing some event or situation. Common themes for each category of lessons learned are presented in response to Research Question 3. Each theme includes examples of quotations stated by the superintendents. Appendix F provides a complete list of the quotations for lessons learned. The number of superintendents who identified lessons learned and the total number of lessons reported are provided for each category.

#### Professional Experience Lessons: Before Current Superintendency

Three themes emerged from the 51 lessons identified by the 12 superintendents in this category. The three themes include bringing about change in an organization, the importance of people skills, and management philosophies.

Examples of perceived lessons learned pertaining to bringing about change in an organization include:

You can't dictate change from the top.

Teaching staffs and administrators are difficult to change. You have to work with them and gain their confidence.

Teachers have to have a share in decisions that relate to the curriculum process. Classroom teachers have to carry it out. They're the ones that are closest to the children.

People will be done with, not to.

Make sure people are informed and have a chance to buy in.

Examples of perceived lessons learned pertaining to the importance of people skills include the following:

You need to be listening and watching. Also, listen for what people are not saying.

Be concerned about your public relations, how your district perceives you.

My former superintendent had a bad temper. I learned that you don't lead by anger.

You get square answers from people you have developed a relationship with.

Be cooperative and a good listener, then make a fair and well-thought out decision.

I look for people skills above everything else when hiring administrators.

Examples of perceived lessons learned pertaining to management philosophies include:

All the best ideas don't have to come from me.

My former superintendent taught me that you don't spend more than you have. Let's differentiate between what you want and what you need.

Hard work pays off. Be prepared to handle difficult situations by doing your homework so you can make the best educated decision.

A wrong decision is better than no decision at all. The people that you work with would prefer to see you make decisions. You must go somewhere.

People always make the difference. You learn quickly who you can count on and who you can't count on, who can be trusted and who can't be trusted, and who will follow through and who won't.

Professional Experience Lessons:  
During Current Superintendency

Four themes emerged from the 36 lessons identified by the nine superintendents in this category. The four themes include working successfully with boards of education, relationships with staff members, community relations, and limitations of the superintendency.

Examples of perceived lessons learned pertaining to working successfully with boards of education include:

You are not going to get a high powered individual on your board who doesn't dip or dab in administration from time to time. You need to learn to deal with that as a superintendent.

How to deal with a diverse board of education. Each board member has a different personality.

Remember that each board member has a big ego.

Remember that you have to please your school board. Ultimately, they are the ones that make the decision of whether you go or stay.

Make sure all board members have the same information.

Examples of perceived lessons learned pertaining to relationships with staff members include:

Be prepared for the fall-out. There is always a group of people who will not support you.

You want people who care about you enough to tell you when you screwed up.

Sensitivity to where other people are coming from.

You need to be aware that people will tell you what you want to hear.

Examples of perceived lessons learned pertaining to community relations include:

I learned how to deal with the media and be sensitive to their needs. You have to be careful what you say and how you say it.

I never get all my information from one source.

I am expected to attend many functions. People want you there. It's a status symbol to a lot of people.

They either like you or they don't. If they like you they will overlook little faults you have. If they don't like you they will hang their hats on your faults.

Examples of perceived lessons learned pertaining to limitations of the individual superintendent include:

You really don't have to know everything that is going on in the district.

Finding out you have your own Achilles' heel.

As a superintendent you don't always get positive feedback. People are beating on you from every angle.

The decision that looks like the right decision may be wrong politically.

Everyone is an expert because they were in school at one time.

I have a lot less control as a superintendent than I thought I was going to have. You are limited by state laws and master contracts.

Personal Experience

Lessons: Before Age 18

The 15 reported lessons generated two themes that were presented in this category by nine superintendents. The themes focused on the development of values and ethics and how to deal with people.

Examples of perceived lessons learned pertaining to the development of values and ethics include:

I learned to work hard, to have a strong work ethic.

I learned to tell the truth.

My religious background promoted my interest in character education.

I carry the belief system I learned as a youngster throughout my career.

The following are perceived lessons learned pertaining to how to deal with people.

I am sensitive to the needs of the lower socio-economic families.

My father taught me how to deal with people.

I learned how to treat people.

Personal Experience

Lessons: After Age 18

Three themes emerged from the 31 lessons identified by the 12 superintendents in this category. The three themes include the development of

values and ethics, issues in respect to the self, and personal qualities needed to be a successful superintendent.

Examples of perceived lessons learned pertaining to the development of values and ethics include:

To be straight-out honest.

Play by the rules, be honest, and treat people the way you would like to be treated.

People are more important than anything else.

Responsibility and respect for other people.

Examples of perceived lessons learned pertaining to issues in respect to the self include:

Keep your sense of humor.

Be sure you have life after work, hobbies are important.

Don't work yourself into a type "A" personality.

You can do anything you want to do, believe in yourself.

Examples of perceived lessons learned pertaining to the personal qualities needed to be a successful superintendent include:

Value the opinion of others.

If you want to catch fish keep your line in the water. Keep at the task, be persistent.

My wife and five kids taught me patience, to be a good listener, to be organized, and to receive feedback.

I was taught patience. As a kid I had a terrible temper.

It is important to be goal oriented.



### Lessons Learned From Academic Experiences

In this category, six superintendents identified 13 lessons. The researcher was unable to identify a theme. A variety of lessons were reported. Table 4.9 shows the responses from this category.

Table 4.9.—Lessons Learned From Academic Experiences.

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My college professors at Michigan State helped me look at issues differently. They helped me put some of my actions in a more theoretical vein.

MEIM workshops and state conferences provide me with current information that is helpful.

A professor at graduate school taught me that as the administrator you are not going to get anywhere if you don't follow rather than lead the group.

My graduate work helped me to develop my leadership style.

My graduate work helped be to work with people.

Conferences and workshops keep me up to date.

A former professor taught me about bringing about change.

Conferences and workshops give me things I can bring back to the district and use.

The need to be flexible and take opportunities when they come.

The worth of people. Everyone needs to feel ownership. Allow people to function and feel their worth.

A mentor at my former university has been a good sounding board for me.

Any student can learn if you provide the right interactions.

The extern program gave me many ideas. It kept me from going stale. We should do more sharing with each other.

In response to Research Question 3, a variety of lessons were perceived to be learned by the superintendents as a result of professional, personal, and academic experiences or events. A total of 146 lessons were identified by the superintendents. The lessons were categorized into themes. The list of themes for each category is listed below.

#### Lessons Based on Professional Experiences Before Current Superintendent Position

- Bringing about change in an organization
- The importance of people skills
- Management philosophies

#### Lessons Based on Professional Experiences During Current Superintendency

- Working successfully with boards of education
- Relationships with staff members
- Community relations
- Limitations of the superintendency

#### Lessons Based on Personal Experiences Before Age 18

- Development of values and ethics
- How to deal with people

#### Lessons Based on Personal Experiences After Age 18

- Development of values and ethics
- Issues in respect to the self
- Personal qualities needed to be a successful superintendent

#### Lessons Based on Academic Experiences

(Six superintendents identified 13 lessons. The researcher was unable to identify a theme.)

