

THE SUPERINTENDENT'S ORGANIZATIONAL APPROACH TO DEFINED
AUTONOMY AND THE GOAL IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS AS IT IMPACTS
STUDENT SUCCESS

by

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DEDICATION

Twelve years prior to the completion of this degree, my post graduate journey began. Working on the belief that education is the key to success, the life of my family is marked by not only the traditional milestones, but also this doctoral endeavor. My daughter, now grown with a husband and a career of her own is the only child who can remember “pre-college” dad. My middle son, a mere seven years old when this started is now finishing his first year of college. My youngest, has never known a life without dad doing homework, research and writing. It is my hope that Alice, Eli, and Oliver develop the love of life-long learning and enjoy all its rewards.

To Lyla, my wife and best friend, who in the darkest hour of chapter three, inspired me to complete this journey.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

Instructional Leadership Role Evolves	1
Principal	2
Superintendent.....	4
Waters and Marzano.....	6
Definition of Key Terms	7
Problem Statement	8
Research Questions	9
Theoretical Lens.....	11
Transformational Leadership	11
Capacity Building and Sustainability.....	12
Research Design.....	13
Pilot Study.....	13
Case Study.....	14
Analysis of Study	14
Data Limitation	16
Significance of Study	18
Summary	18

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction.....	20
Literature Review	22
Transformational Leadership	22
Capacity Building.....	26
Sustainability.....	27
Principal's Instructional Leadership Role.....	27
History of Superintendent's Role.....	31
Instructional Role of the Superintendent.....	34
Waters and Marzano's Meta-Analysis	36
Goal Implementation Process	40
Defined Autonomy.....	41
Summary	43

3. METHODOLOGY

Introduction.....	45
Qualitative vs Quantitative.....	46
Qualitative Study of the Superintendent	48

TABLE OF CONTENTS - CONTINUED

Case Study Approach.....	49
Research Design.....	50
Case Study Design Tests.....	51
Conformability.....	52
Credibility.....	54
Transferability.....	55
Dependability.....	56
Case Study Design.....	56
Case Study Design: Introduction.....	57
Case Study Design: Unit of Analysis.....	58
Case Study Design: Superintendent Interview and Observation.....	60
Case Study Design: Administrative Team Interviews and Observations.....	61
Case Study Design: Trustee Interview.....	63
Case Study Design: Document Analysis.....	63
Case Study Design: Analytic Strategy.....	63
Case Study Design: Analytic Techniques.....	66
Case Study Design: Final Data Analysis.....	66
Pilot Study.....	67
The Case Study.....	68
Summary.....	70

4. THE CASE STUDY

Introduction.....	71
Pilot Study Outcomes.....	72
Maintaining Awareness of the Differential Impact of Leadership.....	73
Prompting for Depth During Interviews.....	74
Clustering of Propositional Theories.....	75
Clarification of Pattern Matching Logic.....	75
Case Study District.....	77
Unit of Analysis.....	79
District's Evidence of Success.....	81
Case Study Participants.....	86
Data Analysis.....	90
Defined Autonomy Clusters.....	91
Defined Autonomy: Cluster No. 1.....	92
Defined Autonomy: Cluster No. 2.....	96
Defined Autonomy: Cluster No. 3.....	101
Goal Clusters.....	105

TABLE OF CONTENTS – CONTINUED

Goal Cluster: No. 1.....	105
Goal Cluster: No. 2.....	108
Goal Cluster: No. 3.....	111
Goal Cluster: No. 4.....	114
Goal Cluster: No. 5.....	118
Summary of Findings	121
5. FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION	
Introduction	125
Instructional Leadership.....	126
Waters and Marzano.....	128
Methodology	129
Traditional Prejudices Against Case Study Strategy.....	132
Case Study Rigor.....	132
Generalizability	135
Inherent Weaknesses of Case Study Research.....	133
Major Rivals.....	133
Research Bias	134
Self Reporting	135
Summary of Findings	135
Implications.....	137
Recommendations for Further Research	143
Final Summary	144
REFERENCES CITED	147
APPENDICES.....	155
APPENDIX A: Pilot Case Study	156
APPENDIX B: Waters and Marzano (2006) Propositional Theories	188
APPENDIX C: Superintendent Interview Protocol	191
APPENDIX D: Administrative Team Interview Protocol	196
APPENDIX E: Superintendent Observation Protocol	201
APPENDIX F: Administrative Team Observation Protocol	204
APPENDIX G: School Board Trustee Interview Protocol	207
APPENDIX H: District Intent to Participate.....	212
APPENDIX I: Informed Consent Form.....	214
APPENDIX J: Introduction to Superintendent	216
APPENDIX K: Introduction to Administrative Team Member.....	219

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Principals' Behaviors, Characteristics, and Dimensions.....	30
2. Waters and Marzano's Superintendent Responsibilities.....	38
3. Case Study Design Tests.....	51
4. Waters and Marzano's Superintendent Responsibilities.....	58
5. Pattern Matching Symbols	77
6. Montana Large School Graduation Rates	81

LIST OF FIGURES

Figures	Page
1. Superintendent Responsibilities Boundary Figure.....	10
2. Convergence and Non-Convergence Figure	53
3. Superintendent Responsibilities Boundary Figure.....	130

ABSTRACT

This single-case study addresses the lack of qualitative research describing the instructional role of the superintendent. Guiding this study are two research questions, “How does the goal implementation process as an element of the superintendent’s organizational approach impact student success?” and “How does defined autonomy as an element of the superintendent’s organizational approach impact student success?”

In 2002 the No Child Left Behind Act instilled a sense of urgency for the education community to implement an accountability reform placing an emphasis on schools to demonstrate effective instructional leadership at the district level. The sense of urgency caused by this political mandate, created a demand for data pertaining to the superintendent’s instructional role and in 2006 Waters and Marzano completed their exhaustive quantitative meta-analysis on this subject. Their study discovered statistical data suggesting six responsibilities comprised of 51 observable practices of a superintendent that positively correlate with student success. Despite this effort, the lack of research concerning the qualitative data describing the superintendent’s instructional role was still evident.

The purpose of this qualitative single-case study was to collect data in a real-life, holistic environment to ascertain if the superintendent’s organizational approaches did impact student success. To guide the data collection process, the six superintendent responsibilities were divided into two categories: defined autonomy and the goal implementation process. Waters and Marzano (2006) further broke these two categories into 51 observable practices (propositional theories) that statistically correlated with student success. Through Yin’s (2003) guidance this researcher conducted interviews, purposeful observation and document analysis, to pattern-match data with empirical evidence.

The findings suggest the organizational approaches of the superintendent did impact student success. Furthermore, new research ground was broken by discovering a process of five observable steps, that when followed will impact student success. The steps are: (1) Develop a shared vision, (2) Implement district goals, (3) Consistently communicate expectations, (4) Allow principals to implement, (5) Hold principals accountable through monitoring.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Since the passage of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2002, standards-based reform has mandated that student achievement increase for all children in all schools and has expanded the responsibility for widespread and sustained academic improvement (Sullivan and Shulman, 2005). Nationally, student success is a standard expected of public school educators and research consistently suggests that student academic success depends on the principal as the most significant factor (Hord, 1993). Cotton (2003) further supports the idea that school-level leaders play a key role in student learning. NCLB has created a sense of urgency in public education by making school administrators more accountable for student learning and has expanded the instructional role from the individual principal to include district level leaders.

Instructional Leadership Role Evolves

The drive for education accountability has evolved to include the principal as school leader and the superintendent as district leader. This research suggests not a shift in the instructional leadership responsibility from principal to superintendent, but rather an expansion of the accountability umbrella to include district level leadership. Waters and Marzano's (2006) findings from their quantitative meta-analysis suggest a positive correlation between district leadership and student achievement. However, qualitative educational studies have only begun to tap into the field of the superintendent's organizational approach as it may impact student success.

The expansion of instructional leadership to include the superintendent has been evolving for some time (Bjork, 1993). Understanding this evolutionary phenomenon requires conceptualization of the context of the principal's and superintendent's roles.

Principal

The traditional building-level administrative job description fosters the perception that they lead the school and the education of its students. This appears to be somewhat simplistic as researchers have contrasted two types of administrators: the traditional principal mainly focused on management tasks and the principal as instructional leader (Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982).

Investigating the principal as instructional leader, Leithwood and Montgomery (1982) describe the behaviors of principals in high-achieving schools to include: establishing clear learning goals and gaining school-wide commitment to those goals; acquisition and distribution of resources to meet learning goals; providing professional development to achieve learner goals; involving all stakeholders in the decision-making processes to achieve learner goals; and modeling behaviors expected from those they supervise. More current studies mirror this research. Cotton's (2003) 25 principal behaviors are divided into five categories and support Leithwood and Montgomery's (1982) earlier research. The five behavior categories are administrators who: (1) establish a clear focus on student learning; (2) create interactions and relationships; (3) create a collaborative school culture; (4) focus on instruction; (5) and through monitoring and using student progress data, create an environment of accountability (Cotton, 2003, p. ix).

Each of Cotton's (2003) 25 behaviors suggests how the principal assists teachers in educating students. Chapter two of this study will detail these behaviors. However, one in particular, teacher autonomy, needs advance discussion. Autonomy at any level of the educational system requires a balancing act, whether the superintendent working with principals, or principals working with teachers, the immediate supervisor provides the independence that defines each relationship. Cotton (2003) cites research (Firestone and Wilson, 1989; Heck and Marcoulides, 1993; Reitzug, 1997) suggesting that principals can provide a supportive environment to teachers by providing them with greater autonomy. Though not purely autonomic, this relationship allows the principal to play an expanded role in the classroom by taking a greater interest in instruction and becoming an expert in pedagogy. Such expertise and involvement permits principals to work with teachers, discuss educational issues and strategies, and influence instruction at the student level. While respecting teacher autonomy the principal can assist them by protecting instructional time, providing resources, and sheltering the educational process from political and parental pressures. Although Cotton (2003) stresses the importance of teacher autonomy, she also notes it is not pure autonomy, but rather a working relationship for the betterment of education.

Cotton's (2003) research concurs with Firestone and Wilson's (1989) findings that tight administrative control over teaching negatively impacts student achievement. Gaziel (1995) revealed that principals of high-performing schools expended generous amounts of time in instructional leadership activities, such as student relationships, professional development and parent communication. Principals in low-performing

schools spent time on organizational maintenance described as controlling, managing, directing, commanding and regulating.

Superintendent

Relatively recent research (Fullan, 2005, Beldon, Russonello and Stewart 2005) suggests the emergence of a new or perhaps revived paradigm regarding responsibility for student academic achievement. This shift in thought places a greater degree of accountability for student success at the district level, e.g., with the district superintendent. Among others, Waters and Marzano (2006) and Fullan (2005) imply that district leadership originates with the superintendent.

A sense of urgency pervades public education as state and national mandates expect students to meet high standards (Knapp, Copland and Talbert, 2003). Society has placed an ultimatum on all students to achieve, not just those enrolled in schools with an effective principal, outstanding staff and adequate resources. “The current climate and emphasis on the reform and restructuring of the United States’ educational system has placed an enormous amount of political pressure on schools to demonstrate effective leadership at the district level” (Petersen, 2002, p. 159). Superintendents face the challenge of taking the success of an individual school and expanding it district wide.

Conventional wisdom suggests the implementation of NCLB in 2002 pushed for expanding the instructional leadership role to include the superintendent. Beldon, Russonello and Stewart’s (2005) quantitative national survey of 813 district leaders, counters this point by stating that a majority of respondents indicated many aspects of district-led instruction had already been in place three or more years prior to NCLB.

The work of Peterson (2002), Lashway (2002), and Shannon and Bylsma (2004) reports that superintendents who set high standards for academic achievement help facilitate student success. As the common denominator in student achievement district wide, the superintendent's organizational approaches must be examined as they support the instructional efforts of principals and classroom teachers at the opposite end of the educational hierarchy (Bjork, 1993).

Administrative practitioners and researchers have traditionally labeled the superintendent as a manager of the educational system. Historically, this role has been defined by characteristics of personal issues, policy implementation and resource allocation. As academically limited as this definition might seem, Bjork (1993) maintains that through personal characteristics and experience, a superintendent's managerial style does affect student achievement. Through the mid-to-late 1980s studies supported the hypothesis that district leadership has a direct effect on academics. Peterson, Murphy, and Hallinger (1987) reported that districts with excellent student achievement had personally involved superintendents. Brown and Hunter (1986) discussed vital role cues that superintendents give principals to identify important instructional programs for academics. Spanneut and Ford (2008, p.28) state, "Whether by design or chance, superintendents communicate their beliefs about what is important educationally and the roles they expect their principals to fulfill."

Further, according to Spanneut and Ford (2008), financial leadership, the purest of managerial characteristics, directed instruction as allocations dictated what district and schools found important. Also, Lipkowitz (1983) and Brown and Hunter (1986) reflected

that budget allocations by the superintendent reflected the district's commitment to the teaching and learning process. By maintaining organizational stability through managerial decisions, Bjork (1993) argues that superintendents unintentionally affected instruction, becoming de facto district-level instructional leaders.

More recent studies pertaining to superintendents have tied their role to instructional leadership through curriculum and instruction (Bjork, 1993; Petersen, 1999; Petersen, 2002; Sullivan and Shulman, 2005). As district leaders, superintendents' actions go beyond the rigors of curriculum and instruction to influence student achievement. The superintendent has the power to affect student achievement through creating a shared district vision and exercising the ability to contextually change the district.

Waters and Marzano

Waters and Marzano (2006) conducted a quantitative meta-analysis to determine the influence district superintendents had on student achievement and to identify the characteristics of effective superintendents. Guiding their meta-analysis was five research questions:

- What is the strength of relationship between leadership at the district level and average student academic achievement in the district?
- What specific district-level leadership responsibilities are related to student academic achievement?
- What specific leadership practices are used to fulfill these responsibilities?
- What is the variation in the relationship between district leadership and student achievement?

- Is there a relationship between length of superintendent service and student achievement?

Waters and Marzano utilized correlational research to investigate these questions by using the Pearson r which expressed the degree of relationship between two variables. Gay and Airasian (2000) state if two variables are highly related, a correlation coefficient near +1.00 (or -1.00) will be obtained. The more highly related the two variables appear, the more accurate the predictions based on the relationship.

Waters and Marzano's (2006) study revealed a positive correlation, indicated as $r = .24$, between district leadership and student achievement. The meta-analysis discovered six specific leadership responsibilities that produce gains in student achievement which include: (1) goal-setting process; (2) creating non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction; (3) board alignment with and support of district goals; (4) monitoring goals for achievement and instruction; (5) use of resources to support the goals for achievement and instruction; and (6) defined autonomy. This brief introduction to Waters and Marzano's (2006) meta-analysis sets the stage for its role in this study. Chapter two will provide a more detailed description of Waters and Marzano's (2006) meta-analysis.

Definition of Key Terms

Prior to the initiation of this study, two key terms must be defined: "organizational approach" and "student success". The superintendent's organizational approach comprises verbal and non-verbal cues used to operate the district. Such cues include the superintendent's academic and tacit knowledge, leadership traits,

management style and personality. Interwoven through the district's operation, from board meetings to administrative interactions to community involvement, they can be either stated or implied.

Student success, as defined by this research project, is the implementation of innovative programs aimed at increasing graduation rates. Evidence of such programs within the district includes: professional recognition of a school or staff member; student recognition for academic achievement; programs ensuring a safe learning environment; Board and administrative leadership training; and an organized professional development plan.

Problem Statement

This single-case study added to the field of research needed to overcome the lack of qualitative data describing the organizational approach of the superintendent as it relates to student success. Quantitatively, Waters and Marzano's (2006) six district leadership responsibilities positively correlated superintendent behaviors with student academic success. Additionally, specific practices were observed for each responsibility. These statistically proven practices will serve as propositional theories that allow qualitative information to be extrapolated from the organizational approach of a superintendent through pattern matching.

This study will provide a greater understanding of how the superintendent's organizational approach may affect student success in a K-12 public school. A qualitative single-case study will permit the researcher to be immersed in the daily

interactions of the superintendent. The participant-observer research gathering strategy provides the opportunity to analyze events in real-life context and retains holistic and meaningful characteristics as they unfold in the day-to-day district operations. This permits the researcher to sharpen lines between variables and data points, coming to a deeper understanding of the organizational approach of the superintendent.

Research Questions

To achieve a robust study, two research questions will provide guidance as this researcher examines the superintendent's organizational approach as it relates to student success. The fulfillment of Waters and Marzano's (2006) six superintendent responsibilities through the observable practices will be the basis of this study's research questions, of those, the first five define the goal implementation process: (1) goal setting procedure; (2) Board alignment and support of district goals; (3) use of resources to support goals; (4) non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction; and (5) monitoring goals. This method of developing and attaining goals is the foundation of this study's first research question. "How does the goal implementation process as an element of the superintendent's organizational approach impact student success?" The observable practices provide propositional theories as benchmarks for collecting qualitative data through interviews and observations.

The remaining superintendent responsibility, defined autonomy, provides the basis of the final research question. As explained by Waters and Marzano (2006), defined autonomy has the superintendent setting clear, non-negotiable goals for learning

and instruction, yet providing school-level leaders with the authority for determining how to meet those goals. This provides a balance between pure autonomy, as provided by site-based management, and centralized authority, where all educational decisions come from the district office. As with goals, Waters and Marzano's (2006) findings also provide observable practices to indicate defined autonomy. This relationship between the superintendent and principals leads to this study's second research question. "How does defined autonomy as an element of the superintendent's organizational approach impact student success?" The observable practices provide propositional theories as benchmarks for collecting qualitative data through interviews and observations.

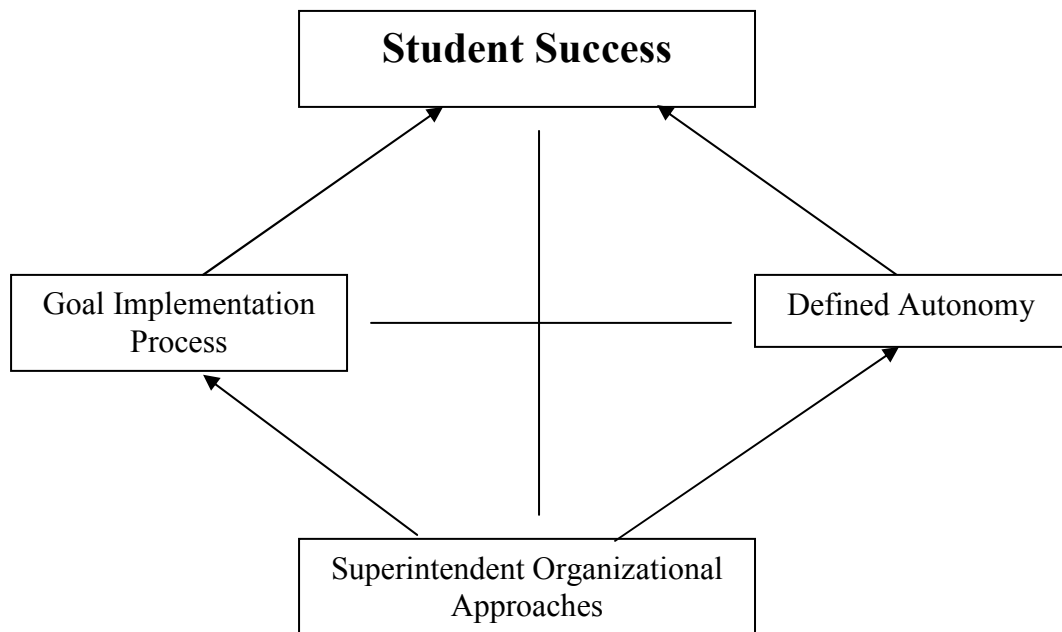


Figure 1.1
Superintendent Responsibilities Boundary Diagram

These two research questions define the study's boundaries, as shown in Diagram 1.1. This visualization of the strategic plan enhances the limitations created by the research design and keeps the researcher focused on pertinent data.

Theoretical Lens

The focus of Waters and Marzano's (2006) meta-analysis is on the superintendent's responsibilities of the goal-implementation process and defined autonomy. To embed these characteristics into the organizational approach, the superintendent may utilize Burns' (1978) transformational theory. This leadership theory incorporates the concepts of capacity building and sustainability, allowing the district leader's organizational approach to manifest the responsibilities into student success. Throughout the literature, Waters and Marzano's (2006) findings have been tightly coupled with Burns' (1978) theory.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership the process that causes people to be transformed (Burns, 1978), strategically sits at the center of modern leadership research and remains integral to Waters and Marzano's (2006) superintendent responsibilities. The supervisor, who engages stakeholders, creates a connection, elevates the level of motivation, and enables the fullest potential possible, lives at the core of this leadership style (Northouse, 2007).

The supervisor who intentionally engages, links transformational leadership with Waters and Marzano's (2006) superintendent responsibilities. "Whether by design or

chance, superintendents communicate their beliefs about what is important. (Spanneut and Ford, 2008, p.28)” Fueled by national reports (Bjork, 1993) and NCLB (2002), educational stakes have risen to the point where each child’s education cannot be left to chance.

Capacity Building and Sustainability

As educational leaders work to implement sustainable change through capacity building, people’s lives transform empowering them to accomplish goals once thought unattainable. These two key concepts, capacity building and sustainability tightly couple transformational leadership with Waters and Marzano’s (2006) six superintendent responsibilities. Capacity building empowers people through knowledge to reach their fullest potential as employees, stakeholders and leaders. The supervisor empowers others by setting expectations, providing support to reach expectations and allowing (autonomy) personnel to attain expectations (goals).

Lambert (2005) expands on building capacity by introducing leadership capacity, defined as a broad-based organizational concept, of skillful participation in the work of leadership. The principal can no longer stand alone in the instructional leadership role. It takes stakeholders working collaboratively for a common vision in a culture where sharing knowledge and learning sits at the core.

Though not easily defined and not as straightforward as the term might indicate, sustainability (Fullan, 2005a) engages in the complexities of continuous improvement consistent with deep values of human purpose within a system. Fullan (2005a) further expounds that as the struggle to achieve large-scale reform evolves, sustainability

becomes a rallying concept, one that contains the elaboration of strategies essential for whole-system capacity building on an ongoing basis. Thus, to produce sustainable, long-term results in student academic success, the educational institution must direct energies to the district (system-wide) level.