In addition to the themes identified in Research Questions 1, 2, and 3, the issue of major patterns of experiences and lessons also emerged. Research Question 4 addressed this data.

#### Research Question 4

Did patterns or themes arise from the kinds of experiences and the lessons learned as perceived by the group of superintendents sampled?

This question was addressed, in part, in the analysis of the results of Research Questions 1, 2, and 3. Research Questions 1 provided groupings of perceived work and life experiences enhancing professional development of school superintendents. Research Question 2 provided groupings of perceived effect of formal training, informal training, and personal life experiences on school superintendents. Research Question 3 focused on the lessons learned from professional experiences. Lessons learned were grouped by categories. To address Research Question 4 the types of experiences and lessons learned are categorized. Definitions for each pattern found is provided.

#### Patterns of Experiences

Patterns of experiences were defined as things that affected the leadership style of the school superintendent: particular job tasks; interactions with specific people; hardships; or other significant events or periods of transition (course work, early jobs, personal experiences).

Five major categories of experiences were developed based on the responses of the superintendents. The five categories include (a) personal experiences up to age 18, (b) personal experiences after age 18, (c) professional experiences before the current superintendency, (d) professional experiences during the current superintendency, and (e) academic experiences. Each category of experiences is defined below.

Personal experiences before age 18. These experiences focused on the nurturing of parents. Some of the superintendents referred to their mother or father, some referred to both parents. Values, morals, and expectations were developed. Relationships with other relatives and school personnel were identified. Experience in athletics was also commonly stated.

Personal experiences after age 18. These experiences were varied. The most common event reported was having a wife and children. Superintendents also identified key professional development events as being college athletics, support from family, friends, and college professors.

Professional experiences before current superintendency. Respondents reported that past superintendents for whom they had worked had been a model to them. Respondents reported that although their past superintendents had different styles, they had been good to work for. Teaching positions and relationships with former principals and other administrators were also identified. On-the-job training in positions outside the field of education were cited.

Professional experiences during the current superintendency. These experiences included becoming familiar with the new role and performance

responsibilities. Some of the new responsibilities included dismissing personnel and developing new programs. Key events included receiving assistance from experienced superintendents.

Academic Experiences. These included degree programs, workshops, and conferences. Conferences and workshops were identified as providing significant learning experiences for several of the superintendents in the sample. Graduate work was deemed helpful by some interviewees and of limited value to others. Undergraduate studies received a similar review.

### Themes of Lessons Learned

The five categories of events above were developed from the superintendents' descriptions of various lessons learned. Lessons learned were defined as leadership skills or patterns of thinking as acquired as a result of the events or experiences. Five major themes of lessons were identified as (a) basic values and ethics, (b) management philosophy, (c) initiating change, (d) school and community relations, (e) personal attributes and limitations.

The five major themes of lessons are described in the following paragraphs.

Basic values and ethics. This group of lessons involved the personality foundation provided by family members, friends, and colleagues. These principles were developed during the early years of the superintendents' lives. The principles included telling the truth, working hard, treating people fairly, and being sensitive to the needs and opinions of others. These basic values and ethics served as a foundation from which the superintendents serve their districts.

Management Philosophy. This group of lessons focused on the management style of the interviewees during their role as superintendents. Many of the lessons identified were basic management concepts concerning dealing with employees. Being a good listener, making fair and educated decisions, hiring competent people, and establishing positive relations with staff were emphasized.

Initiating Change. The lessons involved making changes in the direction of the institution and involving the appropriate personnel. The responses indicated that they believed institutional change can take place but it is necessary to involve people in the planning process. The superintendents emphasized the importance of working with staff and gaining their confidence.

School and Community Relations. This group of lessons focused on the importance of the superintendent possessing a positive image with staff, community, and the board of education. Working with the media and keeping all board members informed was emphasized as was a functional relationship with the staff.

Personal Attributes and Limitations. This group of lessons identified issues of personal discipline, strengths and weaknesses, and self-growth. These lessons appeared to involve professional and personal development. Personal attributes included being goal oriented, patient, persistent, possessing organizational skills, and being a good listener. Limitations involved coming to the realization that although you are the chief executive officer there are situations beyond your control or knowledge.

A variety of lessons were identified by the research as well as patterns of experiences and lessons. Categories of the quotations of lessons learned are provided in Appendix F.

#### Research Question 5

If patterns of experiences or lessons learned arise, what perceived effects could these results have for the professional development of prospective school superintendents?

Research Question 5 addressed interpretation of data and possible outcomes for prospective superintendents and is discussed in detail in Chapter V.

Additional data was obtained from the study of Michigan public school superintendents. In the next section which is titled *Subsidiary Analysis*, topics and significant data are presented.

#### Subsidiary Analysis

In this section, three additional categories of data are analyzed. The researcher chose to analyze additional categories of data that were not included within the five research questions. The data emerged as a result of the interview questions. The researcher felt the supplemental data was pertinent to the research. In the first category data from the interview question, "What has been the most fun for you in your role as superintendent?" will be analyzed. The second category will analyze data from the interview question, "How do you think you have changed over the years during your tenure as a school superintendent?" The third category will analyze data from the interview

question, "As you look back to your formal training (degree programs, conferences, workshops), what impact did they have on you in your professional development?"

What Has Been Most Fun For You  
In Your Role as Superintendent?

The 15 superintendents made 37 responses to this interview question. Common responses included having the ability to make major and direct changes in the school district. Superintendents felt it was fun to give employees awards, honor retirees, and recognize honor students and graduates. Implementing programs that impact students was also considered fun. One superintendent reported that the job is not fun. Appendix G provides a complete list of quotations from this interview question.

Examples of activities that the superintendents considered to be fun include the following:

Taking an organization and seeing it grow and blossom; becoming better than it was when I started.

I enjoy going into elementary schools and seeing young children in classrooms.

When projects are being completed and curriculum ideas are being implemented.

I enjoy following extra-curricular activities.

This is not a fun job. I've had to deal with declining enrollment and budget cuts each year.



How Do You Think You Have Changed Over the Years During Your Tenure as a School Superintendent?

The 15 superintendents made 34 responses to this interview question. A variety of responses were made but the major theme involved professional growth and being more confident and more effective in the superintendent role. Superintendents felt they have matured and learned a great deal. Several superintendents commented that they felt more open and compassionate with people. A complete list of the responses for this interview question is provided in Appendix G.

Examples to how superintendents think they have changed during their tenure as a school superintendent includes the following:

I have learned to protect my time.

I have matured. I have learned a great deal.

I have become more process oriented. I am more attuned to take time to get people on board.

I got into perspective that I can't please everyone and there are some things I can't control.

I am more skeptical than I used to be.

I'm really not excited about being a superintendent. I don't think I want to experience another superintendency. It is a tough job. You have many publics you have to please.

As You Look Back to Your Formal Training (Degree Programs, Conferences, Workshops), What Impact Did They Have on You in Your Professional Development?