Research Design

Waters and Marzano's (2006) meta-analysis, "*Effect of Superintendent Leadership on Student Achievement*" provides the quantitative foundation for this qualitative single case research project. The research design strategy addresses the lack of qualitative data examining the superintendent's organizational approach to student success. Through collecting and analyzing data, information provided will add to the growing knowledge base, helping scholars understand how the organizational approach of the superintendent impacts student success.

The research design demanded a large school district with the superintendent as the unit of analysis. Through interviews, observations and document analysis, the case study will gather qualitative data to examine Waters and Marzano's (2006) quantitative meta-analysis. A pilot study will be conducted prior to the case study to enhance the credibility of this study.

Pilot Study

Conducting a pilot study generates a robust study allowing the researcher to rehearse interview questions and observational techniques in the real-life context of a school district. Information will be collected and analyzed to ensure the validity of the

data-collecting process and strategies. The pilot study provides the researcher experience in conducting a case study. The knowledge of balancing the role of participant observer, honing questioning techniques, and focusing on wording will be valuable to the main study. Furthermore, the pilot study will ensure questions and observation techniques produce data that addresses the problem statement and research questions.

Case Study

Building on the knowledge and experience gained from the pilot study, this researcher will choose a district based on the following criteria. The K-12 school system must support a full administrative team consisting of principals for individual schools and a central office staff, all supervised by the superintendent. The district's superintendent must be involved in statewide professional organizations, recognized by such organizations, recommended by collegiate educational professionals, and have longevity of at least 10 years in the current district.

Through interviews, purposeful observations and documents, this case study will focus on the context of the superintendent. Using the method of participant observer, the researcher will be integrated into the dynamics of the school system. Through multiple visits to the study's district, the researcher will gather information based on the holistic, real-life operations of the system until data saturation occurs.

Analysis of Study

The lack of case study strategies and techniques for analyzing data make it difficult for the researcher to extrapolate information. To strengthen this apparent weakness, Yin (2003) encourages a solid design that guides the process from beginning

to end. This design strategy, or blueprint, enables the researcher to collect proper data, treat all evidence fairly, produce compelling arguments, and discover robust conclusions that withstands criticism. The design that directs this project has three analytical strategies: theoretical propositions, rival explanations, and case description.

Waters and Marzano's (2006) meta-analysis provided 51 superintendent practices, or as defined by this case study, the theoretical propositions. These observable superintendent practices serve as a framework for analyzing data. These benchmarks will be used to guide the researcher to ensure information collected aligns with data desired.

The second analytic strategy demands the researcher to define and test rival explanations. These outside influences weaken the credibility of the research project by questioning what factors affected the outcome. Yin (2003) suggests two categories of rival explanations exist: craft and real life. Craft rivals underlie all social science research, e.g., investigator bias, null hypothesis and threats to validity. Real-life rivals are natural events that happen during the data collection that could also affect the outcome of the research and question the validity of the case. To minimize rival explanations, they must be defined and vigorously documented to ensure minimal affect on the study.

Creating a vivid case description is the final analytical strategy. This method demands a descriptive framework for the case study. The researcher must richly describe the context of the study to ensure data can be extrapolated by means of comparison.

The analytical strategies of theoretical propositions, rival explanations and case descriptions must be embedded in the design to guide the researcher in collecting data.

The process of creating a solid research structure will enable the researcher to collect data that aligns with the problem statement and research questions. Careful planning keeps the investigator from chasing trivial information that could seem interesting but has no relevance to the study.

Data Limitations

Data limitations are existing variables that could possibly taint the information gathered. Due to the nature of a qualitative single-case research study project, data collection occurs in a real-life situation, thus eliminating or controlling variables is not possible. The obstacles addressed in this qualitative case study are: Self-reporting data collection strategy; researcher and personal bias; and a limited pool of school districts to study. Through the conscious recognition of known limitations, the researcher can gather more robust data that provides validity and reliability.

The strategy of collecting data through interviews and observations, self-reporting, creates a limitation and questions the dependability of the information gathered. Peterson, Murphy and Hallinger, (1987) states that when dealing with self-reporting data, particularly when the participants hold very visible positions such as the superintendent or principal, they more than likely will provide what they consider appropriate or politically safe answers. Additionally, self-reporting data introduces the problem of exaggeration. Either consciously or unconsciously people tend to exaggerate in an effort to present a more complimentary picture of personal actions.

The limitation of self-report data provided by interviews requires the researcher to control the data collection with a mixture of open-ended and specific questions. This

technique allows for the interviewee to expand and paint the general picture of the district and at the same time provides an opportunity to build a relationship with the interviewer. Specific questions allow extraction of details to triangulate data.

Self-report data provided by observations create similar limitations as found with interviews. The force of human nature causes individuals to act in a way they want to be perceived.

The limitations created by self-reporting data will be countered by the analytical strategy of theoretical propositions. These create key points or patterns and provide guidance during the interviews and observations protecting data from the possible pitfalls due to the self-reporting method.

The second limitation addressed is researcher and personal bias. The researcher must continually thwart preconceived experiences and tacit knowledge that could taint data. As a practicing superintendent, this researcher must not allow the personal desire to find data connecting district leadership to student success. The effect of bias can be minimized by constant journaling. The practice of continually acknowledging the possibility of personal interference will aid in curtailing this limitation. Another strategy, creating a solid research structure, will guide the researcher in the quest for based on theoretical propositions.

The limited pool of potential districts creates an obstacle when designing this study. Certain criterion, such as size of district, academic success of students and longevity of the superintendent generates a potential obstacle when selecting a district.

Significance of Study

Based on Waters and Marzano's (2006) meta-analysis discovery of a positive correlation between student success and six specific superintendent responsibilities, this qualitative single-case study will collect data to ascertain if this correlation can be seen in a real-world application.

Yin (2003) acknowledges that scientific facts cannot be based on single experiments but on multiple sets of experiments that have replicated the same phenomenon under different conditions. The single-case study can be likened to a single quantitative experiment, individually it cannot be generalized to large populations, but collectively with multiple other studies it can strengthen transferability and dependability. This single-case study adds to growing data researching the effects of the superintendent's organizational approach on student success.

Summary

Research indicates a lack of qualitative data suggesting the correlation between district leadership and student success. This single-case study seeks to extend the Waters and Marzano's (2006) meta-analysis, thus adding to the minimal field of knowledge. The research design requires a superintendent with a minimum of 10 years experience in one district with evidence of student success. Information gathered from this district through interviews, observations and documents will be examined through Yin's (2003) data analyzing strategy of pattern matching. This data will be analyzed to ascertain if a

possible match exists between the chosen district's superintendent's organizational approach and the propositional theories.

In an effort to create a robust study, three analytical strategies will be utilized, applying theoretical propositions, researching and examining rival explanations and providing a thorough case description. To further strengthen the study this researcher is aware of limitations created by self-reporting data collection strategies, researcher and personal bias, and a restricted pool of school districts.

The significance of this study is to add to the growing research on the instructional leadership role of the superintendent. One single-case study does not carry the significance to suggest correlation of data, but coupled with other cases, both present and in the future, this project will have the potential to strengthen educational research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Labeled “Islands of Excellence” (Togneri & Andersen, 2003, p. 1), some individual schools helped students achieve exceptional academic success. The formula for their achievement included the trifecta, consisting of a principal with strong instructional leadership, motivated teachers dedicated to the education of each child, and community support. Success for all students is the standard for all educators and the responsibility for achievement spread beyond the schools to the district level (Sullivan and Shulman, 2005).

Bjork (1993) contends that politicians, community members and educators have been working feverishly to improve public schools since the early 1980s when commission reports such as “*A Nation at Risk*” brought the concern to the public’s attention. Decades later the passage of the 2002 No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) gave legal power to enforce educational accountability. Petersen’s (2002) findings indicated that the standard for all to achieve began prior to NCLB due to the demands of society and evolving educational institution. Petersen (2002) cites NCLB merely forced the issue to the forefront. Whatever the impetus, the current reform requires accountability for the education of all students and characterizes the expansion of the role of instructional leader to include both the principal and the superintendent.

Waters and Marzano's (2006) quantitative meta-analysis found a significant correlation between district leadership and student achievement. Furthermore, six superintendent responsibilities proved to positively correlate with student achievement. The six responsibilities include: (1) collaborative goal-setting; (2) establishing non-negotiable goals; (3) board alignment and support of goals; (4) monitoring goals; (5) resource allocation to support goals; and (6) defined autonomy. This research project, a qualitative single case study, will be designed to collect data to examine the relationship between the superintendent's organizational approach and student success. Specifically, this project will investigate the district leader's impact through the elements of the goal implementation process and defined autonomy. Bjork (1993) states that the superintendent's leadership and management activities must be reframed to more effectively support instructional efforts of the principals and classroom teachers at the opposite end of the educational hierarchy. Fullan (2006a) concurs that the work of transforming all schools dictates a system-wide change through the superintendent.

A related theme to Waters and Marzano's (2006) six superintendent responsibilities are the leadership theories and concepts used to implement these practices. Burns' (1978) transformational leadership theory and further findings of Kouzes and Posner (2002) along with capacity building and sustainability will also be included in this study.

Literature Review

As a background for the study, this chapter presents a literature review of the following five topics. The first section defines and explains the theory of transformational leadership. Burns' (1978) fundamental study represents the process for a superintendent to achieve the systems change needed to meet the demands for success of all students. The concepts of capacity building and sustainability will be presented as they are woven into the transformational leadership theory. The second section discusses the traditional concept of the principal's instructional leadership role. The third section reviews the history of the superintendent. The fourth section provides literature that examines the superintendent's role of instructional leader. The final section presents Waters and Marzano's (2006) quantitative research on the correlation between the superintendent's organizational approach and student success with detailed attention to the goal implementation process and defined autonomy.

Transformational Leadership

The theory of transformational leadership plays a significant role in this study's quest to investigate the relationship between the superintendent's organizational approach and student success. As the superintendent works to transform the teaching staff to exceed student achievement expectations, teachers grow and become leaders. This evolution of leadership creation builds upon the two interrelated concepts of capacity building and sustainability. Evidence of transformational leadership characteristics will be sought as the researcher investigates the superintendent's organizational approach.

As implied, the transformational leadership process changes and transforms people. It concerns itself with emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals that include assessing followers' motives, satisfying their needs, and treating them as human beings (Northouse, 2007). James MacGregor Burns (1978) in his work titled *Leadership*, first introduced transformational leadership. His work redefined leadership by separating it from power. Burns (1978) believed that leaders who motivated followers would have a much better chance in achieving goals, further stating that leadership wants cannot be separated from followers' needs.

The broad-based transformational leadership encompasses many other leadership theories. This big picture includes intrinsic rewards, such as the leader meeting personal needs of followers, to extrinsic rewards, an exchange of goods or services for meeting expectations. Fundamentally, transformational leadership hinges on the relationship between the leader and the followers. This theory's strength lies in the ability of the leader to energize followers by creating ownership of the vision. In doing so, people become attracted to the leader and his/her philosophies, creating trust, respect and dedication to the organization. Transformation occurs as a cohort of leaders emerges to strengthen the organization and individual needs, values and morals are met.

Essentially, transformational leadership theory encompasses a leader who can motivate and energize followers to achieve beyond ordinary expectations, e.g., Moses, Martin Luther, George Washington, and Nelson Mandela, to name a few. Even in the everyday world, transformational leaders exist, one that inspires and causes followers to go above and beyond expectations.

Since its infancy, the application and implementation of transformational leadership has been questioned. Are characteristics of this theory an innate trait of a person's personality? Or can these characteristics be studied and learned by leaders? A book published by House in 1976 just prior to Burns' (1978) Leadership work may explain this critique. House's (1976) book introduced the theory of charismatic leadership, which described the similarity, if not synonymous with, transformational leadership (Northouse, 2007). Likened to an inborn gift, charisma allowed those who possessed it to achieve extraordinary tasks. Furthermore, House's (1976) work linked transformational leadership to charismatic traits which Weber (1947) strengthened by stating that charisma was a personality trait. These studies, Weber (1947), House (1976) and Burns (1978), helped create the assumption that transformational leaders innately had this characteristic.

The relatively recent study on transformational and charismatic leadership by Kouzes and Posner (2002) suggests that characteristics of these theories may be learned and developed through a model consisting of five fundamental practices: model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, and encourage the heart. Kouzes and Posner (2002) propose that any person can learn these five practices or behaviors. Armed with this model, superintendents, when faced with the challenge of making whole system changes can use the tools of transformational leadership theory to lead their organization to the next level.

In the foreword of Michael Fullan's (2006b) book "*Breakthrough*" Richard Elmore exposes the need for transformational leadership by defining default culture of

education. Elmore (2006) likens the educational society to a thick rubber band. It stretches and contorts to demands of society, and once the pressures release it quickly snaps back to the original (default) position. Elmore (Fullan, 2006) warns us not to underestimate the power and resilience of the default culture of public schools: the deeply rooted beliefs, structures, artifacts and symbols of an increasingly dysfunctional and obsolete set of institutions. The symbolic snapping of the rubber band echoes throughout the history of education as schools implement educational reform, only to face the stubbornness of the default culture. Fullan (2005) and Elmore (Fullan, 2006) both agree that sustainable reform demands a complete change of context, a system-wide change, and a steady work of displacing the old culture with an environment that transforms all stakeholders by maximizing their capacity.

Cuban (1998) states that without a model to explain how superintendents influence teachers and students to perform better than they have, most district administrators have to create their own personal cause effect model and rely on luck. The superintendent must look to research-based leadership theories as the vehicle to make whole system changes based on best practices, not luck. The formidable obstacle of a default culture of education may be overcome through a systems-wide change guided by transformational leadership.

Capacity Building

Transformational leadership creates an environment that provides the opportunity for staff development potential (Avolio, 1999). Fullan (2005b) defines capacity building as the concept of empowering employees to attain a higher standard. This concept

includes, developing the collective ability, dispositions, skills, knowledge, motivation and resources to act together that creates positive change. .

Capacity building creates a cohort of leaders that provides a consistent academic environment which seeks input and shares ideas, thus creating ownership and enabling employees to become leaders (Fullan, 2005). The action-based concept of capacity building allows individuals within the context of the district to actively become involved in the leadership process. An example of contextual capacity building at the school level would be a principal sharing the district vision and supporting teachers to reach the established high standards. In turn, the teacher could be a leader among his/her peers, championing the vision and helping others to take ownership. A paraprofessional then carries the torch by assisting the teacher to continually raise the standards of academic achievement. Thus, through capacity building, the school empowers all employees to be change agents and help lead those around them.

Two distinctions exist in capacity building: vertical and lateral. Vertical capacity building suggests a top-down approach where the superintendent empowers the principal, who in turn shares leadership with staff. Conversely, lateral capacity building spans school boundaries as stakeholders interact for the benefit of students. Fullan (2005a) describes lateral capacity building as the power of learning from a wider group of peers across schools. Lateral capacity building does not come from workshops or in-services (although important) but comes from the daily commitment achieved as roles are defined and learning in context is promoted (Fullan, 2005a).

Whether on the level of an individual school or district wide, capacity building will nurture a change in people's behavior, achieved by creating learning systems in which leaders encourage, express and nurture new ideas.

Sustainability

Fullan (2005b) describes the concept of sustainability as the capacity of a system to engage the complexities of continuous improvement, consistent with deep values of human purpose. Sustainability links to the continuous improvement of the quality of education and to the quantity of people who become stakeholders in the commitment to the educational reform. Therefore, test scores, graduations rates and college bound students, in addition to the district's vision, determines the educational leader's success

Principal's Instructional Leadership Role

Instructional leadership means the effort to improve the instructional program to provide students the opportunity to achieve high academic standards. Traditionally, school leaders met their instructional role responsibilities by assuming a top-down approach that focused on monitoring and evaluating teacher performance (The Principals' Partnership 2008). This historic instructional role played a large part in Elmore's (Fullan 2006b) discussion of the default culture of education. This management style maintains long-held policies and procedures that support individual autonomy and isolation. Therefore, as Elmore (Fullan, 2006b) suggests, modern instructional leader must displace the old school culture with one that supports collaboration and deprivatization of practice.

Recent research-based literature (Cotton, 2003) encourages the concept of capacity building which emphasizes collaborative approaches to instructional improvement. Teachers need this collaborative effort in order to have increased authority in making decisions concerning curriculum and instruction. Waters, Marzano and McNulty (2003) expand on the collaborative, capacity building environment by sharing their idea of balanced leadership, i.e., the principal knows when, how, and why to create learning environments that support people, providing knowledge, skills and resources he or she needs to succeed (capacity building). Furthermore, this action connects the teaching staff with each other (lateral capacity building).

Marks and Printy (2003) state the principal's role of balanced leadership advocates that teachers share responsibility for staff development, curriculum development, and instructional supervision with the principal. Blasé and Blasé's (2000) study of teacher empowerment finds that successful principals have staff that attained high levels of empowerment and participated in decision making. This collaboration creates a true atmosphere of capacity building where the principal serves as a leader of leaders, rather than the sole decision maker in the school. Thus, leadership for improved student learning involves both individual efforts by the principal to transform school cultures and joint efforts by the principal and teachers to increase the effectiveness of instructional practice.

Historically, the role of the principal has been to establish and maintain an environment to facilitate student education, which has evolved to create a culture of collaboration with teachers to maximize education offered. The work of individual

teachers, integrated across content areas and grade levels determines this new cultural emphasis of effective teaching in a standards-driven instructional system, as compared to the traditional classroom environment of individual teachers working autonomously in isolated classrooms (The Principals' Partnership 2008).

Recent research by Blasé and Blasé (2000), Waters, Marzano and McNulty (2003), Cotton (2003) and Hallinger (2005) has identified specific practices implemented by successful principals (Table 2.1). Though similar research based practices suggest an effective principal's instructional role must be fundamentally based on a few sound practices, as simplistic as this sounds, it also takes a savvy principal to know when and how to implement the practices (Waters et al, 2003).

Petersen (2002) states research has clearly demonstrated the instructional role has traditionally been in the hands of building principals. Hord (1993) contends that the principal's work causes academic success, however, these efforts thrive or die, supported or otherwise, in the wider school setting. Although the leadership of the principal has been consistently cited as the most significant factor in the success of educational change, this research focuses on the emerging instructional role of the superintendent. The National Commission Reports in the early 1980s (Bjork, 1993) marked a reform shift to standards based education during the last decade of the 20th Century (Sullivan and Shulman, 2005) and the implementation of NCLB has created a reform based on accountability. The intensity of this reform, coupled with our global society has created a sense of urgency to rebuild the educational system that meets the needs of all children.

Table 2.1
Principals' Behaviors and Characteristics

Cotton (2003): 25 Principal Behaviors	Waters, Marzano and McNulty (2003): 21 Principal Responsibilities	Hallinger (2005), Blasé and Blasé (2000): Characteristics of a Collaborative Culture	Smith and Andrews (1989) Four Dimensions of an Instructional Leader
Vision and Goals	Focus	Shared purpose and vision	Resource Provider
Safe School Environment	Culture	Climate of high expectations	Instructional Resource
High Expectations	Order	Visibility	Communicator
Self Confidence	Discipline	Modeling	Visible Presence
Visibility and Accessibility	Resources	Encourage Innovation	
Supportive School Climate	Curriculum and Instruction	Reflective Practice	
Emotional Support	Knowledge of Curriculum	Staff Development	
Parent and Community Involvement	Visibility	Intellectual Stimulation	
Rituals, Ceremonies, Symbolic Actions	Contingent Rewards		
Shared Leadership	Communication		
Collaboration	Outreach		
Instructional Leadership	Input		
Pursuit of High Levels of Student Learning	Affirmation		
Continuous Improvement	Relationship		
Discussion of Instructional Issues	Change Agent		
Observations and Feedback	Optimizer		
Teacher Autonomy	Ideals/Beliefs		
Risk Taking	Monitors/Evaluates		
Professional Development	Flexibility		
Protection of Instructional Time	Situational Awareness		
Monitoring Student Progress	Intellectual Stimulation		
Data Usage			
Recognition of Achievements			
Role Modeling			
Communication and Interaction			

The traditional bureaucracy of education where the superintendent manages and the principal acts as the instructional leader is quickly coming to pass, as the reform of accountability creates a tighter instructional linkage between school and district leaders. Following the trajectory of the history of this reform movement, the future holds a collaborative instructional leadership between all stakeholders under the guidance of the superintendent.

History of the Superintendent's Role

The complex history of the superintendent's role cannot be ignored, and the focus of this study will be the balance between centralization and decentralization. For the purpose of this study, centralization means a governance style where decisions come largely from the district office. The decisions not only include managerial, policy, personnel and financial allocations, but also curriculum and instruction. Conversely, decentralization means local schools govern their own affairs. The district office takes a hands-off approach and the principals have the decision making power at their respective schools.

Fullan (2005b) asserts that centralization/decentralization is the perennial dilemma for those interested in large scale reform, as both concepts have their pros and cons. The extreme of these two concepts have clearly left their mark on the history of education. The role of the superintendent has evolved largely based on the attempt to balance centralization. The current standard based reform and the NCLB Act have given legal consequences to prompt the American educational system to more toward balanced

governance where the district (superintendent) plays an instructional role in the education of all children.

From the conception of the American education system to the mid-1900s, schools had a centralized form of governance with educational decisions flowing from the district office. Town councils, school boards and superintendents controlled every aspect of education, from taxes to testing. Even the current accepted principal's role of instructional leader relied on the superintendent's actions to ensure that appropriate education took place. Cuban's (1998) research supported this contention by saying that superintendents taught teachers how to instruct and regularly appeared in the classroom, encouraging teachers and assisting instruction.

Ever evolving, the superintendent's expectations by the Mid-20th Century shifted from master teacher to expert manager. As the population increased, society changed and the fabric of America transformed from agricultural to industrial. One-room school houses no longer were the mainstay of education as the educational system shifted into mass production. The management operation of school facilities, personnel, building programs and supervision became the responsibility of the superintendent. The demands of the superintendent's managerial role decentralized education and created the opportunity for principals and lead teachers to take responsibility of day-to-day education.

In the latter half of the 20th Century, the superintendent's instructional role continued to shrink. As decentralization of school district operations increased, so did the autonomy of individual schools. Autonomy, as defined by Webster (2008) means the

ability of an entity to operate in the absence of an outside influence. Schools became increasingly autonomous as district management stepped back. At the state level, policy makers set the standards and monitored performance while granting districts the freedom to set their own policies to achieve goals. Principals received the latitude and authority to meet these goals, who in turn gave this responsibility to the individual teachers.

Decentralization further widened the gap between schools and districts that in 1987 Secretary of Education William Bennett characterized superintendents, district office staff, and school board members as part of the education “blob”, people in the education system who work outside the classroom, soaking up resources and resisting reform without contributing to student achievement (Waters and Marzano, 2006).

Although this opinion in itself did not force the pendulum of centralization/decentralization to swing, it did personalize the feelings of the society.

Bjork (1993) asserts that starting in the early 1980s, the need to re-examine the superintendent’s instructional role had become increasingly apparent. The public’s demand for school effectiveness and educational reform not only heightened the visibility and political vulnerability of public school superintendents, but also contributed rising public expectations for a new kind of leadership that emphasized both the need for competent management and effective instructional leadership (Bjork, 1993). Enter the age of educational accountability reform. Empowered with the 2002 passage of NCLB, the governance of education clearly began moving toward centralization. However, it must be noted school governance will not go back along some historical centralization/decentralization path, but rather through intense research based data

educational leaders will find the balance of governance. This balance can best be defined by Fullan's (2005) concept of sustainability, the idea of the superintendent moving from being an individual leader to offering leadership to others. Fullan (2005) further discusses this new leader as one who empowers all stakeholders to become leaders at their own level in the system. Thus, redefining the superintendent's role, educational history has a chance of being changed, rather than repeated.

Instructional Role of the Superintendent

The emergence of the instructional role of the superintendent could mistakenly be linked to the 2002 passage of the federal mandate, NCLB. Although NCLB may have been the catalyst for bringing educational reform to the public eye, one could go back to the early 1980s to see the beginning of a national education reform movement demanding the superintendent become an instructional leader. Bjork (1993) specifically asserts that the nation's commitment to improve its schools started in 1983 with the "Nation at Risk" report and numerous other national commission reports that followed. The reports argued for improving classroom instruction through strong instructional leadership at both the school and district levels. Bjork's (1993) research clearly states that the district level called for instructional leadership three decades ago, yet change has been very slow in coming.

Even though well documented and accepted by educational practitioners, the need for strong instructional leadership at the district level remains yet to have achieved widespread change. Petersen (2002) states district administrators admit that the

managerial reality of the position often forces them to concentrate on issues other than curriculum instruction. Bredeson (1996, p. 244) adds that, “The work of the superintendent has increasingly become defined by political pressures, high public visibility, unstable school finances, and greater external controls exerted through court rulings, legislation, and state department of education mandates.”

Attempting to concentrate on the instructional role and minimizing the managerial role leads to a dead end. Petersen (2002) supports earlier research by Elmore (2000) and Bjork (1993) that when superintendents shift their attention to the instructional side of their job description, the effort gets sabotaged by managerial demands and responsibilities. Elmore (Fullan, 2006b) believes that the reform work of delivering instructional leadership on the district level deliberately causes displacement of one culture with another and Fullan (2005a) further adds that changing whole systems means changing the entire context in which people work.

Changing the default culture of education will require a systems wide change that forces the superintendent to use transformational leadership practices that Kouzes and Posner (2002) have argued are learned behaviors. The change in leadership coupled with intentionally embedding known traits of instructional leadership into all the duties of the superintendent will help positively impact student achievement. This contextual change allows the district to implement sustained educational reform that continually raises the academic bar without sacrificing the authority of the superintendent.

Bjork (1993) asserts that if superintendents must act as instructional leaders in school districts, then they must have a better understanding of the context of the job.

Waters and Marzano (2006) conducted a contextual X-ray of the characteristics of the superintendent's leadership and managerial practices. In their quantitative meta-analysis, "School district Leadership that Works: The Effect of Superintendent Leadership on Student Achievement" Waters and Marzano (2006) dissected and correlated the superintendent daily practices with student achievement.

Waters and Marzano's Meta-Analysis

Waters and Marzano (2006) conducted a quantitative meta-analysis which examined findings from 27 studies since 1970 involving 2,817 schools and 3.4 million students (Waters and Marzano, 2006). This large and rigorous meta-analysis based on five research questions.

- What is the strength of relationship between leadership at the district level and average student academic achievement in the district?
- What specific district-level leadership responsibilities are related to student academic achievement?
- What specific leadership practices are used to fulfill these responsibilities?
- What is the variation in the relationship between district leadership and student achievement?
- Is there a relationship between length of superintendent service and student achievement?

To collect data on their research questions, Waters and Marzano (2006) strived to correlate the variables in their findings. They used the Pearson r to express the degree of relationship between the variables. Gay and Airasian (2000) explain the co-efficient of the Pearson r to be on a scale from 0 - +1.00 or -1.00 to 0, the closer to +1.00 or -1.00,

the more accurate the predictions based on their relationship. Cohen (1988) provides the following guidelines to determine the strength of correlation: 0-.32 (small), .33-.69 (moderate), and greater than .70 (large). All of Waters and Marzano's (2009) findings, except one (non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction .33), are considered by Cohen's (1988) matrix to be statistically small. However, the minimal strength in correlation does not minimize the need for further study; on the contrary it raises more questions, demanding continued research.

Waters and Marzano's (2006) findings for their first research question, the relationship between district leadership and student success revealed a positive correlation of $r = .24$. To understand this positive correlation in educational terms, Waters and Marzano (2006) provided this scenario. Consider an average superintendent at the 50th percentile in leadership abilities who leads a school district where student achievement averaged at the 50th percentile. Assume the superintendent improves his or her leadership abilities by one standard deviation. Given the correlation between district leadership and student achievement of $r = .24$, it could predict that the average student achievement in the district would increase by 9.5 percentile points, thus raising average student achievement in the district to nearly the 60th percentile.

This meta-analysis provided evidence for the second research question by revealing six major superintendent responsibilities that had a statistically significant positive relationship between district leadership (superintendent) and student achievement, ranging from $r = .24$ to $r = .33$, see Table 2.2.

Table 2.2
Waters and Marzano's Superintendent's Responsibilities (2006)

Goal Setting Process	$r = .24$	The superintendent involves board members and principals in the process of setting goals.
Non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction	$r = .33$	Goals for student achievement and instructional programs are adopted and are based on relevant research.
Board alignment with and support of district goals	$r = .29$	Board support for district goals for achievement and instruction is maintained.
Monitoring goals for achievement and instruction	$r = .27$	The superintendent monitors and evaluates implementation of the district instructional program, impact of instruction on achievement, and impact of implementation on implementers
Use of resources to support the goals for achievement and instruction	$r = .26$	Resources are dedicated and used for professional development of teachers and principals to achieve district goals.
Defined Autonomy; superintendent relationship with schools	$r = .28$	The superintendent provides autonomy to principals to lead their schools, but expects alignment on district goals and use of resources for professional development.

However, it must be noted that correlation does not equal causation. Specifically speaking, the superintendent's responsibility (as defined by Waters and Marzano, 2006) of setting non-negotiable goals has a high correlation ($r = .33$) with student achievement. This should not be taken to mean that non-negotiable goals cause student achievement; it merely implies that when one variable increases, the other does also (+1.00), or a negative correlation indicates that when one variable decreases, the other increases (-1.00). However, a statistically significant correlation between two variables does demand further research to determine if a cause/effect relationship does indeed exist.

Guidance from the third question led Waters and Marzano (2006) to discover 51 specific leadership practices, that when implemented, fulfill the six leadership responsibilities. The complete list of these specific practices is in Appendix B.

The fourth research question sought to find the variation in the relationship between district leadership and student achievement. Stated differently, do behaviors associated with strong leadership always have a positive effect on student achievement? Waters and Marzano (2006) discovered that leadership behaviors are not always associated with an increase in student achievement. They labeled this variation the differential impact of leadership. Two explanations for this phenomenon were offered. First, the effect of strong leadership could be mitigated if the superintendent focuses on goals not related to student achievement. The second explanation is when the superintendent fails to understand the magnitude of the instructional goals and the effects on all stakeholders.

The fifth and final research question is the relationship between the longevity of the superintendent at the district and student achievement. Waters and Marzano (2006) state this is a bonus finding because it was not initially a focus of the study, but emerged from the analysis of the reports. This discovery implies that the longevity of the superintendent in one district, positively effects the average student academic achievement. These effects are seen with a superintendent tenure as early as two years.

Through analyzing quantitative studies, Waters and Marzano's (2006) data has realized six statistically relevant responsibilities of the superintendent that positively correlate with student achievement. These quantitative findings birth many questions and

create a need to conduct further studies that will gather qualitative data on the superintendent's influences on student success.

By conducting a single case study, this researcher will focus on the qualitative data to further investigate the superintendent's responsibility and student success. This research project will structure Waters and Marzano's (2006) six superintendent responsibilities into two (2) categories: the goal implementation process and defined autonomy. To further guide the data collection procedure, the 51 specific leadership practices will be used to identify relevant data in the case study.

Goal Implementation Process

As mentioned earlier in this study, Waters and Marzano's (2006) meta-analysis discovered six superintendent responsibilities that statistically correlate with student success. Five of the six responsibilities relate to educational goals and the remaining one to defined autonomy. The five goal responsibilities guide the process of setting, implementing and monitoring goals for success. For the purpose of this case study, the term "goals" as used by Waters and Marzano (2006) will be expanded to the goal implementation process.

This goal implementation framework, according to Waters and Marzano (2006), addresses instructional design, creates a common instructional vocabulary and consistently adopts research-based instructional strategies. Lashway (2002, p. 3) supports this by stating, "Goals do not require superintendents to immerse themselves in the details of instructional planning and execution, but they must be knowledgeable enough to hold principals and teachers accountable for effective practice." The district

does not attempt to micromanage teachers through classroom goals, but instead uses it as a common framework of instruction adopted district wide.

The superintendent's continued persistence and modeling of the district's vision establishes non-negotiable goals. Petersen (2002) states, "the critical importance of the superintendent's individual actions and modeling of academically orientated goals helps maintain the district's ability to focus on the academic achievement of students"(p. 166). Therefore, this study gathers and analyzes data that looks for patterns matching theoretical propositions of Waters and Marzano's (2006) goal implementation process to ascertain if, indeed, the organizational approach of the superintendent does result in student success.

Defined Autonomy

A clear delineation must be made between defined autonomy and autonomy. As defined by Webster (2008), autonomy is the freedom to act in the absence of outside influences. Traditionally in educational practice, autonomy is most commonly achieved when site-based management (SBM) is implemented. At its core SBM is the decentralization of authority within a school district. This decentralization devolves budgetary, instructional and other decision making authority from the centralized district administrations to individual schools. The rationale implies that those closest to the students have the most capability of making important decisions that lead to change and improvement. As logical as this may seem, Waters and Marzano's (2006) study found a negative correlation, $r = -.16$, between SBM and academic achievement, indicating that as autonomy increases, student achievement decreases.

Cuban (1998) set the tone for recent debate between SBM (autonomy) and defined autonomy. He states that educational culture has evolved by having authority shift to SBM and then back to the superintendent's office. More than a trend, this authority shift has practitioners continually searching for the balance between centralization and decentralization of educational authority in a school district. Superintendents who strive to achieve district wide reform face the perennial dilemma of balancing centralization with decentralization (Fullan, 2005). Waters and Mazarno (2006) advances the research on defined autonomy with their meta-analysis which found a statistically significant, yet small correlation of $r = .28$ between defined autonomy and student achievement. The simplistic definition of defined autonomy can be the superintendent setting non-negotiable goals for the district and then supporting individual principals in achieving those goals. Peterson, Murphy and Hallinger (1987) expands this definition by explaining defined autonomy as the combination of direct and indirect controls that create an effective web of control that coordinates instruction at the site level as well as sending clear and potent signals to principals and teachers that curriculum and teaching is important to the district office.

To further clarify defined autonomy, it is not an effort by the district office to micromanage. Through capacity building, both vertical and horizontal, the superintendent creates stakeholders who are empowered to meet specific non-negotiable goals. Furthermore, defined autonomy is also not just a matter of delegating duties. Instead, leaders at the school level need clear guidelines, support, and the freedom to achieve non-negotiable goals. This study gathers and analyzes data looking for patterns

to match to theoretical propositions of defined autonomy to ascertain if, indeed, the organizational approach of the superintendent does result in student success.

Summary

The study of education history reveals a fluid superintendent's role that continually evolves to meet the educational and cultural demands. The superintendent's role has covered the whole realm of education, from a master teacher who taught teachers to a bureaucracy manager. The current educational reform that dates back to the early 1980s continually redefines the superintendent's role to include instructional leader.

The role of the principal must not be overlooked; it too has evolved throughout the history of education. Seen as the school's instructional leader, researchers have long developed the characteristics for an academically successful principal. Cotton (2003) lists 25 principal behaviors; Waters, Marzano and McNulty (2003) list 21 principal responsibilities; Hallinger (2005) with Blasé and Blasé (2000) list eight principal characteristics; and Smith and Andrews (1989) add four dimensions (Table 2.1). All documented as efforts, principals can ensure the quality of education offered to each student in their school. In 2002, NCLB mandated that all students must achieve academic success. The new standard created by NCLB expanded educational accountability to include the district. Starting in the early 1980s, this reform placed accountability for the education of our students at the forefront of society.

Research on the superintendents' role as instructional leader has intensified, and Waters and Marzano's (2006) quantitative meta-analysis findings suggest a positive

correlation between district leadership and student success. Similar to principal research, this study found observable superintendent actions tied to academics. This qualitative single case study will add to the research base of the superintendent' organizational approaches on student success based on the Waters and Marzano's (2006) six statistically significant superintendent responsibilities.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Waters and Marzano's (2006) meta-analysis found a statistically significant relationship between certain aspects of district leadership and student success. Using the Pearson r as the measure of effect size, they found a positive correlation of $r = .24$ between the two variables. The study revealed six superintendent responsibilities that had a positive correlation with student achievement. The practices include: (1) goal setting; (2) setting non-negotiable goals; (3) board alignment with and support of district goals; (4) monitoring goals for achievement and instruction (5) use of resources to support the goals, and (6) defined autonomy. The significant quantitative meta-analysis findings can be generalized across the population, but due to the quantitative nature of the study, the "how" and "why" of superintendent actions impacting student achievement was not addressed.

Built on the quantitative findings of Waters and Marzano (2006), this single case study seeks qualitative data on the effects of the superintendents' organizational approach to student success. This study's focus is guided by two research questions: "How does the goal implementation process as an element of the superintendent's organizational approach impact student success?" and "How does defined autonomy as an element of the superintendent's organizational approach impact student success?"

The inherent difficulty in studying a superintendent's instructional leadership characteristics resonates in Peterson's (1999) work, which described the struggle in locating instructionally focused superintendents. No politically savvy district administrator would ever admit a lack of focus on instructional issues. According to Peterson (1999), only a handful of studies concerning student achievement and superintendent actions had been conducted, indicating the instructional role of the superintendent is under-researched. Waters and Marzano's (2006) exhaustive meta-analysis' findings between the district leader's actions and student success broke new ground for studying the superintendent. The findings indicated that when specific practices are implemented, the six instructional leadership responsibilities will be fulfilled, suggesting a positive impact on student success.

The role of the superintendent can be studied and specific behaviors analyzed to ascertain the instructional effectiveness of the practicing superintendent. Fullan (2005b) states that once superintendents realize their actions can make a difference, they can intentionally manipulate the learning environment to take the district to a higher level of learning. The leadership theory incorporated in this study will be evident as the superintendent applies transformational leadership traits to strive to achieve sustainability in student achievement through capacity building.

Qualitative vs Quantitative

When choosing the research design one must step back and allow the proper vehicle to drive the methodology. To a novice researcher, the obvious path is to choose

the design and then model the project. Patton (2002) suggests the opposite approach. He asserts that methods depend upon the context. In layman's terms, the subject studied will determine the strategy, or as Patton (2002) states, some questions demand numerical answers (quantitative), while some don't (qualitative).

Quantitative research is based on a project that demands a numerical result in a predictable and easily understood world. This method controls the context of the study by eliminating outside influences. By studying one specific thread of the social fabric, it can generalize the outcome to other like materials. The data from this thread is gathered from a large number of participants in order to statistically analyze the information. The researcher then generalizes to the individual from the whole.

In qualitative studies the researcher attempts to vividly recreate past events. This method requires the researcher to observe the context without trying to control it. Rather than statistical analysis, qualitative procedures demand the researcher interpret collected data through techniques such as, observations, interviews and document analysis. The researcher strives to achieve a deep understanding of a context by limiting the number of participants observed and accepts the world as a constantly changing arena that can be categorized based on common themes and patterns.

As oppositional as these two methods seem, Gay (2000) adds that quantitative and qualitative research should not be considered as such, rather, they complement one another, and when in extreme, they show the full spectrum of research. Used together, they can gather data that obtain a deeper explanation of a specific context that could not be attained by one research method alone.

Qualitative Study of the Superintendent

The problem statement for this study concerns the lack of qualitative data that examines the organizational approach of the superintendent as it relates to student success. This project's goal of obtaining a holistic view of a single superintendent in a real-life context demands a qualitative research design. Waters and Marzano's (2006) quantitative study which provides the basis for this study found a statistically significant positive correlation between the superintendent and student success. The fact that correlation does not imply causation requires this study, a qualitative single case study aimed at gathering deep, rich, descriptive data.

The breakdown between qualitative and quantitative studies further supports the need for a true qualitative project. In this researcher's review, a minimal number of qualitative case studies exist that involve the superintendent and student achievement. Educational research needs a rich description of the daily interactions between superintendents and their perceived role. This researcher desires to add to the data by examining the relationship between the superintendent and student success.

Through this qualitative single case study, the researcher will attempt to gain a deeper understanding of the superintendent's working environment in order to document Waters and Marzano's (2006) propositional theories in a real life context. The data will then be analyzed determine if the behaviors observed fulfill the propositional theories.

Case Study Approach

In general, Yin (2003) suggests case studies as the preferred strategy when three conditions are present: first, when “how” or “why” questions are posed; second, when the investigator has little control over the events; and third, when the study focuses on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context.

As mentioned earlier, strategy is dictated by the data desired and the importance of the first condition of “how” and “why” questions cannot be overlooked. Yin (2003) cites that the problem question creates the foundation for the study and extremely important words like “who,” “what,” “where,” “how,” and “why” provide guidance when collecting data. This study posed no exception as the two research questions that guide this research both center around the word “how”.

In the second condition, the investigator has little control over the events. Observing participants in a real-life context provides no opportunity to control events and variables. This particular case study has no desire to control variables as the data desired requires observing participants in their daily activities.

The last condition, studying contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context is unique to a case study. Because case studies can use many techniques to gather data it can deal with a full variety of evidence, such as, documents, artifacts, interviews and observations (Yin, 2003).

Research Design

As the blue print of the study, the research design allows the researcher to focus on the following: what questions to study; relevant data; what data to collect; and how to analyze the results (Yin, 2003). More importantly, the design helps the researcher to maintain focus and not collect information that has no relation to the research questions.

Yin (2003) states that for case studies, five components of research design are especially important. The first and foremost component of the research design is the study's problem statement, which guides the research project.

Second, to maintain focus, research questions accompany the problem statement. The problem statement asks the general question of what needs to be studied. The more specific research questions direct attention to what should be examined in order to collect the proper data.

The third component, the unit of analysis or the "what" or "who" is going to be studied was stipulated in the main question of the study. If the research question does not specify the unit of analysis, then the study may be too vague or broad.

Linking data to the research questions encompasses the fourth component proposed by Yin (2003). This linking, or finding relevancy can be done by researching and finding patterns or themes that have been discovered previously to support like data.

According to Yin (2003), interpreting a study's findings provides solid research outcomes and comprises the fifth and final criterion. However, this fifth component remains the weakest because no set criterion exists. Although a weak point for case

studies, it does not indicate an automatic failure. This case study followed Yin's (2003) guidance to interpret data to ensure the best opportunity for a solid design plan.

Case Study Design Tests

The researcher delineates the last segment of the qualitative single case study by discussing the criteria for judging the quality of the research design. Table 3.1, below, lists the four tests used and the recommended case study tactics, as well as a cross-reference to the phase of research when using the tactic.

Table 3.1
Case Study Design Tests
SOURCE: Yin (2003)

TESTS	CASE STUDY TACTIC	PHASE OF RESEARCH
Conformability	• Use multiple sources of evidence • Pilot Study • Have case study draft reviewed	Data Collection Data Collection Composition
Credibility	• Pattern matching • Address rival explanations • Use logic models	Data Analysis Data Analysis Data Analysis
Transferability	• Incorporate theory into study	Research Design
Dependability	• Use case study protocol • Develop case study database	Data Collection Data Collection

Conformability

Conformability tests whether the research design measures the intended behaviors or social phenomenon. This can be especially problematic for case studies as critics quickly point out the subjective tactics of collecting data. As mentioned earlier, case studies exist in the real world and the researcher has little opportunity to control the variables. Thus, case studies inherently deal with a wide variety of evidence and an abundance of data, most of which could lead the researcher away from the desired point of study.

Yin (2003) and Patton (2002) suggest several tactics available to strengthen confirmability. Patton (2002) suggests that triangulation, arguably the most common tactic, applies and combines several research methods in the study of the same phenomenon. Triangulation occurs when the evidence develops converging lines of inquiry, i.e., the multiple sources of evidence collected in triangulation address the same fact or line of reasoning. An inexperienced researcher sometimes makes a common error regarding the concept of non-convergence of evidence. In an effort to triangulate, the novice researcher analyzes the evidence separately and compares conclusions, but has not achieved triangulation. Please see Diagram 3.1.

Patton (2002) also introduces four different types of triangulation: data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, and methodological triangulation. This case study will use data triangulation.