This interview question was addressed in response to Research Question 2. Research Question 2 includes a table (Table 4.3) that identifies significant,

academic experiences of the superintendents who participated in the study. The researcher chose to review this data in more detail because Table 4.3 includes only positive quotations concerning degree programs. The interviewees responses were positive and negative. The researcher considers 44 of the responses to be positive and 11 to be negative. A complete list of the quotations in response to this interview question is provided in Appendix E.

Each of the superintendents reported some components of the formal training to be beneficial to their professional development. Conferences and workshops provided positive learning experiences for most of the superintendents in the sample. Superintendents reported that some of their graduate work was helpful while some of it was not. A few superintendents were very pleased with their graduate and undergraduate work while others felt it was of limited value.

Examples of positive comments regarding formal training includes the following:

The extern program gave me a lot of information.

My Mott Internship was very helpful.

Conferences and workshops keep me up to date.

Some of my graduate work was very pertinent, not all of it.

My graduate programs helped me to develop my leadership style.

Examples of negative comments regarding formal training includes the following:

Most of the degree programs were getting through the hoops.

Graduate training was very little help, if any. I am not impressed with higher institutions of learning and their administrator preparation.

Conferences never did a lot for me. A lot of the sessions did not apply to what I was doing. I didn't get any new information.

My bachelor's degree program did not prepare me to be a teacher.

### Chapter Summary

The findings of the study were presented in Chapter IV. The research questions were restated, then addressed. Subsidiary analysis were provided based on additional data obtained from the research. Chapter V includes a summary of the results of the study.

## CHAPTER V

### RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND REFLECTIONS

#### Introduction

Chapter V includes a summary of the results of the study, conclusions, discussion of results and conclusions, implications for future research, and reflections.

#### Results of the Study

**Research Question 1: What were the perceived effects of work and other life experiences on the professional development of school superintendents?**

Work and life experiences were reported by all 15 superintendents as affecting their professional development. A total of 93 work and life experiences were reported. Work experiences were identified 34 times while personal experiences were identified 59 times. Each of the superintendents identified at least one personal event that he or she felt affected his or her professional development. Each of the superintendents with the exception of one identified at least one work experience that was believed to have affected his or her professional development.

Work and life experiences were perceived to have enhanced the development of values and a sense of caring, work ethics and self-esteem, and leadership and managerial skills.

**Research Question 2: What experiences had a perceived affect on school superintendents from the areas of: (a) formal training, (b) informal on-the-job training experiences, or (c) personal life experiences.**

The self-report interview procedure showed that the superintendents most often identified personal life experiences followed by formal training experiences and then informal on-the-job training experiences. Personal life experiences were identified 59 times, formal training experiences were identified 46 times and informal on-the-job training experiences were reported 34 times.

Early personal experiences which were perceived to have affected superintendents included the influence of one or both parents. The parents were felt to have influenced the superintendents by developing values and morals. Other experiences included the relationships with other relatives and school personnel and athletics. The most commonly reported personal experience after age 18 was having a spouse and children.

Formal training experiences were reported as significant by each of the superintendents. Conferences and workshops were most often reported as significant learning experiences. The majority of on-the-job training experiences were reported as being prior to the current superintendency.

**Research Question 3: What perceived lessons were learned from professional experiences that the superintendents felt better prepared them for the job tasks associated with the role of school superintendent?**

A total of 146 lessons were reported as a result of professional, personal, and academic experiences or events. Eighty-seven professional lessons were reported, 46 personal lessons were reported, followed by 13 academic lessons. The superintendents identified a wide variety of topics of the lessons. Topics of lessons included bringing about change in an organization, the importance of people skills, management philosophies, working successfully with boards of education, relationships with staff members, community relations, limitations of the superintendency, development of values and ethics, how to deal with people, issues in respect to the self, and personal qualities need to be a successful superintendent. The researcher was unable to identify topics from the academic lessons.

**Research Question 4: Did patterns or themes arise from the kinds of experiences and the lessons learned as perceived by the group of superintendents sampled?**

Patterns of experiences arose including personal experiences before and after age 18. Professional experiences arose before the current superintendency and during the current superintendency.

Patterns of lessons learned that arose include basic values and ethics, management philosophy, initiating change, school and community relations, and personal attributes and limitations.

**Research Question 5: If patterns of experiences or perceived lessons learned arise, what effects could these results have for the professional development of prospective school superintendents?**

Patterns of experiences and lessons learned were identified. It is this researcher's opinion that educators do not do enough sharing of experiences and emotions. Groups of current superintendents could be formed, and the groups could meet on a regular basis, and generally serve as support groups. Major learning experiences could be shared. The superintendents could prepare papers which could be included in professional journals. Major learning could also be shared at conferences.

Individuals who aspire to the superintendency could be identified within their school districts. These individuals could be part of an internship group which meets with practicing superintendents on a monthly basis to discuss issues. Opportunities could be provided for the future superintendents which facilitate learning experiences. Future leaders could be assigned a mentor to aid in their professional development.

The identified patterns from this study could be compared to data from career ladder studies to provide in-depth understanding of professional development for specific positions. Information could be acquired on what an administrator learned while serving in a specific position. This information would help reduce the necessity of having to assume an individual acquired skills as a result of holding a certain position.

A great deal of learning is informal. Prospective superintendents could be given guidelines on how they may learn from others, specific experiences, and from other people. Classes or workshops could be offered to develop situations to enhance their professional growth.

It might be helpful to form a graduate course designed for people who wish to be superintendents. The course could be taught by practicing superintendents. The course could include discussion of current issues, skills needed for the position, interviewing other superintendents and reporting back to the class members, and a variety of other possibilities.

Perhaps one of the best opportunities for individuals who wish to be superintendents are programs that already exist. The programs allow prospective and current superintendents to share ideas, discuss issues, and support one another on a semi-formal basis. The programs are hosted by college professors and well-respected current superintendents in overnight settings that promote learning. Introductions are made as well as long-lasting friendships. The opportunities are offered through extern programs hosted by universities.

### Conclusions

Based on the data collected and analyzed in this study, the following conclusions are supported and hopefully contribute in the understanding of Michigan public school superintendents and their professional development.

1. Personal life experiences appear to contribute significantly to the development of these Michigan public school superintendents.



2. Previously held professional positions appear to have provided learning opportunities that contribute to these superintendents' success on-the-job.
3. Former supervisors (usually superintendents or principals) appear to have had a significant impact on the professional development of these superintendents by serving as positive or negative role models.
4. Professional experiences during on-the-job training appear to have contributed to the development of these superintendents.
5. Academic experiences appear to be significant to the professional development of these superintendents.
6. The superintendents interviewed appear to perceive conferences and workshops as being significant learning experiences.
7. Some of the superintendents interviewed appear to believe that undergraduate and graduate training programs were helpful to their professional development while others appear to have felt undergraduate and/or graduate programs were not helpful.
8. On-the-job training in positions outside of education appear to have been beneficial to the professional development of some of the superintendents sampled.

9. Formal training, on-the-job training, and personal life experiences appear to have contributed to the development of these school superintendents.
10. These superintendents perceive themselves not to be self-made. Parents, relatives, teachers, and coaches appear to have provided learning opportunities for the superintendents in the early stages of their lives. Spouses, children, professors, and former supervisors appear to have provided learning opportunities and support for these Michigan public school superintendents.
11. All of the superintendents interviewed appear to have philosophical beliefs as a result of events experienced and lessons learned that guide their actions in their role as superintendent.

### Discussion of Results and Conclusions

The results of this study indicated that work and life experiences affect the professional development of Michigan public school superintendents. A detailed review of the data gathered identified three major kinds of events that contribute in the development of school superintendents. The three events include formal training, on-the-job informal training, and personal life experiences.

Formal training included degree programs, conferences and workshops. Conferences and workshops were most often reported as significant learning experiences. Conferences and workshops allowed the superintendents to stay current with school law, technical skills and educational issues. The superintendents enjoyed conferences and workshops because they felt the

speakers and information were usually pertinent, they required a relatively short time commitment, and they provided an opportunity to interact and discuss issues with colleagues.

Undergraduate and graduate programs received a mixed review from the superintendents sampled. Most of the superintendents felt the undergraduate and graduate programs were helpful or at least somewhat helpful. A common response was that the benefit of formal training programs depended on the instructor. The sample of superintendents indicated that if the the instructor has had fairly recent experience as a practioner they can usually share helpful information. Some of the superintendents experienced internships as a part of their formal training program. The internships were seen as being very beneficial. University extern programs were also seen as being helpful. Some of the superintendents felt that undergraduate and graduate programs did not prepare them to be teachers and/or administrators.

Informal, on-the-job training situations also were perceived to have provided growth and development experiences for the public school superintendents. The superintendents believed they continued to grow in their current superintendency. These superintendents believed that their skills are being further developed in their current positions including working successfully with boards of education, relationships with their staff, community relations, and realizing the superintendency has limitations. An example of a limitation is when the superintendent finds out he or she has less control as superintendent than was expected.

Experiences that occurred before the superintendents were in their current positions were felt to provide professional development opportunities. Livingston (1971) believes that the most important job responsibilities are learned on the job, not in the classroom. The superintendents reported that it is important to work with staffs and let them share in the decisions. Keeping people informed was also emphasized. The superintendents reported they had learned to be good listeners, to be cooperative, and to make educated decisions. Experiences in previous positions appear to have taught the superintendents to work hard and to be careful spending money.

The third major kind of events that were felt to contribute to the development of school superintendents was personal life experiences. Personal experiences in early life included the development of values and ethics and how to deal with people. Early relationships with parents were felt to result in expectations of success. The superintendents believed they learned to work hard and be responsible for their actions. They also believed they learned to tell the truth, be sensitive to the needs of others, and treat people fairly.

Personal experiences after age 18 also appeared to provide learning experiences. The superintendents believed they learned to be honest, responsible, organized, goal oriented, to accept feedback, and to be persistent. The superintendents expressed a confidence that they could complete tasks. Having a spouse and children was the most common personal experience reported after age 18.

The superintendents reported interactions with a variety of people that were often considered mentors that provided positive learning experiences in their lives. As previously mentioned, the superintendents felt parents often provided the value and belief system. Parents appeared to teach the respondents how to deal with people. Relatives, teachers, and coaches were also identified as being significant to the superintendents. Superintendents reported that former administrators, typically principals and superintendents, provided numerous learning experiences. Relationships with college professors also seemed to be beneficial to the interviewees. The professors often served as a counselor regarding career decisions. Having a spouse and children was also considered to be a significant experience. Many of the superintendents turned to their spouses for support and direction.

The superintendents interviewed talked about allowing people to make their own decisions and developing people. They reported enjoying seeing employees experience success. Honoring employees, retirees, and students was often reported as being an enjoyable responsibility.

Many of the significant lessons identified by the superintendents appeared to serve as basic beliefs and philosophies from which they operate. The basic beliefs and philosophies appeared to provide a foundation which helps the superintendents operate when they are experiencing challenging and difficult times. The basic beliefs and philosophies were reported to be utilized on a day-to-day basis. The most common basic beliefs and philosophies reported included

working hard, involving others in decisions, being honest, communicating thoroughly, and respecting the opinion of others.

The majority of the superintendents interviewed reported a thirst for knowledge. They wanted to be familiar with information that may improve their organization and classroom instruction. It appeared that they were consistently seeking to develop as professionals. The superintendents interviewed indicated a willingness to take risks and admitted to making mistakes. They talked openly about the complexities and the political aspects of their jobs. The superintendents interviewed seemed to be willing to fight the wars for the general cause of education; I viewed the superintendents as survivors.

The information that was gathered as a result of this study sometimes fits into a pattern which can be categorized. However, the researcher feels the statements made by the superintendents exists on its own merit as a quotation in a list. The reported events experienced and lessons learned by the chief executive officers increases one's understanding of the individuals who serve as Michigan public school superintendents.

### Implications for Future Research

The current study included detailed interviews of 15 public school superintendents from a stratified sample. Superintendents representing districts of varying sizes were included in the research. Events and lessons learned were identified which were perceived to have contributed to the professional development of the chief executive officers.

Future research could include broadening the sample size to include a larger number of superintendents from Michigan or from throughout the country. With a larger sample it may be possible to establish more specific patterns identified by school size, length of tenure, gender, and race. A larger sample could permit statistical analysis and allow for generalization of results. Similarities and differences could be determined for individual superintendents and groups of superintendents. However, by increasing the sample size it might be necessary to conduct a telephone interview or survey by mail which I feel would reduce the comprehensiveness and depth of the study.

A qualitative study which focuses on the same topic but includes only one superintendent might provide useful insights. The researcher might conduct several interviews with one superintendent. The researcher could also observe the superintendent and interview staff and community members over an extended period of time to determine if the superintendent functions in the manner in which he or she describes. Data could be obtained which is very detailed and complete.

Further exploration of leadership styles of superintendents might be productive. Perhaps a series of interview questions could be developed which identifies how superintendents function. The study could be conducted with a sample size similar to the current research project or perhaps with a larger sample. It would be useful to interview staff members and determine if the superintendents leadership style is congruent with staff perceptions.

A study similar to the current study, could be conducted with a sample which is exclusively female or of ethnic minority. A small percentage of superintendents in Michigan are female or ethnic minority. As a result it would be interesting to learn of key events and learning experiences in their lives which have assisted them in overcoming the odds and rising to the position of chief executive officer. It might be helpful to learn if mentors played a key role in their development.

Each of the superintendents identified people who aided him or her with professional development. These people are considered mentors. A study might focus on school superintendents and their mentors. It might be helpful to learn how the relationships were established, learn the nature of the relationship, how the mentor helped the mentee, and if the relationship still exists. A key component of the study would be interviewing the mentors as well as the superintendents.

It would be beneficial to further explore the experiences of the superintendents. For example, if the superintendent previously served as a principal, one interview question might be, "What job tasks performed while being a principal were of greatest assistance for the position of superintendent?" A study of career ladders would also be useful.

Each of the superintendents has a personality which affects his or her leadership style. Assessing school superintendents and looking for patterns in personality type would be interesting. Identifying personality traits along with experiences and lessons learned would provide comparison data.