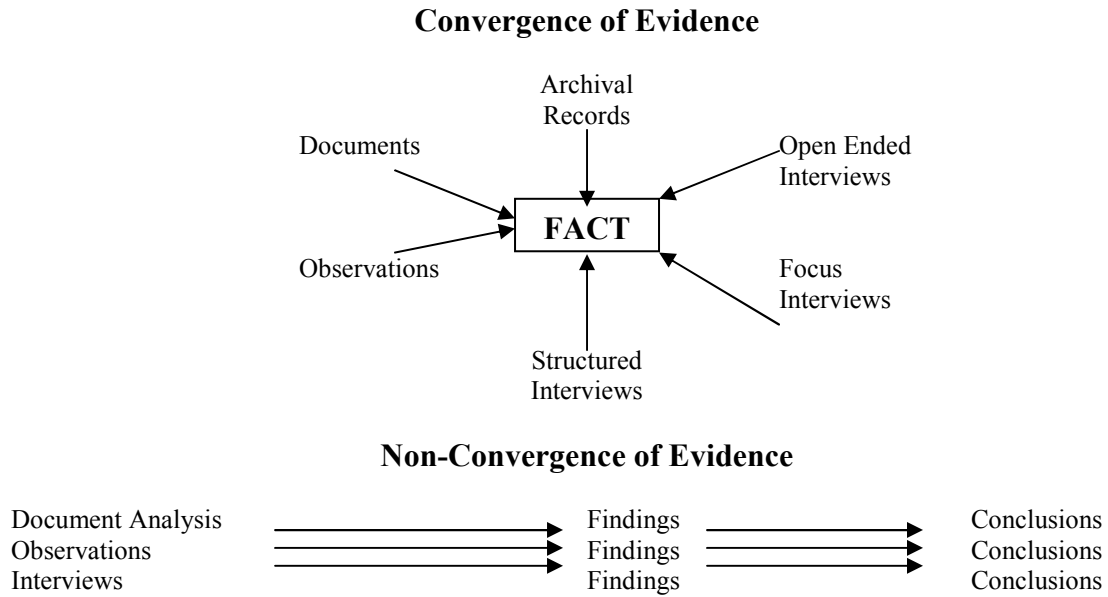


Figure 3.1
Convergence and Non-convergence of Multiple Sources of Evidence
Yin (2003)

The triangulation of data tests for consistency, allowing the researcher to strengthen the study by having two or more sources of data point to the same conclusion. Conversely Patton (2002) suggests that the inconsistency created by the inability to triangulate data is also important. If the attempt to triangulate a data point fails, the experienced researcher has gained insight and is driven to delve deeper into the study.

Triangulation in this study will be achieved by: conducting multiple interviews with the superintendent's administrative staff and Trustees; observation of the participants as they interact within the district and school setting; and analyzing district documents.

Conducting a pilot study is another tactic to strengthen the confirmability of this research project. The pilot study allows the researcher to test the substantive and

methodological issues of the study as interviews and observation protocols can be adjusted and focused to ensure the collection of the proper data. Furthermore the researcher gains valuable field experience, thus enhancing the credibility of the case study outcome.

The last tactic addressing conformability relies on draft review. This project will be reviewed by the researcher's Doctoral Committee of four Montana State University Professors. This review ensures that the experience of the professors will identify threats, weaknesses and faults with the design. The draft review will critique methodology and specifically guide the researcher in interview questions, techniques and observation protocol.

Credibility

Credibility hinges on a concern for studies trying to establish a causal relationship. In determining if one action causes another, the researcher will implement pattern matching to strengthen credibility. Through interviews and observations, data will be collected and analyzed looking for common themes or patterns. These patterns will be matched with the existing propositional theories as proposed by Waters and Marzano (2006). However, pattern matching does have a possible drawback with the inability to match all proposed theories. Yin (2003) suggests that if the data collected does not match all the proposed patterns, then the initial proposition would have to be questioned. The pilot study will be used to test data gathering techniques and adjust if necessary for the case study.

Addressing rival explanations rules out all threats to the study as defined as the result of some other influence. Yin (2003) states that data collection should attempt to collect evidence about other threats, as if trying to prove them. Yin (2003) expounds on the two categories of rivals: craft and real life explanations.

Craft rivals exist due to the nature of a case study. Examples would be the testing, instrumentation, interview techniques and observation protocols, and they all could be wrought with fault, threatening the conclusion. Investigator bias is another example of a craft rival. Real-life rivals occur in the holistic picture of the project studied. These variables occur naturally and need to be explained and determined not to have an effect on the conclusion. The effect of the instructional role of the principal provides an example of a real-life rival in this study. It must be determined that the superintendent leads the instruction of the district, not a member of the administrative team.

Addressing and rejecting as many rival explanations as possible will enhance credibility. Making an exhaustive list of rivals may not be possible or even plausible for the study, but an extensive list can be made. The design of the study will present many rivals, including the craft rivals as listed above. The pilot study and draft review will round out the extensive list of rivals to be explained.

Transferability

Transferability is the ability generalize research findings beyond the scope of the immediate project. Yin (2003) points out that case studies rely on analytical generalization in which the investigator strives to generalize to a particular set of results

to some broader theory. The common term transferability references similarities between two contexts. Patton (2002) uses other terms, such as extrapolation, when referencing generalization and qualitative studies. Researchers can extrapolate data from the information rich studies for potential applications in the future.

The standard of transferability can be maintained by incorporating theory into the study. In this particular study the findings of Waters and Marzano (2006) already positively correlates the superintendent's effect on student success. In using Waters and Marzano's (2006) proposed theories of superintendent practices, this strengthens the study's transferability

Dependability

Dependability is achieved when a study is repeated and the same conclusions are reached. Yin (2003) states minimizing the errors and biases in the study helps ensure dependability. By doing so a future investigator would have a better chance in replicating the project. Yin (2003) and Patton (2002) stress that the researcher must be consistent when conducting a case study. Dependability can best be achieved through meticulous documentation and consistently following the design strategy.

Case Study Design

The design of this case study guided the researcher through data collection and analysis. The quality of the design directly correlated to the strength of this study and the credibility of its outcome. The case study design was grounded in the following nine sections: (1) Introduction, (2) Unit of Analysis, (3) Superintendent Interview and

Observation, (4) Administrative Team Interviews and Observations, (5) Trustee Interviews, (6) Document Analysis, (7) Analytical Strategy, (8) Analytical Techniques, and (9) Final Data Analysis.

Case Study Design: Introduction

A qualitative single case study was designed based on Waters and Marzano's (2006) quantitative meta-analysis. The findings of this study indicates that district leadership does matter and found a statistically significant positive correlation of $r = .24$ between the variables of superintendent leadership and student achievement. Waters and Marzano (2006) also found six superintendent responsibilities that have a statistically significant positive correlation with student achievement.

This study provided thick, rich data that qualitatively examined the boundaries established by Waters and Marzano's (2006) findings. The research questions that guided this study are: "How does the goal implementation process as an element of the superintendent's organizational approach impact student success?" and "How does defined autonomy as an element of the superintendent's organizational approach impact student success?"

See Diagram 1.1 for the boundaries defined by the two research questions presented on page 10 in chapter one of this study. The visualization of the process as presented by the diagram helped maintain the focus of the study and allowed the researcher to collect pertinent data.

Table 3.2
Waters and Marzano's Superintendent's Responsibilities (2006)

Goal Setting Process	$r = .24$	The superintendent involves board members and principals in the process of setting goals.
Non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction	$r = .33$	Goals for student achievement and instructional programs are adopted and are based on relevant research.
Board alignment with and support of district goals	$r = .29$	Board support for district goals for achievement and instruction is maintained.
Monitoring goals for achievement and instruction	$r = .27$	The superintendent monitors and evaluates implementation of the district instructional program, impact of instruction on achievement, and impact of implementation on implementers
Use of resources to support the goals for achievement and instruction	$r = .26$	Resources are dedicated and used for professional development of teachers and principals to achieve district goals.
Defined Autonomy; superintendent relationship with schools	$r = .28$	The superintendent provides autonomy to principals to lead their schools, but expects alignment on district goals and use of resources for professional development.

The case study design demands certain criteria (Yin, 2003). The study was done on a very small sample population; it was conducted in a real life context; and it allowed the researcher to gain a deep understanding of the context. This case study was structured using Yin's (2003) design criteria for guidance. A school district with a reputation of student success was chosen. Data was collected through interviews and observations of the superintendent, administrative team and trustees. Document analysis enhanced the data by triangulation.

Case Study Design: Unit of Analysis

The problem statement and research questions clearly defined the unit of analysis as the superintendent of a school district. In reviewing prior literature in similar studies,

this researcher specifically selected a superintendent based on various standards that were demanded by the data desired. Examples of literature based standards for choosing a unit of analysis might be a superintendent whose students performed well on standardized tests or a superintendent who clearly has a role in evaluating teachers. For this particular study, the superintendent candidate met the following criteria: professionally recognized by state educational leaders; supervise an administrative team; and have longevity at the current district. The superintendent candidate's district also met the following criteria: minimum student enrollment and recognized for student academic achievement.

The superintendent chosen was recognized by educational leaders in the state as a professional who represents the educational interests of students. Examples of evidence of recognition are, appointments to various local, state and national boards or committees, involvement in state or national professional organizations, or have received state or national recognition. The superintendent must have an administrative team. Although no definition of the structure of this team exists, the requirement is having the superintendent supervising all team members. The longevity must be a minimum of 10 years in the district serving in the capacity of superintendent.

The superintendent's district must have a minimum student enrollment of 8,000 students. The district must also have been recognized for student academic achievement through a formal state or federal award, an article in an educational journal or recognized by state professionals as being a school of high academic standards.

Case Study Design: Superintendent Interview and Observation

Once the superintendent selection process ended, a face-to-face meeting was scheduled followed by formal and informal observations. These qualitative data collecting strategies were specific and strategically aimed at gathering the data required of this study. For this reason, purposeful (researching the best times, questions and strategies in order observe desired data) interviews and observations were conducted. Purposeful observation opportunities of the superintendent were during meetings with the administrative team or Trustees. Strategically designed to gain the desired data in the district, purposeful interviews were specific with the purpose of extracting pertinent information from interview discussions.

The initial meeting focused on the superintendent and began with casual conversation to build trust and create a congenial relationship between the researcher and superintendent. The interview took place in the superintendent's office and followed the Superintendent Interview Protocol Matrix (Appendix C) and was digitally taped. Immediately following the interview, the researcher reflected all thoughts and feelings to capture the atmosphere and non-verbal cues of the interview. The interview was transcribed verbatim and categorized according to the propositional theories (Appendix B).

The superintendent was observed according to the observational protocol (Appendix E). The opportunity to observe occurred during, the following situations: administration, staff and Board meetings, and during informal interactions with staff and community members. Each of these meetings was specifically selected in order to

fulfill the concept of purposeful data collecting. During the observations the researcher took minimal notes and reflected immediately following each observation.

The researcher's role was that of a participant observer. There are well documented advantages and disadvantages with choosing this role. Both Yin (2003) and Patton (2002) discuss the potential investigator bias that can occur. In participating, the researcher could lead the observations to desired outcomes by asking or answering questions, exhibiting body language or by journaling. This second major disadvantage is becoming an advocate of the organization, allowing personal or professional biases to enter into the data collected. As ominous as these pitfalls may seem, Yin (2003) states the design of the study, supported by a strict observation protocol will overcome these disadvantages. Also awareness of the possible situations will allow the researcher to continually confront personal bias.

This researcher chose the role of participant observer in order to become part of the administrative environment where team members understand the researcher's role and felt less inhibited.

Case Study Design: Administrative Team Interviews and Observations

A total of five administrative team members were chosen to participate in this study, the assistant superintendent, two high school principals and two elementary (K-8) principals. Choosing specific individuals to participate was dictated by three variables: the guidelines established in this case study design; longevity of administrators within the district; and the number of administrators available in each school.

Defining and testing rival explanations, one of the analytical strategies utilized in the design of this study, demands that the assistant superintendent participates. Waters and Marzano's (2006) statistically correlated propositional theories must manifest from the superintendent, rather than the assistant superintendent, a rival source.

The longevity of each administrator were sufficient for each to have a working relationship with the superintendent. An administrator with minimal years in the district may not have the time required to understand the leadership dynamics of the district. The number of years as an administrator in the district for the purpose of this study was eight. Of the 13 elementary principals, nine were eligible for participation based on years of service. Two of the nine were randomly chosen. The number of principals in the high school equals that of the number needed to participate. Additionally, both of the high school principals' tenure in the district met the longevity requirement.

Through formal letters and consent forms, the researcher contacted each candidate to attain permission to participate in the study. The same purposeful interview and observation procedures used for the superintendent was applied to each administrative team participant.

The data collection strategy dictated the total length of time needed for all interviews and observations. This researcher did not interfere with normal interactions, but built a relationship with each administrator and become a part of the leadership environment. The visitation time ended when data saturation occurred.

Case Study Design: Trustee Interview

Triangulation of the purposeful data collected through administrative interviews and observations was enhanced by interviewing the Board Chair. The position of board chair provides this individual Trustee the opportunity to better understand the actions of the superintendent and workings of the district. The researcher interviewed the Board Chair following the protocol listed in Appendix G.

Case Study Design: Document Analysis

The researcher collected and analyzed documents that were published during the superintendent's tenure. The documents included: newspaper articles, journal articles, district goals and mission statements, administrative team evaluation templates, and website information. Each document was analyzed and matched to Waters and Marzano's (2006) propositional theories and related terminology as collected from the superintendent's interviews and observations.

Case Study Design: Analytic Strategy

Yin (2003) says the challenge in producing a high quality analysis requires the investigator to attend to all the evidence by presenting it separate from any interpretation and exploring alternative interpretations. Specific analytical strategies must be embedded into the design of the case study to guide data collection and ensure proper data analysis. Mentioned earlier, and now fully discussed, are the three analytical strategies guiding this study: propositional theories, rival explanations and a vivid case description.

The first analytical strategy, propositional theories, is provided by Waters and Marzano's (2006) study. This exhaustive meta-analysis found a small, yet statistically significant positive correlation between district leadership and student achievement, and six superintendent responsibilities describing this relationship. Furthermore, 51 specific, observable practices for the six superintendent responsibilities were discovered (Appendix, B). These practices, or theoretical propositions, created an empirical data base to match information collected during the data collection process. Rubrics using the propositional theories were created to guide the researcher in collecting data through interviews, observations and document analysis.

The importance of incorporating theory into the qualitative research study cannot be underestimated. If qualitative research is the attempt of the researcher to vividly recreate past events, then theory attempts to satisfy the human need to scientifically rationalize and interpret these events (Flinders & Mills, 1993a). Theory moves qualitative research beyond professional storytelling to the realm of social examination.

In the foreword of Finders and Mills' (1993b) book "*Theory and Concepts in Qualitative Research*", Eisner states that theory provides the conceptual vehicle that assigns pattern to individuality. Theory intendeds to make coherent what otherwise appear as disconnected individual events. Theory provides the means through which lessons are learned that can apply to situations we have yet to encounter, theory aids as a guide that must be used when tackling the uncharted course of a case study.

According to Yin (2003), using propositional theories provides multiple advantages. First, it helps the investigator to focus on collecting data relevant to the

research questions and ignoring other interesting but irrelevant data. Second, propositional theories guide the research study from start to finish. Third, the research based information creates a solid foundation for the study design, from research questions to data collection to data analysis. Lastly, Waters and Marzano's (2006) quantitative research gives credibility and strengthens the transferability of this study. By fulfilling the propositional theories, the superintendent has met the requirements of the six responsibilities that Waters and Marzano (2006) positively correlated with student success.

The second analytical strategy, rival explanations, defined as influences that occur within the study that could be the cause or at least influence the outcomes, must be addressed or they weaken the study by allowing definitive conclusions to be questioned. Yin (2003) describes two types of rival explanations, craft and real life. Due to the design of the study, craft rivals, such as researcher bias, participation selection process, and weak instrument tools exist. Real-life rivals are influences that occur due to the nature of a real-world case study where multiple variables cannot be controlled. These variables, such as the actions of the assistant superintendent, may influence the outcome by minimizing the effect of the superintendent on student success.

The researcher must understand that rival explanations exist, and direct the data collection process to pursue them in order to explain their effect. Multiple strategies will be used to minimize rival explanations. First, a pilot study will be conducted which will reveal unknown real-life and craft rivals allowing the researcher to adjust the case study. Second, a draft review by the doctoral committee will help to pinpoint craft and real

rivals. Third, continual awareness of the researcher through journaling and following the guidance of the case design will help to recognize and address rivals as they occur.

Lastly, real-life rivals must be vigorously researched as if they are the main point of the study. Integral to the conclusion of this case study is the documentation of the rival's level of influence on the study.

The third and final analytical strategy is creating a vivid case description.

Providing a contextual picture of the case examined is essential to the understanding of the information gathered. Specific details of the environment add to the data and allow the reader to transfer facts and details of the case to other studies.

Case Study Design: Analytic Techniques

According to Yin (2003) using a pattern-matching logic provides the most desirable technique for case study analysis. The strength of this technique rests on the theoretical propositions of Waters and Marzano (2006). These credible propositions are the foundation for the whole study and were used as the empirical based patterns to match with the case study's predicted patterns. The theoretical propositions listed in Appendix B were integrated into the interview questions, observation protocol and document analysis. The researcher focused on patterns, key words and actions of the superintendent and administrative team that match the theoretical propositions.

Case Study Design: Final Data Analysis

The researcher strived for a high quality analysis of the data through the use of a well designed study, analytical strategies and techniques. Yin (2003) and Patton (2002)

discuss four principles fundamental to achieving a high quality analysis. First, the analysis should prove that the study attended to all the evidence. Second, all major rival interpretations should be researched and explained. Third, the analysis should address the core of the study. Fourth, investigator expertise should be used when analyzing the data. This proficiency expresses the researcher's passion and knowledge of the subject matter and strengthens the overall study.

Upon completion of the interviews and observations, all data was transcribed verbatim. Using the patterns provided by the theoretical propositions of Waters and Marzano's (2006) meta-analysis, the data was categorized and matched with common words and phrases. Document analysis was also categorized and match key words and phrases from the theoretical propositions. By breaking down data to specific words and statements, the researcher found a pattern in the superintendent's organizational approach that matched the statistically significant propositional theories.

Pilot Study

The case study's strength rests on the researcher's skill attained through extensive knowledge of the topic and the research process. A higher level of experience was attained by conducting a pilot study.

The two basic tenet of the pilot study are: give the optimal opportunity to research a problem and provides the researcher with the ability to adjust and address any weaknesses in the data collection process. Therefore this researcher conducted a pilot study to test the interview and observation techniques and change as necessary.

The district chosen for this pilot study fulfilled the criteria set for the case district with the exception of student enrollment. Reasons for allowing this exception are the convenience and access for the researcher. The district's student population is approximately 1450 students in grades K-12. It has received many awards including the Blue Ribbon School Award.

The pilot study superintendent has been the leader of this district for 11 years. During that time he has been a member of both the state and national association of superintendents. The superintendent also acted as president of the local superintendent organization as well as the Indian Impact Schools, and played active roles in the Yellowstone West Special Education Cooperative and the Superintendent's Council for Multicultural Education Northwest Region.

The design plan for the pilot study was similar to the one described for the case, only less intense. Three interviews were conducted, the superintendent, a high school principal and the board chair. Purposeful observations were planned along with the collection and analysis of documents. All gathered information will be transcribed and pattern matched according to Yin's (2003) guidelines.

The Case Study

Upon completion of the pilot study and its data analysis, all necessary revisions were made in the data collection strategies for the case study. Once the adjustments were made the case study began and followed the nine categories as explained in the case study design.

The district chosen for the case study has a student enrollment of 8,000 students K-12. The administrative team for this district under the superintendent's supervision consists of the following: assistant superintendent, 11 elementary principals, two middle school principals, three assistant middle school principals, two high school principals, five assistant high school principals, activity director, curriculum director, special education coordinator, data assessment administrator, technology administrator, student services administrator, library instructional media coordinator, support services director, food service director, personnel services administrator and business manager.

Under the guidance of the current superintendent, the district has implemented the following research based programs. In 2008 a Curriculum Advisory Council was established to advise the district on such issues as curriculum, instructional best practices and assessment processes. This group also responds to student achievement reports, district data and other pertinent researched documentation. The Council consists of administrators and educators from each content area. Since 2006, the district's curriculum has been working on vertical and horizontal alignment, creating content-specific vocabulary and hiring instructional coaches such as reading, to augment specific academic areas. Examples of curricular programs implemented in the past three years are Response to Intervention (RTI) under the direction of Dr. Wayne Callendar, Reading Mastery Plus, AIMSweb curriculum based assessment program, dual credit opportunities through a partnership with the local university, middle school at-risk reading program LANGUAGE!, Cognitively Guided Instruction

(CGI) Mathematics, and Metropolitan Opera LIVE (only one of 18 in the nation chosen to host opera venues).

The case study district received three major grants. The Science and Inquiry Learning in Classroom (SILC) partnership grant allowed a partnership with another school and the hiring of a science coach to implement science inquiry instructional strategies. The district also received a five-year \$125,000 drug-free grant and a five-year \$50,000 Sober Truth on Preventing Under Age Drinking (STOP) grant.

The superintendent chosen for the case study has been at the helm of the district for 13 years. During this time, he has been recognized for his leadership abilities by being appointed to many federal, state and local boards. He also received the state's highest honor in 2005 by receiving the Superintendent of the Year award.

Summary

This qualitative single case study sought to collect descriptive data that focuses on the instructional role of the superintendent. The foundation created by Waters and Marzano's (2006) quantitative meta-analysis of district leadership strengthens the outcomes of this study. The case study design allowed the researcher to achieve a deeper understanding of the quantitative theoretical propositions offered by Waters and Marzano (2006). In doing so, this study's findings provided descriptive data currently absent in the research of the superintendent's instructional role. The desire of this researcher is to join fellow professionals in adding research based practices to the profession of educational leadership.

CHAPTER 4

THE CASE STUDY

Introduction

Waters and Marzano's (2006) meta-analysis provided a quantitative foundation for investigating the instructional role of the superintendent. Waters and Marzano's (2006) study found a small yet significant positive correlation between district leadership and student success. These findings prompted this researcher to create a qualitative single case study entitled "*The Superintendent's Organizational Approach to Defined Autonomy and the Goal Implementation Process as it Impacts Student Success.*" Furthermore two research questions were developed to guide and provide focus for this project. First, "How does defined autonomy as an element of the superintendent's organizational approach impact student success?" and, "How does the goal implementation process as an element of the superintendent's organizational approach impact student success?"

To further clarify, two important variables of this study need to be defined: the superintendent's organizational approach and student success. First, the organizational approach accounts for all the actions, verbal and non-verbal cues and experiences that the superintendent uses to operate the district. Waters and Marzano's (2006) study discovered that certain superintendent practices can positively impact student achievement.

The second variable, student success, is defined by graduation rates and innovative programs. The Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) sets the standard for graduation rates at 80 percent. The other tenet of student success is the recognition by state, federal or professional organizations for innovative student programs.

This researcher will conduct a qualitative single case study with data collection occurring through interviews, observations and document analysis. Once the researcher gathers all the information, it will be analyzed using the pattern matching strategy. Waters and Marzano's (2006) propositional theories will be used as patterns to match with responses, actions and documents provided by the data collection process.

Eight interviews (superintendent, assistant superintendent, two high school principals, two elementary principals, Trustee and the Board Chair) will be conducted with each having eight open-ended questions. Document analysis will use available information from the school's website, the Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI), and newspaper and journal articles. The researcher will conduct purposeful observations gathering information during times that desired data is most likely to occur, such as staff and administrative meetings. The study will be conducted at the beginning of the school year to provide ample opportunities for data collection.

Pilot Study Outcomes

The pilot study's intent was twofold: to test substantive and methodological strategies, and to provide experience for the researcher. The success of the pilot study

cannot be understated as valuable experience was gained and flaws in the design plan became apparent and were connected.

Upon completion and analysis of the pilot study, four main adjustments to the core study were made: (a) maintaining awareness of Waters and Marzano's (2006) differential impact of leadership, (b) prompting for depth during interviews, (c) clustering of the propositional theories and (d) clarification of the pattern matching logic.

Maintaining Awareness of the Differential Impact of Leadership

The first adjustment focused data collecting by maintaining an awareness of Waters and Marzano's (2006) concept of the differential impact of leadership. This integral concept of Waters and Marzano's (2006) meta-analysis is the foundation of one of their research questions, "Do behaviors associated with strong leadership always have a positive effect on student success?"(p. 17). Their findings revealed that district level leadership behaviors do not always equate with an increase in student success. Waters and Marzano (2006) called this variation the differential impact of leadership (p. 17).

In an effort to explicate the variation in the relationship between superintendent practices and student achievement, Waters and Marzano (2006) offered two plausible explanations. First, the effect of strong leadership could be mitigated if the superintendent focuses on goals that may not affect student achievement. Research suggests that when the district leader truly wants to positively affect student success, academics and instruction must be a priority. The second explanation is the order of magnitude of change. Education uses many different terms to describe levels of change. Waters and Marzano (2006) use the phrases, first-order or second-order, which

distinguish between changes perceived as routine and those perceived as dramatic. To avoid the differential impact of leadership the superintendent must estimate accurately the level of change that goals will have for all stakeholders.

During the data collection process, more specifically the interviews, the researcher will stress the importance of discussing academics and instruction. By maintaining a constant awareness of the differential impact of leadership through the two explanations of focusing on student success and the magnitude order of change, the researcher will sustain focus and guide the analytical process and extrapolation of data from gathered information.

Prompting for Depth during Interviews

The second adjustment requires prompting for depth during interviews. The pilot study's interview process provided eight opened-ended, questions broadly based on Waters and Marzano's (2006) superintendent responsibilities. These questions were intended to provoke the interviewee to provide a rich, detailed discussion that would describe the district's practices and provide data to match propositional theories. This minimally successful strategy using broad-based questions did not promote a thick discussion providing necessary data. The researcher must provide more guidance to the interviewee, without losing the credibility of open-ended questions. The practice of prompting the interviewee with minor open-ended questions will be added the interview process. The proposed procedure will be to ask the question and check off the propositional theories as the interviewee mentions them. Then if one or a group of

practices are not discussed, the researcher would be prepared to prompt the interviewee with minor open-ended questions.

Clustering of Propositional Theories

The third pilot study adjustment pertains to the large number of propositional theories that proved to be too unwieldy in the pilot study. To gather the desired data, propositional theories will be organized or clustered into smaller groups. This clustering will allow the researcher to compartmentalize the data collection process, focusing on small groups of theories, rather than comprehensively. Waters and Marzano's (2006) findings provide the framework for the clustering of propositional theories. This research bases its eight clusters on the six superintendent responsibilities and corresponding propositional theories. The first five responsibilities formulate the goal-setting process. This researcher transformed each of these into its own cluster with a range of four to eight propositional theories each. The final responsibility, defined autonomy, will be split into three clusters with a range of six to nine theories each.

Clarification of Pattern Matching Logic

The researcher must clarify the pattern matching method as the fourth and last major adjustment that needs to be made. This strategy best describes Yin (2003) as a procedure that compares an empirically based pattern with a predicted one. The known or empirical patterns of Waters and Marzano's (2006) propositional theories provided by specific superintendent practices correlate defined autonomy and the goal implementation

process with student success. The data extrapolated from interviews, documents and observations provide the predicted patterns.

This researcher must create a procedure that defines not only a pattern match but also to what extent the propositional theory is embedded into the data. The pilot study's superficial findings produced a match when the practice was merely mentioned in the data. This did not take into account whether the match was oppositional (propositional theories that were met with opposition in the district) or positive (implemented in the district) or to what extent the theory was embedded into the district.

Through collaboration with the doctoral committee, a new standard for data matching formed was established through a simple yet precise method of ascertaining if data collected did, indeed, align with propositional theories. To organize this data a graph was created. The propositional theories were listed on the "y axis" and the data sources on the "x axis." The corresponding box between the x and y will indicate the degree to which a pattern was recognized by using symbols. A plus (+) symbol means a positive match was mentioned. A double plus (++) indicates the data collected had a positive match with the propositional theories and the data source expanded on the topic with either an example or discussion. A "0" indicates the data sources did not mention that propositional theory. A single dash (-) symbol stands for a match that was mentioned, but opposed by the data. For example, the data matches but the interviewee opposes the practice. And finally the double dash (- -) indicates an oppositional match in which source provided an example or discussion.

Table 4.1
Pattern Matching Symbols

Symbol	Definition
++	Positive Pattern Match with Example or Discussion
+	Positive Pattern Match
0	No match
-	Oppositional Pattern Match
- -	Oppositional Pattern Match with Example or Discussion

These four pilot study adjustments coupled with the experience gained by the researcher will provide the greatest potential for a robust study.

Case Study District

For the purpose of this project, the school system examined will be called Luther District Schools. Consisting of 16 different schools, 11 elementary schools, two middle schools, two high schools and an alternative school, Luther boasts an enrollment of 8,015 students. The district employs a staff of 910 (559 teachers, 124 paraprofessionals, 189 non-teaching support staff and 38 administrators).

The district has a traditional leadership bureaucracy. The Board of Trustees, consisting of eight elected community members, oversees the district. The district's leadership team consisted of the superintendent and the administrative team (assistant superintendent and central office staff). The central office departments include: data

assessment/Title I, technology, personnel service, business, special education, literacy/curriculum, student services administrators, adult/career and adult education coordinators and the athletic and student support directors. Each school within the district has the typical administrative team of a principal and assistants, depending on enrollment.

Student enrollment in Montana has been on a steady decline since 1995 (OPI). Luther School District, though not immune to this trend, also has seen its student numbers fall, but at a slower rate than other Montana schools. Optimistically, the district's enrollment fairs better than most due to the type of employment opportunities and industries in the community. The most prevalent businesses can be labeled recession proof and mainly provide white-collar jobs. State and local government, health care and education comprise three of the largest employers. Approximately 30,000 reside within the city limits with the surrounding area reaching 68,829 residents. The largest private college in the state and a college of technology are located in the community.

Financially the Luther School District enjoys strong community support. In Montana the school funding system is aimed at equalization and provides revenue sources for 80 percent of a district's general fund budget based on enrollment. Each district can then levy the remaining 20 percent through local voted levies. Luther School District has maximized their community financial support, as their general fund budgets sit equally at 100 percent for both the elementary and high school. Besides a maximum general fund budget, the Luther School District has asked the local voters to support a technology fund and building reserve fund, expenditure specific monies voted for a

specific reason. The district does not have to use general fund monies to support expensive technology acquisitions and buildings improvements. With minimal declining enrollment and strong community support, the Luther School District remains financially sound.

Unit of Analysis

Dr. Henry Oliver, the district leader of the Luther School District will provide the focus of this single case study. Superintendent Oliver's educational background is very diverse and heavily influenced by his innate mathematical skills. Fresh out of high school he was encouraged to use these math skills and pursue a career in engineering. Two years into his engineering degree, he realized he wanted to make a difference in people's lives, which pushed him into elementary education. In 1978, he earned his Bachelor's of Science in Elementary and Math Education from the University of Nebraska. He spent the first eight years of his career in York, Nebraska teaching at the kindergarten, 1st, 4th grade levels all the while working towards a master's degree in leadership which he earned in 1981. In 1986, Dr. Oliver moved to Greeley Colorado and spent the next 11 years working as an elementary principal, central office administrator and deputy superintendent of the 12,000 student school. In 1992, he earned his Ph.D. in Administration Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Nebraska. In 1997, Dr. Oliver accepted the superintendent position at Luther School District where he has remained for 13 years.

Dr. Oliver has received many awards in his career. As previously mentioned, he garnered the Montana Superintendent of the Year in 2003 and the G.V. Erickson Leadership Award in 2005. Other awards include: The Montana Library Association's Pat Williams Intellectual Freedom Award, 2005; Colorado Association of School Executives Board of Directors Recognition, 1988-90; Colorado Association of School Executives Board of Directors Outstanding Service Recognition, 1992-93, and the Colorado Elementary School Principal's Outstanding Service Award 1992-93.

Dr. Oliver stays involved at the local, state and national levels. His professional memberships include: American Association of School Administrators, School Administrators of Montana, Association for Career and Technical Education, Montana School Boards Association, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Montana Association of Gifted and Talented Education, Phi Delta Kappa, and the National School Public Relations Association.

Dr. Oliver has served or currently serves on 19 different professional committees, ranging from President of the Department of Colorado Elementary School Principals to Board member of the Montana Quality Schools Coalition. Just recently he has been elected Chair of the Montana Virtual Academy Board of Directors.

Dr. Oliver has commitments in 12 different community organizations. From the Chamber of Commerce to President of the Rotary Club, his well grounded leadership abilities assist him in influencing the realm of the community that supports his school district.

District's Evidence of Student Success

As briefly introduced earlier, the researcher bases the district's evidence of success as defined for the purpose of this study on two factors. First, graduation rates as defined by the OPI and second, the implementation and recognition of innovative programs.

The graduation rates defined as the percentage of total students who complete all high school requirements on time, provides evidence of the district's success. This definition requires students to finish high school in four years or less from the moment they enroll in 9th grade, or have an individualized education program (IEP) allowing for more years to graduate (OPI, 2009). Students, who have achieved anything else, such as the General Education Development Test (GED), are not considered to have graduated.

Table 4.2
Montana Large School Graduation Rates

	Luther	Dist. 2	Dist. 3	Dist. 4	Dist. 5	Dist. 6	Dist. 7
2007-08	78%	76%	76%	76%	83%	88%	84%
2006-07	82%	79%	81%	82%	85%	86%	82%
2005-06	83%	86%	80%	82%	82%	85%	86%
2004-05	83%	85%	78%	89%	82%	87%	86%
2003-04	79%	70%	75%	81%	85%	80%	84%
2002-03	80%	85%	79%	86%	80%	86%	83%
2001-02	83%	81%	79%	88%	81%	87%	83%
2000-01	81%	83%	71%	85%	76%	84%	78%

Since the 2000-01 school year the Luther School District has hovered around the state standard of 80 percentile in graduation rates. When compared to the other six large districts in the state of Montana, the Luther School District's graduation rates are about average. Table 4.2, Montana Large School Graduation Rates, provides the graduation rates for the seven largest school districts in Montana.

Based on the ultimate goal of graduation, schools, through the actions of their leaders, implement instructional strategies in an effort to ensure students have the best opportunity to achieve that objective. More specifically, the superintendent's actions relating to instruction can be seen as purposeful attempts to positively affect student graduation rates.

These actions lead into the second and final student success indicator, recognition for innovative programs aimed at providing the opportunity for student success. The recognition could be state or national awards on either the district or school level, or accolades received by individual educators through their professional organizations.

The innovative programs at Luther School District that provide the opportunity for students to achieve and ultimately graduate are not solely aimed at the high schools. Data reveals the Luther School District provides opportunities for students at all levels in an attempt to instill the desire to graduate. A quote from Dr. Oliver in the Northwest Education Journal supports this philosophy, "graduation rates are more like the effect not the cause, students just don't wake up one day and drop out of school, there are obviously things that led to that decision."

Luther Schools has not only implemented high school level programs for at-risk students, but also district wide initiatives aimed at engaging students. The stop-gap programs for at-risk students are designed specifically for the needs of these wayward students. Late Start, a program for high school students recognized the Northwest Educational Journal, targets those who continually struggle with the rigid time frame of traditional education. Based on the research that shows many adolescents' internal clocks don't start until later in the morning, Late Start allows identified students to start school around 10 a.m. and begin with breakfast and social counseling. Teachers then tailor instruction to their individual needs.

Another innovative high school program partners the Luther School District with the University of Montana. Labeled Access to Success, students who have dropped out of high school re-engage in education by taking courses at the local technical college. The dual credit agreement between the two schools allows students to earn credits toward a college degree while at the same time fulfill secondary diploma requirements.

The American Association of School Administrators and Sodexo USA honored the Luther School District's PEAK (Promoting Enrichment Activities for Kids) in the elementary after school and summer programs. In addition, Luther Elementary has implemented Response to Intervention (RTI) in all of the elementary schools and is beginning to influence the Middle Schools and high schools. RTI as an individualized education program encourages teachers to change the style of instruction to fit the student's learning needs. The concept challenges traditional thinking by introducing the new paradigm that low-achieving children struggle not with actual learning, but with

teaching methods. Thus the teacher intervenes at an early stage, identifies the problem and changes the delivery method of teaching.

Frontloading education, the strategy of applying resources to younger students in an effort to instill the importance of education, produces huge payoffs as students move through their educational career. Luther Elementary School follows this strategy and has created a learning center hosting several early-education programs, thus allowing resources to be used efficiently. To best meet the needs of these young learners and their parents, the Ray Bjork Learning Center has been established. This facility offers a variety of services for the district, including Head Start, preschool special education and the district's elementary Gifted Education program.

In the fall of 2008, Dr. Oliver introduced the Whole Child initiative for the entire district pre-K-12. The aim of this project is to produce successful learners who are knowledgeable, emotionally and physically healthy, civically active, artistically engaged, prepared for economic self-sufficiency, and ready for the world beyond formal schooling (www.ascd.org). Before the introduction of this program Dr. Oliver spent a full year researching and slowly educating stakeholders. As one trustee stated in his interview, "When choosing the direction of the school for the year, Dr. Oliver had done his research and is trying to get us to go in that direction."

The following are the five guiding principles of the Whole Child Initiative: (1) Each student enters school healthy and learns about and practices a healthy lifestyle. (2) Each student learns in an intellectually challenging environment that is physically and emotionally safe for students and adults. (3) Each student is actively engaged in learning

and is connected to the school and broader community. (4) Each student has access to personalized learning and to qualified, caring adults. (5) Lastly, each graduate is prepared for success in college or further study and for employment in a global environment (www.ascd.org). The Whole Child Initiative defines the vision and mission of Luther School District as they strive to prepare students for life by challenging and empowering each student to maximize individual potential and become a competent, productive, responsible, caring citizen.

Luther School District's dedication to student success through innovative programs can also be linked to individual recognition of professionals who are leaders in their educational fields. Since 2007 the Luther School District has had six individuals receive national awards. The awards include: The American Chemical Society, for Excellence in High School Teaching, Nationally Certified School Psychologist, National Board Certified Teachers, International Society for Technology in Education, Making it Happen Award, U.S. Department of Education Presidential Scholar Teacher Recognition Award and the Sports Illustrated Top Athletic Program Award. The state recognized 14 individuals, awarding them with the: Montana Special Education Teacher of the Year, Outstanding Professional Educator Award, Biology Teacher of the Year, English Teacher of the Year, Montana Music Educator Leadership Award, Advisor of the Year, Middle School Resource Officer of the Year, Distinguished Service Award for the Montana Association for Health and Physical Education. In addition the Luther School District had five administrators receive the Montana School Administrators of the Year Award.

Prior to 2007, other major awards and recognitions were earned and deserve to be recognized. Luther Schools has two Milken National Educator Award winners for the 2005 and 2006 school years, and also in 2006 had one elementary school recognized as a U.S. Department of Education Blue Ribbon School. Additionally, in 2003 the Montana Superintendent of the Year honored Dr. Oliver with its award and in 2005, he received the Montana School Board Association's highest recognition, the G.V. Erickson Award.

Case Study Participants

A total of eight interviews were completed, Dr. Oliver, two trustees and five members of the administrative team. The researcher purposefully chose three of the eight, the superintendent, assistant superintendent and the Board Chair. The remaining five interviewees were chosen based on their length of tenure in the district and job position within the district. The interviewees chosen had enough experience in the district to be able to describe the effects of Dr. Oliver's organizational approach.

In his sixth year of serving as a Trustee, the Board Chair, Mr. Bobert, served as Vice-chair prior to moving to the Chair position this year. He has an undergraduate degree in teaching, but has minimal experience. He currently operates a coalition that creates housing opportunities for people with disabilities. Mr. Bobert's desire to be on the Board stems from his interest in public education and desire of making a difference in people's lives. He and his wife have a vested interest in the Luther School District as they have children in the system.

The researcher interviewed Mr. Ferguson, the second Board member, who has served seven years as a Trustee. As a life-long member of Luther School District community, he received all his primary and secondary education there and then worked as a teacher for 37 years in the district before retiring. Although not ready to walk away from education when he retired, Mr. Ferguson decided by becoming a Board member he could stay involved. He credits Dr. Oliver's competency and longevity as the foundation for the success of the district. Mr. Ferguson still feels highly vested in the district having two children who teach in the system.

As assistant superintendent, Mr. Clyde has been in the Luther District for 33 years, working his way from an elementary teacher to the gifted and talented director, then elementary principal before finally moving to the central office 14 years ago. He first served as the district's curriculum director before accepting his current position. Similar to the superintendent, Mr. Clyde started his undergraduate career in another profession (pre-law) before switching majors to education.

Mr. Eli, a building level administrator, describes himself as a "born and bred" Luther community person. He graduated from Luther Schools then attended the local private college where he received an elementary education degree. From that point, he spent one year at a nearby rural K-8 school before his current 20-year stint at the Luther School District. Mr. Eli has been an administrator for 16 years, with positions ranging from the Dean of Students at Luther Middle School to principal of the alternative school to assistant high school principal and intern high school principal. For the past eight years he has held the position of elementary principal.

Mr. Eli could only remember wanting to be a teacher, especially having a role model like his mother, a special education teacher. His 5th grade teacher positively influenced him, and at age 16 he started coaching basketball to elementary aged kids.

As an elementary principal, he says his greatest challenge involves balancing the district demands with the needs of his students. The educational strategies demanded from the central office usually are adjusted for his poverty-ridden school.

Dr. Sophie has the most diverse experience of all the administrators with about 37 years of experience spanning two continents, an Indian Reservation, and for the last 18 years, an administrator at the Luther School District. She describes her decision to become an educator as a choice given by her very conservative family.

When asked why she became an administrator, she replied, “Because I worked for an incompetent, inept, idiot and thought ‘Good Lord, why not do it myself’.” Dr. Sophie also admitted that her personality has always driven her to go to the next step. When she was a teacher, it only made sense to become an administrator, and then as she stated “to get my doctorate.”

When discussing her greatest challenge, Dr. Sophie quickly stated she wanted to keep the focus on the needs of the kids. Not everything required, whether from the central office or federal government, has the best interest of the kids. It is her duty to balance everyone’s requirements all the while maintaining the focus on the kids.

Mr. Buck is the most veteran of all the administrators with 40 years of experience, all in the Luther School District system. Uncertain to which career path he should choose while in undergraduate school, Mr. Buck had five major program changes in college but

eventually ended with a degree in sociology, which he never pursued as a profession. Through the urging of his college professor, he took an interest inventory test which showed he had an intellect for social studies. Mr. Buck had the opportunity to discuss teaching with a couple of social studies instructors at the local high school, they encouraged him to attain his education degree.

Work-sharing has followed Mr. Buck throughout his career, an activity that shares materials, ideas and classrooms. This trait continued throughout his career propelled him to be one of the first regular education teachers trained in special education inclusion. As an administrator, it had an impact on his leadership style as he encouraged his teachers to learn from one another. Because he loves to read, Mr. Buck makes it a point that when he reads a good book, he shares it with his staff; conversely he enjoys it when his staff shares their books with him. He sees this as a way to communicate good ideas and to create common ground within his school.

The final building level administrator interviewed was Ms. Alice. She began her career on one of the largest Indian Reservations in the state. From there, she went on to a small school before being hired as an assistant principal at Luther High School. After four years, Dr. Oliver recommended she be promoted to principal and has been in that position for the past four years. Ms. Alice said she found the role of instructional leader as one of the challenges she faces as a principal in a large system. Her school has many experts in their respective disciplines, all of whom have their bachelor degrees, many with master degrees, and some have doctorate degrees. She wants to ensure that each remains enthusiastic and challenged. This is accomplished by examining their teaching

styles, including delivery of content, and to ensure technology is embedded into the curriculum.

The data collected from Ms. Alice provided evidence of her passion for reaching children who live in poverty. She stated her background of teaching on the reservation coupled with the years spent as an assistant principal, impressed upon her the impact of poverty on students. She continually observed and experienced students who would struggle with expectations that did not align with their poverty-stricken lives. As principal, this realization became part of her expectations as she trained her staff to better meet the needs of economically disadvantaged students. In her opinion, the greatest gift a teacher could give to a disadvantaged student would be influencing them with a positive attitude. Ms. Alice taught and encouraged the staff to model and relate to students on their own level.