Future research could include an examination of the differences in experiences and lessons learned by superintendents from districts of varying sizes. Perhaps superintendents in large districts are exposed to different learning experiences than superintendents in small districts.

Research which further explores the nature of and particularly the significance of the various lessons learned from experience might yield interesting and useful results. Such a study might attempt to determine those lessons and experiences which were the most powerful in shaping the careers and professional characteristics of the superintendents.

### Reflections

I wish to take this opportunity to reflect upon how I became interested in this research project, the superintendents who participated in the study, the results obtained, and my personal opinions about the study.

I became interested in conducting this research after listening to a presentation by Dr. Howard Hickey about a similar study with community college presidents. The study of community college presidents identified events and lessons learned on a professional and personal basis that the presidents felt contributed to their professional development. The study was conducted by Lewis Dotterer in 1989. Dotterer interviewed 12 community college presidents from Michigan. Dotterer chose to personally interview a relatively small number of presidents to obtain detailed information as opposed to surveying many presidents and obtaining general information. Dotterer felt the two major

findings from his study involved the significant lessons learned and the notion that the presidents could not always clearly identify the event that promoted the development of a particular lesson.

After becoming familiar with the above mentioned study I became interested in conducting a similar study with Michigan public school superintendents. Being a public school educator and having a desire to be a superintendent at some point in my career, I felt it would be interesting and personally beneficial to explore events and lessons learned by superintendents. I was pleased when my guidance committee supported my desire to study this subject.

I conducted my research project with 15 Michigan public school superintendents from districts of varying size. Members of the researcher's guidance committee recommended superintendents who they felt would be interesting to study. Superintendents who were interviewed recommended colleagues to participate in the study.

I found the superintendents to be very willing to participate in the study. Each of the superintendents that I personally spoke with agreed to participate and scheduled an appointment with me within a three week period. I felt the superintendents were very open and honest with me. Each of the superintendents allowed me to tape record our interview. Three superintendents asked for assurance that the interview would remain confidential.

The research was an interesting experience for me because I had the opportunity to meet and listen to superintendents who were well-respected by my

guidance committee, other superintendents, and me personally. I had a unique opportunity to listen to key events and lessons learned which contributed to the superintendents' professional development. I enjoyed learning about their management philosophies. I was very impressed with their open and sincere comments.

The personal interviews were much more rewarding to me than surveys conducted by mail or telephone; both of which I have done previously. The face-to-face interviews allowed me to meet the superintendents' staffs and learn about their communities and school districts. I had the opportunity to visit with and observe the majority of the superintendents in their work environment where they are most comfortable.

I believe most of the superintendents enjoyed the interview. Eight superintendents stated directly that they found the experience enjoyable. Most of the superintendents spoke directly in the questions. Occasionally I had to redirect the conversation back to the interview questions. Several of the interviewees expressed an interest in receiving a summary of the study.

I felt the three most important findings of the study were the personal and professional experiences of the superintendents which they considered significant to their professional development, the lessons that were learned from these experiences, and the management styles and philosophies of the superintendents. The superintendents serve as the chief executive officers of major organizations. The study provided an opportunity to gather data about their significant experiences and learnings.

Similar to the Dotterer study, the data-analysis process was frustrating because themes of experiences and lessons did not always emerge readily. At times I felt as though I was categorizing experiences and lessons in slightly different ways.

Overall, I was very pleased with the study. I enjoyed meeting and becoming familiar with the superintendents which I consider to be a very talented group of individuals. I can honestly say that I found the study to be interesting. I anticipate that learning about the superintendents will benefit my professional development and career. I believe that managers of any organization would benefit by becoming familiar with the data obtained in the study. I am very appreciative to the superintendents for the giving of their valuable time and their open and honest responses.

## APPENDICES

**APPENDIX A**

**Letter of Confirmation**

Date

Name  
School District  
Street Address  
City, State Zip

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study regarding school superintendents and administrative/leadership development. Without the cooperation and interest of superintendents such as yourself, my study would not be possible, and I am very appreciative. I look forward to our interview which is scheduled for \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_.

Enclosed please find a list of questions that I will be asking you during our discussion. Additional questions may also be utilized in an effort to collect as much pertinent data as possible. Also, please find an Informed Written Consent Form. Please return the form to me in the self-addressed stamped envelope provided.

As we discussed during our telephone conversation, our interview and your responses will be conducted in a professional and confidential manner. Your identity and the identity of your school district will not be disclosed. I will be the only person who has access to the tapes and written notes of our interview. The interview will be tape recorded, with your permission, to ensure that all data will be captured for future analysis. You may choose to end the interview any time you wish. At the completion of the data analysis, the tapes will be destroyed.

Again, thank you for agreeing to participate in my study. If you find it necessary to reschedule our interview, I may be reached at work at 517/339-2665 or at home at 517/339-3631.

I look forward to seeing you on \_\_\_\_\_.

Sincerely,

Todd Dowrick

Enclosure

## **APPENDIX B**

### **The Interview Questions**



## The Interview Questions

1. What past events, either professional or personal, have had the most impact on you in your role as a school superintendent?
2. What lessons have you learned from those experiences?
3. Receiving helpful feedback regarding one's professional performance can certainly influence future behavior in the workplace. Please talk about the kind of feedback you receive from others. Is it helpful feedback? Who gives or gave you most of your feedback? What would you change about the feedback you receive from others?
4. When you reflect back over the people who have had an effect on you, which people influenced you the most; i.e., who taught you the most? How did that person/those people teach you? Would you call these people mentors?
5. How do you think you have changed over the years during your tenure as a school superintendent?
6. What part have events in your personal life played in your growth as a leader?
7. What has been most fun for you in your role as superintendent? Please give examples of situations you have enjoyed the most.
8. What is the most significant thing you have learned as an adult, the one thing you would pass on to another person if you could?
9. As you look back to your formal training (degree programs, conferences, workshops), what impact did they have on you in your professional development?

## **APPENDIX C**

### **Informed Written Consent Form**

### Informed Written Consent Form

Todd Dowrick requests your permission to participate in the study titled, "Self-Reported Significant Career and Life Experiences Among Selected Michigan School Superintendents."

The study is designed to investigate the effects of informal and self-directed learning experiences and lessons learned from earlier professional and personal experiences of school superintendents. The study will bridge the research of two major fields of study; the school superintendency and administrator/leadership development.

I hereby agree to participate in the study as presented in the above paragraph. I understand that my identity and the identity of my school district will not be disclosed. I understand that Todd Dowrick will be the only person who has access to the tapes and written notes of our interview, and that the tapes and written notes will be destroyed after completion of the data analysis. I also understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

\_\_\_\_\_ I give my consent to participate in the study.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not give my consent to participate in the study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Superintendent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **APPENDIX D**

### **Letter of Appreciation**

Date

Name

School District

Street Address

City, State Zip

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Thank you for allowing me to interview you for my study regarding school superintendents and administrative/leadership development. I appreciated your honest and sincere responses.

I will be completing the data collection portion of my study in late September. I hope to have the summary of the studies' findings completed by December. I will send you a copy of the summary at that time.