Data Analysis

This single case study based on the Luther School District and its superintendent, Dr. Oliver, provides data extrapolated from interviews, observations and documents. The gathered information was pattern matched using Yin's (2003) techniques to Waters and Marzano's (2006) propositional theories as discovered in their meta-analysis.

Waters and Marzano's (2006) 51 propositional theories were divided into eight clusters. The first three clusters centered on defined autonomy and became the basis for the first research question, "How does defined autonomy as an element of the superintendent's organizational approach impact student success?" The remaining five of

the eight clusters dealt with the goal implementation process and became the origin of the final research question of this study, “How does the goal implementation process as an element of the superintendent’s organizational approach impact student success?”

The following synopsis organized is by examining and analyzing one cluster at a time. Individualized cluster examination will allow this researcher to fully examine the data and present a summary worthy of the demands of a case study.

Defined Autonomy Clusters

Waters and Marzano’s (2006) meta-analysis discovered six superintendent responsibilities that had a positive correlation with student success. One of which, defined autonomy, was the expectation for schools to lead within the boundaries defined by district goals. This discovery contrasts with the traditional acceptance of building autonomy or site-based management. Waters and Marzano (2006) described their data as surprising and perplexing as earlier studies had indicated that site-based management for all practical purposes has no correlation with student success. Waters and Marzano’s (2006) study discovered new boundaries for autonomy. Rather than allowing administrators complete control, they found that when the superintendent provided specific autonomic parameters, the district administration had a positive effect on student success.

The data discovered by the meta-analysis proposed that when the superintendent implements three specific parameters then an atmosphere of defined autonomy results. The first defined autonomy parameter is the goal setting process that results in non-

negotiable goals for achievement and instruction. Furthermore, Waters and Marzano (2006) note that when schools align resources and continually monitor and evaluate the progress toward non-negotiable goals that high levels of student achievement occur. The second parameter encourages strong school-level leadership and responsibility for school success among principals. The third and final parameter relates to the superintendent creating a shared understanding and commitment to a relationship between the district and schools. When all administrative personnel honor and share an understanding of defined autonomy, district level leadership contributes positively to student achievement (Waters and Marzano, 2006).

The defined autonomy parameters create the first three clusters to be studied. Additionally, Waters and Marzano (2006) provided 22 observable practices, or propositional theories, to assist in data collection.

Defined Autonomy, Cluster No. 1

The first defined autonomy cluster was based on the superintendent parameter of establishing, monitoring and evaluating non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction. The data collected was centered on the description of the school's environment as it pertained to defined autonomy. The data collected during the interview process was centered on this open-ended question, "Discuss defined autonomy in your own terms, what it looks like in your school."

Nine propositional theories correlated with this cluster. These theories where then pattern matched with data collected from 10 different sources (8 interviews, observations

and document analysis). Seven of the nine theories consistently matched with data collected. The remaining two propositional theories only matched once with the data.

Defined autonomy as characterized by one of Waters and Marzano's (2006) propositional theories is a strategy to empower all schools to ensure the opportunity for all students to learn. No Child Left Behind enforces, and the district and school provide the accountability of individual student achievement. Luther School's mission statement states the district's goal to educate all students, "The mission of Luther Public Schools is to challenge and empower each student to maximize individual potential and become a competent, productive, responsible, caring citizen (Documents, 2009)."

The evidence of the practical application of defined autonomy at both the central office and building administration levels provided robust data in this cluster. In an interview with Mr. Eli, Elementary Principal, it was stated,

Dr. Oliver has done a nice job on saying the primary role is the education of youth. The secondary role is the whole child concept will be followed. We must meet the needs that we can, as much as we can. We as a district are expected to support those; we in our buildings are expected to support those. The expectation is that you will participate. In some way shape or form, you will participate. How you choose to set that up is up to us. Some get more direction than others, but we are expected to participate.

In essence, Dr. Oliver created district goals, and the principals carry out expectations. Mr. Clyde, Assistant Superintendent also supported this management style. "Dr. Oliver is definite in setting the goal with the Board for the district and then we look to the building principals, now what is your plan to reach the goals? Each principal brings a different set of skills to achieve."

This cluster included the creation, implementation and monitoring of goals. The foundation for this procedure is based on a vision and mission for the district. Two of the cluster's propositional theories deal directly with vision and mission. These two propositional theories have produced evidence throughout the district, from the Board to administrative meetings. The first proposition, developing a shared vision, was matched and information indicated Dr. Oliver's efforts. The Board Chair, Mr. Bobert stated "He, [Dr. Oliver] paints the goals, the big picture and has good references for people to follow. He has a unique relationship with building principals, he is sharing that vision, and he is driving that vision." This line of reasoning was also evident with Mr. Buck, high school principal, who stated, "To get the big ideas so that we are all sharing the concept as a district so that we can see a direction that he puts part of his vision as far as direction is concerned."

During an observation of Dr. Oliver's weekly site visit with central office administrators and the high school administration, the researcher observed the linking of the vision with defined autonomy.

The room was filled with all of Luther's high school administration and several central office officials. The discussion revolved around the need to address graduation rates. Mr. Buck led the discussion about a particular vocational class that builds houses. Passionate for the program, the Vice-principal specifically discussed the student benefits by stating that by the end of the year, a majority of the students had part-time jobs with local contractors. The Vice-principal wrapped up his comments by stating the "program must be maintained and can be done so by working within your vision." Mr. Buck gently corrected the vice-principal by stating "It is not my vision, it is our vision." The discussion was ended with Mr. Buck when he added, "Don't separate school work with district plans." Although he didn't aim this last statement at anyone in general, it did, however end the meeting with the feeling of a shared vision for the school and district (Field Notes, 2009).

The data provided a mixed reaction when discussing the propositional theory that demands schools have a clear mission focused on school performance. The overall message communicated that everyone share and understand the direction of the district, as high school principal Ms. Alice stated, “I feel good that we are all on the same page.” However, two interviewees, Mr. Clyde and Mr. Eli, made oppositional comments, “Personally I would like to see him [Dr. Oliver] be a little clear up front...,” and “What we sometimes hear is, ‘why doesn’t central office just tell us maybe a little bit’, so when I hear that, sometimes I feel they are asking for some expectations. Obviously we haven’t been clear enough.”

The propositions that solicited a great deal of discussion with the building level administrators were those that dealt with the hiring of new personnel. Luther School District screens all applicants by a computer generated test created by the Gallup Corporation. The central office grades all applications and sets the cut-off score. The applicants who make the cut move to the interview pool and then chosen by the principals to be interviewed. Providing an oppositional data point to this process, Mr. Eli stated, “If I had a complaint this is something that I feel has been taken away from building administration to a certain extent. Our central office is incredibly involved in the teacher hiring process.” Ms. Alice elaborated, “We pretty much have the autonomy other than that bar [Gallup generated test] if you will, so I am not dissatisfied with it, I am just in a review mode right now.” Although oppositional data was collected from the building level administrators, the process of choosing new employees is very important to Dr. Oliver as he stated,

Every recommendation for professional staff comes through my office before it goes to the board because I need to feel confident. I am trusting the principals are not making recommendation unless it is a match because they have done the face-to face-interviews.

Even though comments from the principals were oppositional, all indicated that the hiring process did produce successful candidates. Mr. Eli summed up the data collected from all the building administrators by stating, “Now in defense of the process, we have hired some really good teachers in the past two years. I do believe that it clearly helps to pull out the best of the candidates.”

In summary, the defined autonomy cluster No. 1 as described by Waters and Marzano (2006) provided the opportunity to collect rich data in the Luther School District. Although some expressed oppositional comments, they do not detract from the propositional theories. The data collected from comments about Dr. Oliver’s hiring process provided an example of an oppositional match. As top level management activities, Dr. Oliver’s directives signal the seriousness of purpose and serve as important cues of the district’s commitment to student success concerning the recruitment and selection of personnel (Bjork, 1993).

Defined Autonomy Cluster No. 2

The second defined autonomy cluster is based on the parameter of encouraging strong school level leadership and responsibility for school success among principals. When the superintendent encourages strong school-level leadership and empowers principals and others to assume responsibility for school success, the second parameter for defined autonomy will be established. The second cluster for defined autonomy seeks

to gather data examining how administrators are held accountable for the responsibility demanded of defined autonomy. Backed by extensive research Waters and Marzano's (2006) seven propositional theories state that if all students are to succeed, then the responsibility must be extended beyond the traditional instructional leadership of a local principal (Sullivan and Shulman, 2005). When the superintendent assures accountability for all, then he, too, joins the ranks of those responsible for student success.

When discussing how Dr. Oliver holds his administrative team accountable, he clearly sets the standard of the district by stating,

Well, it's important. Clearly they are the building leaders. They help set the tone. Their leadership matters givin the right opportunities, the right support for teachers, so they can be successful with students... I think for them to have the opportunity to be held accountable through some of the ways I mentioned earlier [such as] school visits to school improvement planning to the board presentations are all kind of accountability systems, not a 'gotcha' system but just an expectation that you will monitor, and you will report and guess, hopefully, be held accountable for how you do with that over time.

Assistant Superintendent Clyde supported Dr. Oliver by discussing how the district holds administrators accountable.

In every building, twice and some [times] three times we have a format that we use when we visit a building which definitely builds accountability both for the building principal and their staff because they know the superintendent and their staff will be in the building. I know it builds the sense of, we're interested and we want to know, and we want to look at results and we want to discuss, 'so why did this go so well and why didn't this go so well' as we go through so we put that into place. Then every two years, each building does a formal report to our board and that is another piece of accountability and being connected and knowing that people care.

Waters and Marzano's (2006) propositional theories that create this cluster demanded the superintendent maintain high expectations for school performance. Dr.

Oliver expressed this expectation, and data suggests it is embedded throughout the district. As documented in his opening communication at the beginning of the 2009 school year, Dr. Oliver proclaimed, “I have high expectations as students return to school ready to learn, dedicated staff focused on providing quality learning experiences, and a highly supportive community. I believe these are the ingredients for successful public schools.”

Analyzed documents support accountability with data that aligns with a propositional theory that demanded establishing agreed-upon values that direct the actions of people.

The Luther School District’s Professional Compensation Alternative Plan’s (PCAP) has a three-legged approach, which includes career development and education, professional service and evaluation. It encourages educators to take risks within their disciplines, to try something different to enhance student achievement, and to develop a relationship with the school district.

Data collected from Trustee Ferguson about the reputation of the Luther School District suggested a direct tie with district documents and Dr. Oliver’s comments on the accountability and values that administrators must abide by.

I think that not only the superintendent but all administrators and teachers look at this district as being a district of leadership within the state. There is leadership within the MEA and MTSBA, there is leadership afforded that everybody is striving for the Lighthouse district, if you will. I think it [Luther School District] has achieved levels of competency to afford that particular status within the state. Everyplace I go, it is looked well upon. I think it is because everyone is working in the same direction.

During an administrative meeting in which the conversation turned to content and curriculum directing instruction the researcher observed the high standards for the Luther District and the reputation as described as a “Lighthouse District”.

One participant in the meeting asked the group their thoughts on allowing classes to view a speech by President Obama. The President's speech was intended to address school age-children encouraging them to do their best. Several schools in the Luther District had received calls from parents opposing their child viewing the President's address. Dr. Oliver quickly turned the conversation from a political tone to an academic philosophy by asking, 'Does the content of the speech match curriculum?' This short statement and the discussion that ensued clearly established Dr. Oliver's priority of academics. Although what could be a hot political topic, was turned into a curriculum question and a decision was based on what was academically best for students (Field Notes, 2009).

The two propositional theories describing the role of teacher evaluations and accountability generated 13 pattern matches from the interviews. Waters and Marzano (2006) stressed that the superintendent's actions must establish teacher evaluations as a priority and that principals should discuss the results with each teacher.

Dr. Oliver admitted the weakness of the system by stating,

Realistically to think somebody supervising 30 to 40 staff will have meaningful time with the educator or with the staff and give them feedback on a consistent basis isn't all that likely to occur in a large high school or in a larger middle school just because of that expansive area of responsibility.

Mr. Buck summed up in this statement, similar data collected from other sources:

It is an area that we need to improve on and recognize better. I don't think we are doing as good a job as we could. Dr. Oliver is pretty consistent that we need to look at this and change the way we evaluate teachers, but it is one of those things we talk about but never seem to move on.

Finally, Trustee Fergusson made these remarks:

It is not significant. It doesn't happen...and it is a joke in the school district, I don't think it can be done. You take a building principal at the high school level ... he has two assistant principals and they divide up a teaching staff of 100, each of them has 33 to do, you don't do them.

However, when analyzing all teacher evaluation propositional theories, two points became evident: evaluating teachers and communicating. Data suggested that evaluating teachers is not a priority, but through further examination, the communicating component between teachers and administrators does occur and is expected. Dr. Oliver stated, “The role of the building administrator is to have accountability through conversations with the teachers about their performance and both to give feedback but also to give them support as they are trying to develop themselves.” High School Principal Buck followed up by saying, “There is communication going on between the teacher and the administrator that helps the teachers go and can actually have a healthy communication between the administrators and the teachers.” Finally Ms. Alice discussed that the expectation also came from the teachers, “The majority of our staff really enjoyed that part of it [communication] and they were disappointed when we didn’t follow up.”

Under the guidance of Dr. Oliver the Luther School District does differentiate between the evaluations of tenured and non-tenure teachers. Data suggested that the district makes it a priority to evaluate and communicate with non-tenured teachers. Assistant Superintendent Clyde emphasizes this expectation by stating,

Probably five or six years ago, every non-tenured [teacher] in this district started having a formal meeting with the building principal twice a year, once in January and once in April, and we [building principal and district administrator] really just walk through each [non-tenured] teacher and have them share about the strengths and weaknesses.

It’s sent the system a signal that the superintendent and his staff really do care. We are going to sit and discuss, and then we are going to give you [principal] help and guidance to give them [non-tenured teachers] help and guidance. Because our bottom line is the question we always ask ‘do you think that the staff member is at the top 10 percent?’. If not, then tell us what can you do to get them to the top 10 percent and if not at what point do we need to discuss to council them out. So we have really

put a concerted effort into our non-tenured staff over the last five to eight years.

Board Chairman Robert's comment solidifies the district's philosophies for evaluation on non-tenured staff with the following data collected during his interview.

"We are going to make a commitment to teachers that in their first three years, teachers are viewed twice per year, and every teacher knows the superintendent is involved in getting feedback."

The defined autonomy cluster No. 2 produced data suggesting the actions of the superintendent and showed evidence throughout the district. The data examined suggests a common thread of expectations for the administrative team. Seen as a Lighthouse District, the Luther School system believes the actions of the leadership team strive to maintain this standard as the data suggested.

Defined Autonomy Cluster No. 3

Waters and Marazano (2006) third parameter of defined autonomy is when the superintendent creates a shared understanding and commitment to a relationship with schools. The data collected to examine this partnership revolve around the theoretical propositions that demand the administrative team be supported. Superintendents, who champion the development of these relationships, must provide resources that will allow principals to put their plans into action (Spanneut and Ford, 2008).

The six propositional theories described in this cluster have four of the six based on hiring, rewarding, terminating and providing a stable yet improving work force. The

other two theories promote innovation and provide an orderly learning environment. An excerpt from Dr. Oliver's interview revealed the core of the data collected for this cluster.

I really think that the right people, be it a principal or a teacher or a para-educator, everybody we employ, I think, is even though we have a lot of employees, ultimately at some point, it is just that employee working with the student and that is what matters.

Aware of the importance of quality staff, Board Chair Bobert and Trustee Ferguson supported Dr. Oliver's belief in the need for the right people. Mr. Bobert said in his interview, "Employees are the biggest difference we can make in student achievement, making sure all our staff is the best quality and that we recruit and retain them." Trustee Ferguson elaborated by stating, "We want to branch out and get a broad diversity of teachers to give more opportunities for kids to respond."

Based on this philosophy, Assistant Superintendent Clyde explained the process that has grown under Dr. Oliver's leadership.

Seven years ago, the Board along with Dr. Oliver's leadership said we believe that major resources should be put into teacher salaries because we believe that if we are going to be competitive and hire the best, we are going to have to pay the best.

Analysis of documents of the Luther School District revealed Dr. Oliver's philosophy of hiring and retaining the best employees. The Luther School District designed and implemented the Professional Compensation Alternative Plan (PCAP). According to the Luther School District's documents, the following excerpt explained the purpose of the PCAP:

Attract, motivate and retain quality educators. This plan will be an attainable, affordable and accountable compensation plan that fosters high levels of student growth, achievement and academic excellence. The plan will encourage and reward professional growth, knowledge and

responsibility. The plan will provide opportunities to help educators develop skills and knowledge that result in observable and/or measurable improvements in education. All educators will have equal access to the plan. The criteria will be clear, consistent and understandable.

Furthermore, documents provide information that fulfills Waters and Marzano's (2006) propositional theories of hiring experienced teachers, rewarding good teaching, promoting innovation and providing a balanced work force by the following statement.

The Luther School District's PCAP is designed for all educators. It is multidimensional where creativity is encouraged. It encourages educators to take risks within their disciplines; to try something different to enhance student achievement; and to develop a relationship with the school district.

Through further examination of the district's documents, Luther's PCAP offers, "through the three-legged approach of career development, professional service, and evaluations, teacher's 2009-10 base salary begins at \$35,040 and caps at \$73,173".

The Luther School District widely accepts the promotion of innovation as indicated by the data collected. The district's goals specifically endorse originality: "Enhance the learning opportunities for students by providing professional development for all employees and encouraging innovative instructional strategies." All four building administrators acknowledged the role of encouraging innovative strategies into the individual schools. Building Principal Mr. Buck summed up the thoughts of the administrative team by stating, "Our procedures are out-of-the-box type thinking. Even though something says this, we look at other alternatives. In fact this is encouraged. Don't look for a simple answer, investigate and get two or three answers."

This researcher observed the innovative problem-solving process in action during a high school administrative meeting where all participants brainstormed ideas on how to

control unexcused absences. The agenda for this meeting had 13 topics, but this topic brought up during the “your turn” portion of the meeting dominated the discussion.

The issue of unexcused absences and Saturday school created a lengthy discussion on how the two high schools could collaborate to make this program successful. The schools decided in order to realize any success they would have to share resources and have the Saturday school in one high school, as funding would only permit limited staff. They also discussed the problem of mixing rival students and criteria for sending students to this program. Assistant Superintendent Mr. Clyde, said he would take the proposal to Dr. Oliver to get his thoughts and see if additional funding could be secured (Field Notes, 2009).

This innovative process also touched on another Waters and Marzano (2006) propositional theory of ensuring schools is characterized by an orderly climate. The principals advocated for this program to not only control unexcused absences but to help with discipline issues that arise with some students. Their concern was the time and effort it takes for teachers to handle discipline issues, limited their resources for teaching the remaining students (Field Notes, 2009).

Data collected and from cluster No. 3 revealed the propositional theories that correlate with student success permeates in the district. The implementation and apparent success of the PCAP suggests that the employees accept it and that the Board of Trustees approved of the program. Data collected proposed that Dr. Oliver’s actions have created a shared commitment to the relationship with schools. By providing an experienced, well-balanced staff willing to take risks, Dr. Oliver has nurtured a strong relationship between the schools and the district.

Goal Clusters

Based on Waters and Marzano (2006) six superintendent responsibilities, the last five clusters relate to the goal implementation procedure: (1) the goal setting process, (2) non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction, (3) Board support, (4) monitoring, and (5) the use of resources. Each one and its propositional theories guide the data collection strategy for this study.

Goal Cluster No. 1

The first cluster suggests collaborative goal setting. An effective superintendent upholds this responsibility by including all relevant stakeholders, i.e., central office staff, principals and Trustees, in establishing goals for the district. In particular, the principals remain heavily involved since they implement the goals at the school level (Waters and Marzano, 2006).

The analyzed data reveals that district-wide goals start with Dr. Oliver by researching and educating all stakeholders. Trustee Ferguson stated, “When we were considering the Whole Child concept, prior to the decision he [Dr. Oliver] gave us a lot of information explaining the initiative. It was well thought out, not haphazard.” Principal Alice added, “Once the process begins, all are invited to provide input, they offer you [principals] to come into the discussion and participate.”

Dr. Oliver explained the goal setting process as a two-pronged approach. First, “We have an annual planning session with me and the Board where we visit about areas and topics. To give an example of what has evolved recently is the Whole Child

Concept.” The second prong involved what Dr. Oliver calls the “dynamic planning process,” a “focused work with a purpose based on common dialog.” Dr. Oliver contributed the success of this process to having stable, well-educated Trustees and an administrative staff that has worked together for many years. “This stability in the leadership team has created a culture of a high level of trust that allows the team to build on accepted goals rather than having to continually having to restart due to staff and Board turn-over.”

The ability of the superintendent to communicate expectations to all administrators provided a cornerstone to this cluster. Assistant Superintendent Clyde supports this propositional theory by stating:

He [Dr. Oliver] is a master of taking that [goals] down to our level and discussing what it means and how it looks. And then taking the leadership of the schools through a process to determine what it looks like in each building and what activities should be in place in order to obtain and maintain those goals.

In addition, building level administrator Eli stated, “He [Dr. Oliver] trains us in the process so it is very clear in what we are to do. I believe it gives us direction that we give to our staff.” Principal Alice agreed with this statement by saying, “He [Dr. Oliver] does a nice job communicating that [goals] with the central office, building administrators and then on to the teachers ... I think he communicates simply through his support.” Dr. Sophie, a building level administrator’ elaborated that, “It is not just a published set of statements; we need to refer back to them in our school improvement process and staff development.”

The awareness of the differential impact of leadership requires the superintendent to focus resources on academic goals, rather than just goals in general as evident in the data collection. Documentation of the district's curriculum department's fundamental philosophy provided data suggesting the Luther School District's priority for student success.

Curriculum and instruction are of central importance in developing policy and determining goals for Luther School District No. 1. Curriculum and instruction are central to the educational program of the Luther School District and exist for the purpose of preparing students for life.

Dr. Oliver expected the district to continue to focus on student achievement which the researcher observed at a general administrative meeting.

Dr. Oliver was very specific in his expectations for his weekly school visits and Board meetings. He directed the building level administrators to renew their emphasis on data collection, especially in describing the Whole Child Initiative. He wants contextual examples in the school environment of the affects of the Whole Child program (Field Notes, 2009).

Data advocated that Dr. Oliver fulfill the responsibility of collaborative goal setting as defined by Waters and Marzano (2006). From the Board to the principals, the full leadership team stayed involved and communicated expectations. This cluster can best be summarized by a quote from Assistant Superintendent Clyde, "I have a pretty good read of the principals. I don't feel they walk away, like it [goals] was done to them. They feel a part of the process."

Goal Cluster No. 2

Waters and Marzano (2006) defined this responsibility as focusing on the superintendent responsibilities and minimizing the differential impact of leadership. The

goal-setting process must create non-negotiable goals in the areas of achievement and instruction. Achievement requires specific targets for the district, individual schools and subpopulations of students. As for instruction, this does not mean the district micromanages the actions within each classroom, but creates and adopts a common framework for classroom instructional design. Based on common instructional vocabulary, this strategy provides consistent use of research-based methods in each school (Waters and Marzano, 2006).

Through document analysis of the Luther School District's Mission Statement and Goals, data indicated the district's commitment to non-negotiable goals for student achievement. The goal for curriculum and learning is, "Luther School District will provide relevant, integrated and meaningful learning experiences for students that will prepare them for life (Documents, 2009)." This researcher observed the district's dedication during an Elementary administrators' meeting when discussing the Science curriculum.

The entire group is engaged in a discussion on how to meet the state benchmarks for Science. The Luther Curriculum Director stated she had a conversation with one teacher that said she did not teach a particular theme in her class. Assistant Superintendent Mr. Clyde responded by stating, "We must align with state standards and teachers need to give up their favorite themes and adopt the curriculum (Field Notes, 2009).

Data collected from eight of the 10 sources garnered the most information for the propositional theory describing the importance of modeling. Mr. Eli, a building level administrator, described Dr. Oliver's impact on the district as it pertains to modeling.

I believe Dr. Oliver's leadership style is modeling. In every aspect, take it as simple as working hard. He is here early and leaves late. He has set

high expectations for himself, and he models those expectations for everyone in the district.

Mr. Buck concurred with the above data, “His leadership style is modeling ... he helps us by modeling and being a student of education. He likes to model and likes us to model also.”

While observing an elementary administrators’ meeting, Dr. Oliver modeled his knowledge of technology and its role in delivering curriculum.

When discussing the remedial math software, Dr. Oliver questioned the method of delivery and questioned the principals and tech advisor on the specifics of the program. Dr. Oliver wanted to ensure that computers were being used efficiently and made it clear he supported the program; he just did not want any major breakdowns or barriers (Field Notes, 2009).

Information for the prior cluster proposed that the goal-setting process did include all stakeholders and that the goal-setting strategies were well embedded into the district. However, this cluster takes the process one step further by seeking how non-negotiable goals are conveyed and implemented. The data collected for this cluster suggested that conveying non-negotiable goals for instruction shows a weakness in this responsibility. Principal Eli stated,

At times, I wish he [Dr. Oliver] would just be direct. It could be as simple as ‘You will all use the spelling curriculum adopted by the district’. I would like to see this but I realize it is not Dr. Oliver’s leadership style.” Another principal stated, “Dr. Oliver is clear, but not demanding about what goals are and the direction we are moving.

Another principal, Dr. Sophie, elaborated on the data that suggests the weakness of conveying goals. “Dr. Oliver never says you will do XYZ, he just does not get up and say you will do this. We assume it and it is implied.”

The district involvement in instructional methodologies is evident as data collected indicated an effort to implement changes to create learning experiences for all students. The Board Chair Mr. Bobert stated that, “Student achievement is critical and we are taking responsibilities for those students who fail our system.” Dr. Oliver knows of the need to incorporate varied and diverse teaching methods that allow for a wide range of learning styles to meet the needs of individual students. He stated, “I think we can do better than we are, and I think everyone knows that we can, through system changes. We are expanding the summer school program, more quality after school programs and are introducing drop-out recovery programs.”

To use Waters and Marzano’s (2006) terminology for achievement, the district must set specific targets and then ensure the schools achieve those goals. The data suggested that the Luther School District under the direction of Dr. Oliver does set specific targets and then allows each school the authority to reach these goals. The diverse instructional methodologies and the information collected promoted the district’s efforts of implementing various programs to allow for a wide range of learning styles.

Goal Cluster No. 3

The Board’s alignment and support of district goals describe the third goal cluster and its six propositional theories. The Board ensured that district goals remain the top priority and that no other initiatives detract attention or resources from accomplishing these goals.

The first propositional theory, establishing agreement with the Board on district goals, provided data from nine of the 10 data sources. Information given consistently recognizes Dr. Oliver and his ability to work with the Board to set and support district goals.

Dr. Oliver described the role of the Board in his remarks, “They set and plant the flags so we always know where we need to go. They are very comfortable keeping their distance and trusting that we hire the right people and will follow their lead on getting them where we need to be.”

Principal Eli observed and described the Board’s role. “Dr. Oliver does a great job helping people [Board] to understand their role. Our school board is incredibly supportive of us.”

The propositional theories propose the concept that the board alignment with district goals makes them aware of the conflict and political climate of the district. Principal Alice provided data, “They [Board] have been in those decisions, financial decisions, personnel decisions and pushing for public support of an initiative. They are out in front beating the drum.” The following quote from Trustee Ferguson suggested the Board understands the climate of the district; and as mentioned earlier by Dr. Oliver, has a solid trust relationship with the superintendent to shape community perceptions.

Dr. Oliver is the face of the school in the community and his community relationships are so strong and again it brought us partnerships, he is trusted and wants to be open and trustworthy. Dr. Oliver is both of those things and it serves us well in the community. Sometimes the public does engage you [Trustees] and you send that along to the superintendent to deal with that is that part of getting to know the community. When you get more than a handful of the similar type things, you want to make sure the superintendent is fully aware.

Waters and Marzano (2006) discuss the importance of the Board's support for district goals. The Trustee's actions support the goals and make this responsibility correlate with student achievement. Conversely, the meta-analysis findings suggest that Trustees, who don't support district initiatives and pursue their own interests and expectations, may actually be contributing to failure (Waters and Marzano, 2006).

Data from this study suggests that the Luther School Board members understand their role. Dr. Oliver stated, "We have been very fortunate to have trustees who understand their role and are active and engaged in the act of governing." In an interview with Board Chair Bobert, he addressed the role of the Board.

When we [Trustees] first come on, we may push too hard, but we realize we need to spend a little time getting a handle on things. One of the key things we do is emphasize that we function as a board. Let's not be grandstanding and be careful not to engage in outside decision making.

The Board's awareness of the teaching and learning strategies in the district described the last propositional theory of this cluster. Waters and Marzano (2006) state that in order for the Board to ensure achievement and instructional goals remain the top priority, they must be knowledgeable of these goals. In analyzing the documents of the Luther School District, the following statement revealed the inclusion of the Board in academic and instructional discussions.

The Luther School District Board of Trustees conducted a work session with administrators and teachers which focused on the exploration of strategies to improve high school education. The planning session helped the Board and district leadership develop a statement of intent and purpose.

During the interviews, Trustee Ferguson stated that Board members had little knowledge of learning and teaching strategies. “I don’t think without an awful lot of background we [Trustees] would be able to understand it.” However, data proposed that Dr. Oliver provided the opportunity on a regular basis for the Board to become more educated on student learning. Every month the Board holds its meeting at a school and a thorough presentation of the school’s activities is given.

The Board actually holds a meeting in each school once every two years. We are on a rotation where we will host a Board work session and part of that is a presentation of the school’s goals and teaching strategies and things being done to meet the goals the district has established (Principal Mr. Buck).

Luther’s documents also support the Board of Trustees having knowledge of learning and teaching strategies within the district. The following excerpt from the documents provided the Luther Board of Trustees’ Vision, Mission, and Goals.

Vision: The Luther Public Schools foster dynamic educational experiences that prepare all students for life.

Mission: the mission of the Luther Public Schools is to challenge and empower each student to maximize individual potential and become a competent, productive, responsible, caring citizen.

Board Goals: (1) Curriculum/Learning – Provide relevant, integrated and meaningful learning experiences for students that will prepare them for life. (2) Staff Support and Relationships – Enhance the learning opportunities for students by providing professional development for all employees and encouraging innovative instructional practices. (3) Environment – All schools and work sites will be safe and foster positive and productive environments for students and staff. (4) Technology – Implement technology in Luther Schools to enrich student learning and deliver more efficient administrative services. (5) Community Partnerships – Encourage excellence in our schools by maintaining a positive and productive relationship with parents, employers, community members and members of the higher community. (6) Fiscal Planning – A budget development process is established so the allocation of resources has the greatest positive impact on the performance of students and staff.

Analysis of the third goal cluster relied heavily on district documents that provided rich data describing the Board's relationship with district goals. Comments from the Trustees indicated a disconnect from the Board to teaching and learning strategies, but data from the documents and administrative interviews suggested the Trustees do not realize the extent of their role.

Dr. Oliver provided the common link between the Board and the education of students. This fact is best supported by comments from Principal Sophie who sums up this relationship best by stating, "Dr. Oliver works very well with the Board. He keeps them informed, his boardsmanship is incredible."

Goals Cluster No. 4

The fourth goal cluster examines the superintendent responsibility of monitoring goals of achievement and instruction. Along with eight practices or propositional theories, data collected through interviews, observations and document analysis examines the goal-monitoring activities of the Luther School District. Waters and Marzano (2006) stated a characteristic of an effective superintendent as one who continually monitors district progress toward achievement and instructional goals to ensure that they remain the driving force behind the district's actions.

The data collected from the interview with Board Chair Bobert indicated the degree in which this superintendent responsibility remains engrained in student achievement and instruction. His comments propose that Dr. Oliver's leadership behaviors, apparent at the Board level, focused on factors that positively impact student success.

One of the things we do is honor success at our monthly board meetings we begin by honoring students who have succeeded. We believe this sends an important message. It is about recognizing and grounding our work, it is about students' achieving.

Like all public schools across the nation, the Luther School District administers many standardized tests to evaluate the progress of each child's education. One of the central office's departments is Data and Assessment. Its purpose is to organize all testing as stated in the following district document.

The Data and Assessment Department coordinates the state and district students' academic achievement testing for Luther Public Schools. This department provides test administration and data interpretation support for schools related to large-scale testing programs such as the MontCas assessments, Measured Progress CRT, Aimsweb Reading assessment and Fitnessgram.

Each school-level administrator interviewed discussed these traditional, objective strategies to monitor academic goals. The high school administrators, Mr. Buck and Ms. Alice also included GPA and graduation rates as another tool in monitoring academic goals. During one observation, the discussion over CRTs became quite lengthy and finally had to be stopped due to time constraints. The following comment ended the discussion. "It is obvious that analyzing the CRT data is pretty interesting. There is so much that these numbers can tell us, we must make time to continue this discussion later."

An interesting piece of data emerged from a conversation with Trustee Ferguson.

Well, there are so many ways to measure success, I don't think that the individuals on the Board nor any administrator all measure success in the same fashion. It can be measured objectively as attempted in NCLB, with very little validity. It is somewhat objective and there are standardized testing procedures that allude to subjective measures. But I think that in everyone's mind, there is a subjective analysis that probably supersedes

the objectivity in evaluation. I personally think that is a greater value and when you have nine people on the Board all subjectively evaluating in a different fashion that gives you some credence. I think it is advantageous to have subjective evaluation in addition to objectivity that is afforded in standardized testing. It seems to work very well and it works very well for the public. We can describe to the public how subjectively we feel our students are doing, even though some of our schools end up not being fully accredited by NCLB for instance. The subjective analysis can supersede that even when we describe that to the news media and to the public.

This data implied that monitoring the district must be a continual process, not one that corresponds with the outcomes of standardized tests. Substantiated by the specific comment of this trustee, the advantages of having both subjective and objective evaluations are evident.

Waters and Marzano (2006) stress the evaluation of principals play a key role in monitoring district goals. Unlike teacher evaluations where data suggested a more concerted effort could be done, according to information gathered, the district holds principal evaluations as a priority. Dr. Oliver states, “Well, it’s clearly important, they are the building leaders and they help set the tone. Their leadership matters given the right opportunities, the right support for teachers, so they can be successful with students.” Assistant Superintendent Clyde collaborated with Dr. Oliver’s comment by stating, “What we try to do is set the tone that learning for all students is important, and to set this expectation so it is part of the data we look at when evaluating [principals].” The principal evaluations include a combination of a final document and an ongoing conversation. Dr. Oliver stated that, “They [principals] are evaluated in other ways,” implying that the central office and the Board, through site visits and presentations, evaluate the principals. High School Principal Mr. Alice’s supported this by

commenting, “For my evaluation, we have a framework that we use and address the issues. It looks at both the qualitative and quantitative pieces.” Data suggested that the principal evaluations require a year-long process of conversations that culminates in a formal document.

As found by Waters and Marzano (2006) the final cornerstone of monitoring goals related to the superintendent’s actions of observing teaching to ensure providing student curricular needs. Dr. Oliver along with other central office administrators visit one school per week to spend one half-day working with the building administrators and visiting classrooms. Principal Eli discussed the importance of these visits. “Dr. Oliver effectively communicates to the teaching staff when he does his school visits. During his visits, he does a staff meeting in the morning and visits with teachers at recess or lunch time or whenever it is possible.” The researcher observed this involvement during the site visit to one of the high schools.

The central office delegation consisting of Dr. Oliver, Mr. Clyde, the Data and Assessment and Student Support Directors met in the teachers’ lounge to talk to staff as they came in and out of the room. Dr. Oliver made an attempt to talk to each teacher who came in, and knew each one by name. When asked about this, he stated, “my tenure and the tenure of the teachers allow this to happen; I do struggle with our new staff.” The brief discussions, usually started with small talk and then one or two questions about their program. One particular conversation took place with a science teacher discussing the newly implemented pedagogy of exploratory learning. During this time all four representatives from the central office were moving around the room, individually speaking to teachers. None of them waited for the staff to approach (although some did) and the central office administrators did not sit in one group talking to each other. The relaxed atmosphere and the teachers’ demeanor suggested that this interaction was typical and non-threatening (Field Notes, September 16, 2009).

Dr. Oliver brings essential communication skills to monitoring of goals. Data collected through observations indicate he allowed himself to be visible and accessible. He continually discussed educational data with all stakeholders. According to Dr. Sophie, the Board sees his incredible boardsmanship through their knowledge and support of goals. Lastly, his communication skills collaborate with Trustee Ferguson's comments on the continual subjective monitoring of the district.

Goal Cluster No. 5

The fifth cluster aligned with Waters and Marzano's (2006) superintendent's responsibilities related to the use of resources to support goals for instruction and achievement. Districts characterized by student success ensure that necessary resources, including time, money, personnel, and materials, are allocated to accomplish district goals. Waters and Marzano's (2006) meta-analysis does not specify the level of resources needed to support goals, however, their findings do make it clear that a meaningful commitment of funding must be dedicated to professional development for teachers and principals.

Five propositional theories guided the data collected: two in resource allocation and three in staff professional development. These two sub-categories guided the data analysis process for this cluster. The first category, resource allocation, had two propositional theories: adopting an instructional resource management system supporting implementation of the district's instructional philosophy and controlling resource expenditures.

Assistant Superintendent Clyde's statement suggested that the Luther School District does prioritize its distribution of resources according to goals. "Dr. Oliver is very adamant about the need to put resources in the right spot. We take existing resources and we reformat and have discussions about the areas that resources need to go." Dr. Oliver elaborated on this point,

We really want to refine the process where we are doing the right kind of training, the right kind of support, the right kind of modeling and then the right kind of assessing to make sure we are moving all students towards that goal. This is more resource intensive and we do our best to spend the money in the right way.

Board Chair Bobert and Trustee Ferguson's statements provided confirmation that the district does have an instructional resource management plan, "It is one of the primary jobs of the Board to make sure we have the resources we need to have quality instruction and success, which leads to achievement (Mr. Bobert)." Also, "I don't think we establish goals that are unfunded, whatever goals are started, they are fully funded (Ferguson)."

In the process of analyzing the Luther School District's documents, the researcher found that its mission statement and five goals showed information that tightly couples the Luther School District goals directly with Waters and Marzano's (2006) propositional theories. One of those goals fiscal planning, stated, "A budget development process is established so the allocation of resources has the greatest positive impact on the performance of students and staff."

Staff development, the second sub-category of this cluster provided data that proposed staff development is embedded in the district as defined by Waters and Mazano

(2006). In turn the professional development plan must be incorporated through a master-plan designed to coordinate the activities throughout the district. Principal Eli commented, “The central office has done a fantastic job of studying up for new teacher learning academies.” Board Chair Bobert triangulated this data by stating, “We maximize resources so they can be applied towards classrooms and quality professional development.” Lastly Principal Buck summed up the thoughts of the building administrators by making this statement.

We are able to do an incredible amount with very little. We access the expertise within the district so we don’t do a lot of national conferences, but we work with the people within our community and bring in the training for staff. This summer, we had our first technology camp. It was great with teachers teaching teachers. I think the staff development has done a great job.

The Luther School District documents contain data that described their commitment to professional development.

Luther Public Schools believes that education without quality professional development is a contradiction. Therefore, certified and support staff have the opportunity to participate in professional development opportunities that are: (1) focused on student learning, (2) standards-based, (3) on-going and job-embedded, (4) results driven, (5) based on established needs and the goals of the district and buildings, and (6) related to district focus areas.

By studying the district’s Professional Compensation Alternative Plan (PCAP) the extent to which the professional development plan is embedded into the district can be examined. Based on three premises, Career Development and Education, Professional Service and Evaluation, the PCAP describes Luther’s progressive salary placement schedule. Each teaching or support staff member must complete a Career Development Plan (CDP), designed to provide each staff member with career development that is an

ongoing professional process focusing on the Luther School District's mission, goals and curriculum standards. As noted in the PCAP requirements, "The purpose of the Career Development Plan is to allow educators the opportunities to explore, analyze, and develop quality instructional strategies directly benefiting each individual learner." Each educator must create his or her own professional development plan that correlates with the district's missions and goals.

In summary, data suggested that professional development and the necessary resources is a priority for the Luther School District. This cluster provided positive statements from every level of the district's leadership team, Trustee, superintendent, central office and building administrator. This verbal data reinforced the information found in numerous district documents. Lastly, professional development directly tied to teacher salary placement suggested a priority that permeates the district.

Summary of Findings

The research problem addressed in this study is the lack of qualitative data on the organizational approach of the superintendent as it relates to student success. Using the pattern matching strategy, as described by Yin (2003), the researcher extrapolated data from this study as it aligned with the propositional theories proposed in Waters and Marzano's (2006) quantitative meta-analysis.

To better organize the data collection process, Waters and Marzano's (2006) six superintendent responsibilities and correlating 51 propositional theories were split into eight clusters. Each cluster created an investigative focus to better dissect the holistic

qualitative picture provided by the daily operation of the Luther School District. Eight members of the administrative team were interviewed and followed by purposeful observations. The researcher extrapolated pertinent data from 252 pages of district documents, journal and newspaper articles.

The first three clusters revolved around Waters and Marzano's (2006) superintendent responsibility of defined autonomy. The data collected described the three parameters of creating and establishing non-negotiable goals. These three boundaries, gleaned from Waters and Marzano's (2006) meta-analysis included: encouraging strong school level leadership and responsibility for student success, the creation of a shared understanding, and commitment to a relationship with schools.

When discussing defined autonomy, Dr. Oliver puts it into his own words by stating "What we have tried to establish is what things we are going to be tightly linked, and those things that we give more discretion." The concept, created by this seemingly simple statement can be observed throughout the data collected in defined autonomy. The balance of defined autonomy or, in Dr. Oliver's vernacular, "linkage" is ever evolving and as data indicated caused frustration by being both too tight and too loose. When discussing the propositional theory of ensuring that schools have a clear mission focused on school performance Principal Eli stated, "I wish he [Dr. Oliver] would be just a little clearer up front." Assistant Superintendent Clyde seems to agree by admitting "What we sometimes hear is 'why doesn't central office just tell us maybe a little bit.'" Dr. Oliver clearly understands these feelings by stating, "This is a process and we are trying to work through some steps to clearly make a difference in the student's success in

school.” On the other hand, when the linkage holds too tightly it also causes friction. Data suggested a perfect example in the hiring process, whereas, the superintendent and central office is highly involved.

The defined autonomy data collected suggested a constant ebb and flow of shared leadership between the district and schools. Dr. Oliver summed this up by stating, “I think that it is an ongoing discussion about the level of autonomy that you offer and what areas to guide and supervise, again not to try and control folks, but to provide common support.”

Collectively, the last five clusters, Waters and Marzano’s (2006) superintendent responsibilities, form the data pool describing the goal implementation process at the Luther School District. From development to establishment, all stakeholders create, monitor and support the goals.

Evidence supported that the goals start with a working relationship between Dr. Oliver and the Board. The administrative team realized the vision of goal creation and respected the process. “Dr. Oliver has done a nice job with the Board in helping them wrestle with what are the goals, what are the community goals for education.” When discussing how goals come about, Dr. Oliver stated, “It is a process we use that ultimately sets meaningful goals for the district.” Once administrators set the goals, Assistant Superintendent Clyde stated, “Dr. Oliver is a master of taking that level down and explaining how it looks like in each building.”

Although the principals know the clear goals, they still express some frustration with Dr. Oliver’s direction for each goal in the schools. Mr. Eli clearly stated that, “At

times I wish he would be more direct.” The data does not indicate that Dr. Oliver’s establishment of goals is unclear; it just suggested that he does not give ultimatums when establishing specific goals.

The information provided by the cluster describing the monitoring of goals indicated a well-developed process for measuring the effectiveness of district goals. From evaluating principals to reporting the data to the Board, all levels of the administrative team remain involved in continually assessing the value of the district’s actions. Documents analyzed provide data on the district’s ongoing attempt to monitor goals.

The following report was presented to the Board of Trustees. It provides background information on the value of a balanced assessment system. It includes components of a balanced assessment system, gives examples of assessment across a continuum and provides a district-wide perspective of the status of the district’s assessment system.

This quote provides concrete data that information provided to the Board attempts to transparently monitor goals.