I enjoyed our interview and found it to be very interesting. I hope you enjoyed the experience as well.

Thank you once again.

Sincerely,

Todd Dowrick

## **APPENDIX E**

### **Responses to Interview Questions Regarding Type of Experience**

## **RESPONSES TO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS REGARDING TYPE OF EXPERIENCE**

### **On-The-Job Training in Other Positions (Not Current Superintendency)**

My diverse background in education. I was an elementary principal and an assistant high school principal. I also was an assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction in a small district.

My teaching experience and principalship helped in the development of my ability to deal with people.

My former principal was straight-out honest. The people I most admire are straight-out honest.

Evaluating a teacher as a young principal. The teacher asked if she was doing anything right.

I switched from being a high school teacher and became an elementary teacher. It was extremely rewarding.

When I was a teacher my administrators were fair and equitable.

My superintendent when I was a high school principal was my major professional event.

Past superintendents that I worked for have been a model to me. All of the superintendents have been good to me but they had different styles.  
(5 responses)

I worked with a lot of class people who had a positive effect on me.

I worked for seven summers running a small business. The owner was ethical and treated me well.

A former curriculum director I worked with got me excited about curriculum and instruction.

My experience in community education made me sensitive for students that struggle in the system.

A prior superintendent had a philosophy of we will do it my way. He went about things the wrong way.

A former community education director I worked with. He got me into administration.

An administrator from a neighboring district. I watched him from a distance.

I worked in a troubled school as the dean of students. I was responsible for straightening out the building.

I obtained a job in a district that was growing rapidly. I was involved in a variety of building projects and curriculum development.

I worked for a district that had a good track record and sought to improve and were willing to experiment.

Pilot training and serving as a pilot in the Air Force provided leadership opportunities.

My Air Force experience included a couple management positions. I had a chance to practice my management skills.

Being a teacher and high school principal.

My first administrative position as an athletic director and assistant principal.

### **On-The-Job Training: As Superintendent (In Current Position)**

When I took the position as superintendent I was unaware of the roles I would be required to assume. I learned a lot from job experiences.

The dismissal of a principal.

The Intermediate School District training has been very good.

Trying to fire incompetent teachers.

Organizing an Early Childhood Center. People felt they were losing their neighborhood school.



A superintendent in a neighboring district held my hand during my first year as a superintendent.

My leadership roles in professional associations.

Two former area superintendents were very helpful to me. I became a superintendent at age 28.

### **Personal Experiences Affecting Superintendents (Before Age 18)**

I was raised in a one parent family. My father left when I was very young.

My mother had a tremendous influence on me in getting an education. She didn't have an education herself.

We were very poor when I was growing up. (2 responses)

My farming background helped me develop a strong work ethic.

My farm background developed the whole notion of solving problems.

When I was ten years old I was expected to work like a man. I had a feeling of being valued.

There was a lot of conflict in my family between my mom and dad.

My early life upbringing, foundation from parents. (2 responses)

Former teachers served as good role models.

My dad was ill and died when I was early in my teens. I had to be the man of the house.

My dad was a coach. I was involved in athletics in high school and college.

When I was in high school I was put in leadership positions such as athletics and the student council.

When I was growing up people that I associated with had a positive influence on me.

I worked for my uncle in the summers. He had high ethical standards.

My outside interests and hobbies keep me enthusiastic for my job. I believe in life after work.

Playing high school football.

My father accidentally shot his leg off when he was 16 years old. He had hard times getting jobs. He worked his way up. He was a self-made person.

My uncle was a teacher, principal, and superintendent. He was my hero and I wanted to copy him.

A former high school teacher was firm and fair with me. The teacher made me work hard.

I left school at the age of 12 to enter the seminary. Values, morals and ethics are very important to me.

As a child and student I was in leadership positions. My leadership abilities have developed over a long period of time.

My father influenced me a lot. (2 responses)

I learned from my high school football coach.

My childhood had the greatest impact. Simply learning life's lessons as one grows up.

A former high school wrestling coach.

### **Personal Experiences Affecting Superintendents (After Age 18)**

Having children that went through school. It gave me an awareness of the importance of our jobs. (2 responses)

People have been good to me, you can't be successful by yourself.

My grandfather encouraged me to earn a doctorate degree. He said a doctorate degree was like a union card.

A superintendency is a team effort. My wife always supports me. (2 responses)

I spent five years in active duty in the Navy and 24 years in the Navy Reserves.

My wife and children. (6 responses)

An interview experience I had in college. My father's company provided scholarships for employees' children. Interviews were required each year.

Coaching varsity football for eight years.

A relationship with a professor at graduate school. (2 responses)

I left the school business midway through my career to be a salesman.

I used to be a Catholic priest which has had a profound impact on my views of education.

Getting married was an enormous decision after leaving the church.

A family was living in a car with a young child.

I have a supportive family and husband which I very much need and appreciate.

\_\_\_\_\_ is a good friend and mentor. He gives me good, honest feedback.

Four years of college as a varsity football player provided leadership opportunities.

The death of my mother and my wife's father.

My involvement in athletics put an emphasis on health, including being durable to do the job.

Athletics helped me with the competition of the job.

My relationship with my former college advisor.

Being a football player in college.

Leadership positions in my fraternity.

My wife has her own career. It's healthy, everyone needs their own interdependence.

### **Academic Experiences**

My undergraduate class in political science.

My master's degree in speech therapy.

Degree programs had the most impact on me. I like to hear lectures. I get a lot of good information, invaluable information.

Conferences never did a lot for me. A lot of the sessions did not apply to what I was doing. I didn't get any new information.

The extern program gave me a lot of information. (3 responses)

An undergraduate sociology class was my best class. It opened my mind. I looked at the world differently after that class.

My undergraduate work at the University of Hawaii was very good.

My graduate work emphasis was on leadership. At the time it wasn't helpful but it is now.

My bachelor's degree was very good but my education classes were not helpful.

My graduate classes were very little help.

MEIM workshops and state conferences are very good and timely.

My undergraduate work helped me to increase my knowledge in my field. But, what I learned didn't have much of an influence on my teaching.

My graduate work had a positive influence on me. It helped me to develop my leadership style.

Conferences and workshops keep me up to date.

My graduate education was not very relevant to what I did. (2 responses)

My year of internship was very valuable to me.

Most of the stuff that I have found relevant to me have been in a workshop setting.

My bachelor's degree had little impact.

Some of my graduate work was very pertinent, not all of it.

My Mott Internship was very helpful. (3 responses)

Conferences and workshops are extremely helpful. You get things you can bring back to the district and use. (2 responses)

An Adventures in Attitudes class was very helpful.

I try to stay current by attending IDEA fellowship programs and other workshops and conferences.

Degree programs give you the ticket to get there. The value depends on the course and the instructor and how it meets your needs at the time. (2 responses)

Some of my graduate work was helpful. It depends on if the instructor is current or not.

My bachelor's degree program gave me the general program I needed. It was not practical for administration.

My master's degree in curriculum and other graduate courses were helpful.

Workshops are most practical. Conferences generally provide current information.

Degree programs are the least helpful, they are less helpful on a daily basis.

Conferences and workshop have helped mold me to where I am now.

During my graduate studies I came out of my shell. I was able to select courses that I liked. My graduate courses were very much more rewarding than my bachelor's degree.

My relationships with people I have met in my formal training has had the greatest impact on me.

My bachelor's degree provided a foundation. It was very important for my professional career.

My master's degree training was outstanding. I had hands on experience.

My specialist's degree training was less profound than my master's degree but you always learn something.

My graduate programs helped me to develop my leadership style.

Conferences and workshops keep me up-to-date. I meet people I can contact for more information.

Degree programs did not have a substantial impact, except the extern program.

Most of the degree programs were getting through the hoops.

Conferences and workshops have been positive and practical. It provides informal discussion with colleagues. (3 responses)

My undergraduate work increased my knowledge base and awareness.

The bachelor's degree prepared me to be a teacher.

Graduate training was little help, if any. I was not impressed with higher institutions of learning and their administrator preparation.

A lot of the time the professors for my graduate classes had not spent time on the firing line. Some were good, others were a waste of time.

Conferences are good because you can talk to other people in the field. Speakers are usually good.

My bachelor's degree program did not prepare me to be a teacher.

## **APPENDIX F**

### **Responses to Interview Questions Regarding Lessons Learned**

## **RESPONSES TO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS REGARDING LESSONS LEARNED**

### **Lessons Learned Based on Professional Experiences Encountered Before Accepting the Current Superintendency**

Twelve superintendents identified the following 51 items in this category.

You can't dictate change from the top.

I am sensitive to the needs of special education children and their families.

Teaching staffs and administrators are difficult to change. You have to work with them and gain their confidence. (2 responses)

Change can take place in an organization but you need a well thought out plan.

Teachers have to have a share in decisions that relate to the curriculum process. Classroom teachers have to carry it out. Their the ones that are closest to the children.

All the best ideas don't have to come from me.

Most of the issues you have to deal with are mistakes other people have made that you had nothing to do with.

Be concerned about your public relations, how your district perceives you.

You need to be listening and watching. Also, listen for what people are not saying.

You get square answers from people you have developed a relationship with.

A former high school principal taught me how to deal with conflict.

My former superintendent taught me that you don't spend more than you got. Let's differentiate between what you want and what you need.

My former superintendent had a bad temper. I learned that you don't lead by anger.



My former superintendent saw classes of people with administrators on top and support staff at the bottom. That's wrong.

Hard work pays off. Be prepared to handle difficult situations by doing your homework so you can make the best educated decision.

My former superintendent taught me by allowing me to be an active participant in the learning.

Be understanding of people and their feelings, appreciate other people.

Be cooperative and a good listener, then make a fair and well thought-out decision.

I look for people skills above everything else when hiring administrators.

Don't shoot from the hip.

I worked with a person who was unethical. Since then I always wonder if there is a bad apple in the bunch.

Your decision is no better than your input to make it. If you are missing a key piece of information you may make a wrong decision.

Everyone needs warm fuzzies.

High gain people hit the deck running. I can get more accomplished before the regular crew shows up than I can all the rest of the day.

Never take issue with anyone who buys ink by the barrel.

Someone who governs by intimidation receives all positive feedback. People are afraid to say anything negative.

I probably learned more from negative mentors. They taught me what not to do.

A wrong decision is better than no decision at all. The people that you work with would prefer to see you make decisions. You must go somewhere.

It takes teamwork, without teamwork you haven't got anything. If you don't have the players with you your in trouble.

The concept of a neighborhood school is very fundamental to many people.

People will launch personal attacks which they really don't mean. Personal attacks are another weapon people use.

You always have to judge and put a value on unofficial sources of feedback.

People will be done with, not to.

Make sure people are informed and have a chance to buy in.

An administrator from a neighboring district taught me the importance of the political process.

I learned that I am not alone with problems. There are a lot of staff willing to help.

I learned about management and how to control crisis.

The importance of flexibility. There is no one way that is right. There are a lot of ways to look at things and deal with people.

I learned how to deal with children and people in general.

How to build consensus.

I learned about marketing a product.

The opportunity for collegial feedback is not there because you are the only one in the district in your position.

I have a collective style based on the people I worked for.

People always make the difference. You learn quickly who you can count on and who you can't count on, who can be trusted and who can't be trusted, and who will follow through and who won't.

The position keeps people away from you.

People perceive that you are too busy for them or you have more important things to deal with.

Stand up for what is right. It sounds easy but it is often difficult.

I now tend to see the big picture.

Hard work pays off.

I've learned to be more open and caring.

### **Lessons Learned Based on Professional Experiences Encountered During the Current Superintendency**

Nine superintendents identified the following 36 items.

You really don't have to know everything that is going on in the district.

It's impossible to know everything.

I learned how to deal with the media and be sensitive to their needs. You have to be careful what you say and how you say it.

How to deal with a diverse board of education. Each board member has a different personality.

You are not going to get a high powered individual on your board who doesn't dib or dab in administration from time to time. You need to learn to deal with that as a superintendent.

I never get all my information from one source.

I am expected to attend many functions. People want you there. It is a status symbol to a lot of people.

Have empathy for people that are losing their jobs.

Remember that each board member has a big ego.

Remember that you have to please your school board. Ultimately, they are the ones that make the decision of whether you go or stay.

I should have done more research on what the expectations were of me before I accepted the position.

Don't be willing to assume so many responsibilities.

Stay away from negotiations as much as possible.

Give people the authority to make decisions.

Each decision we make as administrators is going to touch people's lives and that is a momentous responsibility you shouldn't take lightly.

Be prepared for the fall-out. There is always a group of people who will not support you.

Be careful in your decision-making and be aware of people's needs and concerns. We are in a people business.

You want people who care about you enough to tell you when you screwed up.

You need to be aware that people will tell you what you want to hear.

Proximity with people builds comfort. The people you see everyday are going to be more open and honest with you than people you see periodically.

Finding out that you have your own Achilles' heel.

Everyone has a support group.

Sensitivity to where other people are coming from.

People complain when things go wrong. They don't often say anything when things go right.

Don't be afraid to say you don't know something.

As a superintendent you don't always get a lot of positive feedback. People are beating you from every angle.

Feedback is very seldom direct. Administrators tell me what they want me to hear. It probably is not what is on their mind.

The organization is first and foremost. The vitality of the organization is my greatest concern.

Work with all members of the board, have respect for all board members.

Make sure all board members have the same information.

The decision that looks like the right decision may be wrong politically.

I've always had the philosophy of an open-door. I don't try to screen people except possibly salespeople.

When people have a concern I listen to them, don't talk, and get back to them the next day.

I have a lot less control as superintendent than I thought I was going to have. You are limited by state laws and master contracts.

Everyone is an expert because they were in school at one time.

The either like you or they don't. If they like you they will overlook little faults you have. If they don't like you they will hang their hat on your faults.

### **Lessons Learned Based on Personal Experiences Before the Age of 18**

Ten superintendents identified the following 18 items.

I am sensitive to the needs of the lower socio-economic families. (2 responses)

My parents taught me the value of education and to be a productive citizen. Education was a corner stone in my family.

To carry the belief system I learned as a youngster throughout my career. (2 responses)

I learned to work hard, to have a strong work ethic.

The notion of problem solving.

Work hard, don't give up, and eventually good things will happen.

Be honest, work hard, and treat people with respect.

Competitive athletics helped me to develop leadership. I can make decisions under fire.

I learned how to treat people. (2 responses)

I learned to tell the truth.

My father taught me that you can get ahead, even if you are handicapped.

My religious background promoted my interest in character education.

Values, morals, and ethics are very important to me because of my religious background.

My father taught me how to deal with people. (2 responses)

### **Lessons Learned Based on Personal Experiences Occurring After the Age of 18**

Twelve superintendents identified the following 31 lessons.

To be straight-out honest.

Do what you think is right and be honest.

Play by the rules, be honest, and treat people the way you would like to be treated.

Learn from the mistakes of others.

Value the opinion of others.

No one is successful by themselves. A lot of people support you along the way.

To admit when you make a mistake.

Be honest and have integrity and the rest will follow. Treat people respectfully.

Be sure you have life after work hobbies are important.

Keep your sense of humor.

Don't work yourself into a type "A" personality.

If you want to catch fish keep your lure in the water. Keep at the task. Be persistent.

Measure the board twice but cut it only once. Think before you act.

My wife and five children taught me patience, to be a good listener, to be organized, and to receive feedback.

What people have to say is important because they feel it is important.

When you lose your hair don't worry about it. People get hung up on the little things in life and don't keep looking at the big picture.

When you're younger you think you know everything, but the older you get the less you find you know.

I learned that my spot was in education, that's what I enjoy the most. After leaving education and then returning I look forward to going to work now.

Life is short, as a result do your best and remember that everyday you set an example for someone. It is entirely up to you whether you set a good or bad example.

There is no substitute for 100 percent open communication. Be completely honest with people.

Maintain your commitment to what you are doing. If what you are doing is no longer exciting, do something else.

Anything can be done, we can do it.

You can do anything you want to, believe in yourself.

I was taught patience. As a child I had a terrible temper.

Responsibility and respect for other people.

My wife taught me to think about school problems as a parent, not as a person in the system.

You need to have an inner satisfaction that you did the right thing. You can't succeed if you don't have self-confidence.

Believe in yourself and what you are doing.

People are more important than anything else.

It is important to be goal oriented.

One has to be flexible and roll with the punches.

## **Lessons Learned From Academic Experiences**

Six superintendents identified the following 13 lessons.

My college professors at Michigan State helped me look at issues differently. They helped me put some of my actions in a more theoretical vein.

MEIM workshops and state conferences provide me with current information that is helpful.

A professor at graduate school taught me that as the administrator you are not going to get anywhere if you don't follow rather than lead the group.

My graduate work helped me to develop my leadership style.

My graduate work helped teach me to work with people.

Conferences and workshops keep me up to date.

A former professor taught me about bringing about change.

Conferences and workshops give me things I can bring back to the district and use.

The need to be flexible and take opportunities when they come.

The worth of people. Everyone needs to feel ownership. Allow people to function and feel their worth.

A mentor at my former university has been a good sounding board for me.

Any student can learn if you provide the right interactions.

The extern program gave me many ideas. It kept me from going stale. We should do more sharing with each other.



## **APPENDIX G**

**Responses to Two Interview Questions:  
What Has Been Most Fun For You  
In Your Role as Superintendent?  
How Have You Changed During Your  
Tenure as a School Superintendent?**

## RESPONSES TO TWO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### What Has Been Most Fun For You in Your Role as Superintendent?

This is not a fun job. I've had to deal with declining enrollment and budget cuts each year.

Implementing programs that have significantly impacted the lives of children. (2 responses)

Having some successes.

Talking to children at the high school. I enjoy discussing issues.

When projects are being completed and curriculum ideas are being implemented.

When you hire people you can make major direction changes.

Having the ability to make major and direct changes in the school district. (3 responses)

I like problems. I enjoy figuring out how we can get something done.

I enjoy seeing people grow.

Relationships and friendships. It's fun to work with people I like.

Planting trees, they will last. It is something the next superintendent can't change.

When someone that works for me succeeds.

Giving credit to the people in the trenches.

I do a wide variety of different things. In a small school system you wear many different hats.

When you are a superintendent you get invited to participate in a lot of stuff because of your position. (Conferences, outings, and special activities)

It's fun to give employees awards, honor retirees, and recognize honor students and graduates. (3 responses)

I enjoy following extra-curricular activities. (2 responses)

Being a distinguished member of the community.

Reading to elementary students.

I enjoy the challenge of teacher negotiations. Our last contract was a win-win-win situation.

I get to travel and meet people through work.

Taking an organization and seeing it grow and blossom; becoming better than it was when I started. (2 responses)

You are around good people who can teach you about education and other things.

It's a great opportunity to learn and grow. You are constantly in a situation of learning something.

I always felt the whole community should be focused around the schools. The evolution of the community education program, volunteer programs, and senior citizen programs have been very enjoyable.

I enjoy going into an elementary school and seeing young children in classrooms.

Seeing my son inducted into the National Honor Society.

Success on a district level basis.

Visiting the buildings on a weekly basis.

Being with children and people.

### **How Have You Changed During Your Tenure as a School Superintendent?**

I'm really not excited about being a superintendent. I don't think I want to experience another superintendency. It's a tough job. You have many publics you have to please.

I have learned to protect my time.

I have learned to reduce stress. I don't take the job home with me.

My managerial skills have improved. I feel I could go to the United Nations after dealing with this stuff.

I have improved my insight to people. You have many people trying to sell you many things.

My interpersonal skills have improved.

My ability to address many different issues has improved.

I have matured. I have learned a great deal. (3 responses)

I am more philosophical. Things will work out.

I have become more confident. I know I can do the job. (2 responses)

I have become more process oriented. I am more attuned to take time to get people on board. (4 responses)

I am more accepting of partial successes. Most of the time you don't have 100 percent success. But, are we further ahead? Is it better today than it was before?

I have lost a little perspective regarding what is going on in the classroom.

I look at things in a wider range. As principal I only worried about my building.

I have mellowed out a little bit. Things that used to upset me is water off a duck's back.

I got into perspective that I can't please everyone and there are some things I can't control. (2 responses)

I don't get as angry.

I am better now listening to staff and sorting out problems and not putting staff down when problems come up.

I have become more caring, more compassionate for people.

The superintendency can be very political. It's very difficult to maintain your integrity.

I am more confident telling the board how something needs to be done.

I am more skeptical than I used to be. When you're young you look for a little bit of good in everybody. As you get older, you've been burned often enough, you tend to look for a little bit of bad in everybody. (2 responses)

I find myself being more direct with people on a personal and professional basis.

I find myself less open with people, probably because of preoccupation - things on my mind.

I do a better job of looking at ramifications of decisions. I used to ram ahead and deal with the consequences.

I am an advocate for all levels of education.

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