The documentation within the data compiled during this study provides evidence of Waters and Marzano’s (2006) six superintendent responsibilities and 51 propositional theories. The district’s documents collaborated with statements made throughout the interviews and observations. Embedded with the goals established throughout the district include staff development, compensation and resource allocation. Data collected advocated that the goals embedded throughout the district originate with Dr. Oliver.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

This single case study addresses the lack of qualitative data describing specific aspects of the superintendent's organizational approach as it relates to student success. This is the gap in the literature that provides the basis for the problem. Guided by the following two research questions the analyzed data will provide documentation to add to the existing body of knowledge. The first research question is based on the relationship between the superintendent and principals. "How does defined autonomy as an element of the superintendent's organizational approach impact student success?" The second research question guides the study in analyzing the process of developing, implementing and monitoring goals. "How does the goal implementation process as an element of the superintendent's organizational approach impact student success?"

Waters and Marzano's (2006) quantitative meta-analysis provides the empirical data for the basis of this case study. This quantitative meta-analysis stands as the most substantial body of research analyzing the instructional role of the superintendent. Gathering evidence from 1970 to its release in 2006, the meta-analysis examined 27 quantitative studies involving 2,817 districts and 3.4 million students.

A thorough analysis of how the superintendent's organizational approach impacts student success, its contributions of this study to the current body of literature, and recommendations for further research will be discussed.

Instructional Leadership

This study's determination to research the impact of the instructional role of the superintendent demands a historical understanding of the evolution of this profession. In the past the superintendent often delegated the duties of the instructional leader to the principal allowing time to focus on district management and political issues (Petersen 2002). Since then much attention has been given to the widely accepted expectation of the principal as instructional leader. Respected research by Blasé and Blasé (2000), Waters, Marzano and McNulty (2003), Cotton (2003) and Hallinger (2005) have identified specific practices implemented by successful principals. Even though the individual lists from different researchers prove exhaustive, the basic actions are similar. The analogous practices derived from separate research studies suggest an acceptance of principal actions that positively correlate to student success.

A benchmark in the history of the instructional leadership role in public education occurred with the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Although a watershed event for education, passage of the NCLB Act did not mark the beginning of an educational reform, but rather acted as a catalyst that ignited a fundamental transformation that had been smoldering for decades. The 2002 Act brought accountability for student success to the forefront of American education, with an expectation for academic success for all students through stronger direction from the district. The public's awareness not only heightened the visibility and political vulnerability of public school superintendents, but also contributed to rising expectations

for a new kind of leadership that emphasized both the need for competent management and effective instructional leadership.

The concept of expanding the instructional leadership role to include the superintendent gave rise to the necessity of educational research as very little data had been collected to guide this emerging trend. Petersen (2002) discovered only a handful of studies examining the effect of the district superintendent on the academic achievement of students. In those limited studies, all agreed the superintendent's instructional role proved vital to student success.

Undeniably the NCLB Act gave a sense of urgency and placed the issue of student academic success into the public spotlight, but many studies discovered the instructional role had already been passed to the district leader. As early as 1984, Cuban acknowledged that the success or failure of a public school can be directly linked to the influence of the district superintendent. Belden, Russonello & Stewart (2005) findings indicated that stronger direction, spurred by the NCLB Act from the district, resulted in more testing and accountability, but superintendents do not see this as the sole driver of increased instructional leadership from the district. Also Belden et al (2005) reported that in their studies, a majority of superintendents report instructional decisions in the prior three to five years were made more at the district-level than by individual schools.

Lashway (2002) best summarizes the educational environment surrounding the expanding instructional leadership role. District leaders, more specifically, superintendents must place instruction at the top of the district's agenda. While the

managerial and political dimension of the job will not go away, those roles should be aligned with the overriding goal of continuous instructional improvement.

Waters and Marzano

With a foundation of over two decades of research and authority from a federal mandate, the accountability reform was widely recognized, albeit only minimally practiced across the country. Superintendents who desire to cross over from the traditional role to the new instructional role found it difficult and with little research for guidance, the path was unclear.

The Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL), under the direction of Dr. Timothy Waters and Dr. Robert Marzano, provided the most substantial research on the instructional role of the superintendent to date. Their meta-analysis' findings indicated a positive correlation between district leadership and student success. Furthermore the study uncovered six specific superintendent responsibilities and 51 observable practices related to student success.

Waters and Marzano (2006) discovered that behaviors associated with district leadership do not always correlate with an increase in student achievement. Termed the "differential impact" of leadership, it indicated leadership actions could be mitigated if focused on goals that have a weak relationship with student achievement, or the effect on student achievement varied according to the order of magnitude required by the superintendent's academic and instructional goals.

In summary, Waters and Marzano's (2006) findings suggest that district leaders, more specifically superintendents, can contribute to student success when they focus on key responsibilities and implement the corresponding practices.

Methodology

This single-case qualitative study sought to extend the findings of Waters and Marzano's (2006) quantitative meta-analysis by researching the organizational approach of a practicing superintendent in a school setting. Yin (2003) proposed that case studies are the preferred strategy when "how" or "why" questions are posed, when the researcher has little control over the events, and when a contemporary phenomenon focuses within a real-life context.

The superintendent as a unit of analysis was defined in the research questions and the boundaries they establish for the case. Diagram 4.1 provides a definition of the boundaries for this study. It can best be described by the two research questions which ask how defined autonomy and the goal implementation process as elements of the superintendent's organizational approach can impact student success. This diagram also provides the definition the unit of analysis as the superintendent, as all data is linked through him within the boundaries of this case study.

This research based its design on a large school district with the superintendent as the unit of analysis. Through interviews, observations and document analysis, the case study gathered qualitative data to examine the superintendent's impact on student success

through defined autonomy and the goal implementation process. To ensure a robust case study, a pilot research project was conducted.

The pilot study's district was demographically close to the researcher, providing a convenient location to collect data. This advantage did not compromise the integrity of the study, besides having a smaller student population; all other criteria for the case study were met. The superintendent had 11 years of experience in the district leadership position at this school. The administrative team consisted of a high school principal, assistant high school principal, middle school principal and two elementary principals.

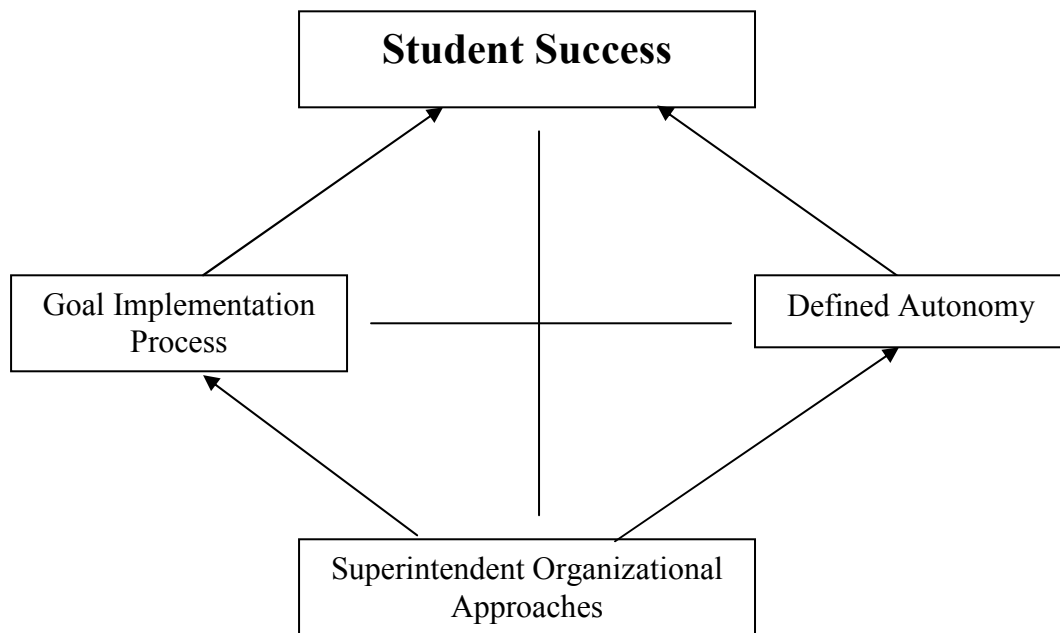


Figure 4.1
Superintendent Responsibilities Boundary Diagram

The central office portion of the administrative team included the business manager, curriculum coordinator, special education director and athletic director. The

superintendent directly supervised all of these professionals, answering only to an elected Board of seven Trustees who directed the district.

The pilot study allowed the researcher to rehearse interview questions and observational techniques in the real-life context of a school district. Three participants, the superintendent, high school principal and a trustee were chosen to interview. The content of the interview included eight open-ended questions. Each meeting was conducted at the convenience of the participant and lasted about one hour. The interviews were digitally recorded and then transcribed verbatim. Documents collected from the district's website and OPI were analyzed and data was collected.

The pilot study provided the researcher with experience in conducting a case study. The knowledge of balancing the role of interviewer, honing questioning techniques, and focusing on word usage proved valuable to the main study. Lastly, the pilot study allowed the testing of the interview questions to ensure that collected data produced information that addressed the problem statement and research questions.

The main, qualitative single-case study was then conducted with data collected through interviews, observations and document analysis. Yin (2003) provided analytical guidance through the pattern matching strategy. Waters and Marzano's (2006) propositional theories were empirical data to match with responses, actions and documents provided by the data collection process.

Eight interviews (superintendent, assistant superintendent, two high school principals, two elementary principals, a trustee and the board chair) were conducted with each having eight open-ended questions. Document analysis used available information

from the school's website, the Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI), and newspaper and journal articles. The researcher conducted purposeful observations as defined as information gathered during times that desired data is most likely to occur, such as staff and administrative meetings. The study was conducted at the beginning of the school year to provide ample opportunities for data collection.

Traditional Prejudices Against Case Study Research Strategy

Case Study Rigor

Yin (2003) stated the case study strategy is one of the most challenging of all social science endeavors. Several traditional prejudices against this research strategy exist. The first concern raises the possibility of the lack of rigor of case-study research. This intolerance for case-study strategies can be found in the minimal number of methodological guidelines providing specific procedures to be followed. Without the direction of specific formulas, critics contend that fair reporting of all evidence will not occur and without clear guidance, bias will taint the data, resulting in a weak conclusion. Yin (2003) reminds critics that bias exist in all research strategies and all have the same solutions: acknowledgment, continual awareness, and a solid research design plan that uses multiple methods and multiple data sources.

Generalizability

The second prejudice Yin (2009) addresses is the critic's concern of the inability to generalize the outcomes of a single-case study. Yin (2009) answers this query by pointing out that experiments, like an individual case study, cannot by themselves

provide the ability to generalize. These singular qualitative and quantitative research designs are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes. Only when the same phenomenon is replicated under different conditions can these phenomena truly offer scientific evidence. As Yin (2003, p. 10) stated, “In doing a case study, the goal is to expand and generalize theories (analytic), not to enumerate frequencies (statistical).”

Furthermore, generalization occurs in the mind of the reader when he or she connects the phenomenon together similar or familiar situations. Thus, the reader’s ability to generalize stems from the reader’s own experience and a thick, rich description of the case study. It is this thick and rich description and observable phenomena that protects against bias (Stake, 2000).

Inherent Weaknesses of Case Study Research

To further strengthen the findings’ conclusions and produce a high quality analysis, Yin (2003) suggests addressing the following three inherent weaknesses of a case study design: (1) address major rivals, (2) researcher bias, and (3) pitfalls of self-reporting.

Major Rivals

First, the design strategy of this study identified the major rival as those who could influence the district, other than the superintendent. The study targeted the assistant superintendent as the major rival, since this position has the authority to wield district-wide influence. The Board was also questioned as a major rival, but was

dismissed as they have the authority, but not the opportunity to reach the administrative team.

Triangulation of data confirmed that Dr. Oliver was the sole provider of direction pertaining to defined autonomy, thus dismissing Assistant Superintendent Clyde as a major rival. Interview comments consistently verified this conclusion. Principal Eli, “I believe it is Dr. Oliver’s leadership style...” Mr. Clyde, “Dr. Oliver does a nice job with the Board...” Mr. Buck, “Dr. Oliver is pretty direct about his expectations.” Data analysis discovered Dr. Oliver’s weekly newsletters where he discussed his expectations. Finally, this researcher observed an example of Dr. Oliver’s influence at the high school administrative meeting. The meeting attendees included all high school leaders with the discussion focusing on how to fund the Saturday school teaching position. Mr. Clyde opened the discussion by stating, “We need to make a decision and I’ll take that back to Dr. Oliver.”

Researcher Bias

Second, while taking notes for observations and interviews, this researcher minimized bias by being constantly aware of its threat and careful not to interject words that indicated bias, such as, obviously, clearly and support. The design strategy also assisted in the triangulation of data (interviews, observations and documents), and set guidelines for collecting data: predetermined interview questions, observation, and document analysis protocol, and the propositional theories.

Self Reporting

The third section, minimizing self-reporting data errors, used many of the same strategies for combating researcher bias. Especially potent was the triangulation of self-reporting data with established district documents. The documents provided a fundamental baseline for data as information collected has a higher level of credibility. Collected from a public forum, website, journals and newspaper articles, the documents provide established and known information. Thus triangulation of self-reporting data with documents provided this researcher the confidence of minimizing possible errors.

Summary of Findings

The purpose of this study was to determine how defined autonomy and the goal implementation process as an element of the superintendent's organizational approach impacted student success. The strategy of collecting data through interviews, purposeful observations, and document analysis provided information that reached saturation. Yin's (2003) pattern-matching tactic guided the analysis strategy in which data collected was aligned with empirical information. This study's data demonstrated the superintendent's organizational approach did impact student success. Information gathered in the real-life context of Superintendent Oliver painted a vivid picture of how Dr. Oliver's relationship with his principals (defined autonomy) and the goal setting process impacted student success.

A rich example of how Dr. Oliver's defined autonomy actions influenced student success can be described by the following data extracted from administrative team

interviews. Assistant Superintendent Clyde is quoted in his interview stating, “Dr. Oliver is definite in setting the goal with the Board for the district and then we look to the building principals, now what is your plan to reach the goals?” Additionally the evidence of how defined autonomy is embedded in the district is further triangulated by information collected from Principal Eli’s interview.

Dr. Oliver has done a nice job on saying the primary role is the education of youth. The secondary role is the Whole Child concept will be followed. We must meet the needs that we can, as much as we can. We as a district are expected to support those; we in our buildings are expected to support those. The expectation is that you will participate. In some way shape or form, you will participate. How you choose to set that up is up to us. Some get more direction than others, but we are expected to participate.

The evidence of the practical application of defined autonomy at both the central office and building administration levels was evident throughout the data collection process. Superintendent Oliver’s actions provided a contextual picture of leadership characteristics that correlated with empirical data.

In addition, data collected demonstrated Dr. Oliver’s leadership characteristics did provide a rich description of how a superintendent’s actions impacted student success through the goal implementation process. Excerpts from the collected data reveal Dr. Oliver’s dedication to the goal implementation process as it begins with the Board and transfers to the individual schools. Through his interview, Assistant Superintendent Clyde specifically explains the goal implementation process as directed by Superintendent Oliver:

He [Dr. Oliver] is a master of taking that [goals] down to our level and discussing what it means and how it looks. And then taking the leadership of the schools through a process to determine what it looks like in each

building and what activities should be in place in order to obtain and maintain those goals.

In addition, Principal Alice collaborated with this statement by saying, “He [Dr. Oliver] does a nice job communicating that [goals] with the central office, building administrators and then on to the teachers.”

While observing Dr. Oliver interact with his administrative team, a common theme emerged; he continually communicated his expectations for student success. During an all district administrative meeting the discussion revolved around whether or not to allow students to view the President’s speech to the nation’s school children. Dr. Oliver’s direction to the principals was to ensure the speech aligned with content and standards of the curriculum. The comments matched the professional atmosphere of the room. Although not stated, the level of professionalism was apparent and Dr. Oliver’s statement linking the problem to student learning seemed expected.

In conclusion the outcomes of this study are a small snap-shot in the overall educational picture. However, the relative size of this project does not diminish the importance of the findings. The robust study and its rich, descriptive data provided educational practitioners a research-based picture on how the superintendent’s organizational approaches impacted student success.

Implications

The purpose of this study was to address a topic that had not been fully explored in the empirical literature, how superintendent organizational approaches impacts student success. The boundaries were created by conducting a qualitative single-case study

involving a district with a record of student success based on recognition of innovative programs and graduation rates.

The study of the evolution of the superintendent's impact on student success is well documented. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s researchers and practitioners speculated about the instructional role of the superintendent (Cuban, 1984, Bjork, 1993, Beldan, Russonello & Stewart, 2005). Research studies, both quantitative and qualitative suggested that the superintendent's actions could influence student success. In 2002, the NCLB Act provided public awareness and political pressure to ignite the superintendent instructional leadership role reform. However, it was not until 2006 when Waters and Marzano's (2006) meta-analysis findings discovered the next step in the evolution of the superintendent's instructional role by providing specific tasks needed to be implemented to produce a positive impact on student success. This single-case study's contribution to the field of educational research is the addition to the body of knowledge through a research-based example demonstrating the superintendent's organizational approach impacts student success.

The data collected from this research suggested one major implication for guiding practitioners to redefine the role of the superintendent to meet the instructional demands of educating every student. Data (Kouzes & Posner, 2002) demonstrates that district leaders can learn and apply research-based instructional practices that positively impact student success. Information gathered from this research indicated Dr. Oliver's influence on student success is implemented through a series of steps. It is through these benchmarks that this study offers ground-breaking research on how superintendents can

impact student success. Each one of these benchmarks align with research-based empirical evidence provided by Waters and Marzano's (2006) superintendent responsibilities. The triangulated data collected within the Luther School system provided the following five steps to provide guidance for district leadership to positively impact student success. The following list will be discussed in detail: (1) Develop a shared vision, (2) Implement district goals, (3) Consistently communicate expectations, (4) Allow principals to implement, (5) Hold principals accountable through monitoring.

The first benchmark, developing a shared vision, is fundamental in influencing student success. Throughout Dr. Oliver's long tenure at Luther Public Schools developing a vision has become part of the district's culture. Assistant Superintendent Clyde states, "I believe the process of developing a shared vision is so engrained that it has become a part of their [administrators'] lingo." Although Dr. Oliver's responses downplay his role in the process, data demonstrated his role in leading the district through the shared vision process. Trustee Ferguson illustrated this point, "All last year he [Dr. Oliver] gave us a lot of information describing the direction he wanted us to go, it was not at all a hap-hazard process." Board Chair Bobert detailed Dr. Oliver's vision setting process, "He paints the goals, the big picture and has good references for people to follow in terms of, read this book, and see these examples and models." This deliberate process is transparent as the administrative team is invited to join the dialogue at the Board level. On the administrative level, Assistant Superintendent Clyde described Dr. Oliver's skills of instilling the vision in each school. "He [Dr. Oliver] is a master at

taking that [vision] down and how does that look like in your building, and what activities you should have in place in order to obtain and then maintain those goals.”

The second step is implementing district goals developed in the shared vision process. Dr. Oliver established the goals through his administrative team. Ensuring each school has a clear mission, Principal Alice describes Dr. Oliver’s implementation process, “I think it is a clear set of objectives, from the central office to my office about what we are trying to do. I feel good that we are all on the same page.” The expectations for these goals were conveyed in several ways. Dr. Oliver stated he likes to communicate face to face and as specific as possible. An example would be his convocation for the first day of school where he discussed the district’s graduation goals. Dr. Oliver also modeled his expectations. Principal Eli stated, “I believe that Dr. Oliver’s leadership style is modeling.”

The implementation of district goals is not without conflict, as uncovered while analyzing the data, not all goals were popular with the administration. Evidence in this case study suggests that in many instances, educators opposed and caused conflict regarding Dr. Oliver’s decision to implement specific practices. The propositional theory of district-level involvement in the hiring process received multiple oppositional comments. Principal Eli opposed this practice. “If I had a complaint as far as something that I feel has been taken away from building administration, it is our central office is incredibly involved in the hiring process.” Dr. Sophie concurred:

The wrinkle in the hiring process is the teacher website and if you don’t score high enough on the Teacher Insight [test], you don’t get an interview. It eliminates any judgment, training, or perception for principals who have been hiring and working with teachers for their whole

career. Hiring good, excellent teachers is critical and this process is non-negotiable from Dr. Oliver.

This process has been implemented into the Luther District for two years. Dr. Oliver understood the level of conflict and did not waiver. His commitment to this program has proved itself and has become an accepted process for hiring staff. Mr. Eli even admitted, “Now in defense of the process, we have hired some really good teachers in the past two years. I do believe that it clearly helps to pull out the best of the candidates.”

The third step is the constant communication of expectations to the administrative team. Dr. Oliver wrote weekly messages that were posted on the district’s website. This newsletter allowed him to address many issues and was a forum to communicate expectations to all employees. Also Dr. Oliver held weekly site-visits, which provided the opportunity for communication. Dr. Oliver stated, “The site visits allow us [administrative team] to walk around the buildings and promotes an opportunity for discussion about the daily activities of the school.” Principal Buck’s comments relay the same message, “This next visit, he [Dr. Oliver] wants us to start talking about what we are doing with the Whole Child Concept.” This third benchmark in itself, does not break new ground, open communication is widely accepted as the success of all organizations. However, this study provided a real-life picture portraying how communication can be utilized to achieve student success. The building blocks of Dr. Oliver’s leadership style provide opportunities to communicate: regularly scheduled meetings; site visits; Board presentations; and weekly newsletters stating his expectations.

The fourth level of impacting student success is allowing the principals to implement goals based on their school's individual culture. The data suggests that Dr. Oliver is very aware of his relationship with principals and how to balance autonomy. He used the term "linked" when discussing his connection with the administrative team. "What we have tried to establish is what things we are going to be tightly linked, and those that we will give more discretion." Assistant Superintendent Clyde best summarized this relationship between the district and the schools, "It's a sense of setting expectations. Dr. Oliver has set the goal with the Board, and then we look to the building principals and say what is your plan to reach the goals. Each principal brings a different set of skills."

The last step is holding principals accountable through monitoring. Dr. Oliver was specific on monitoring during his interview when he stated, "One formal way of monitoring is through the school improvement plan process. Every building has a single and multiple year plan and when we do our site visits we discuss the plans point by point." Data collected from the principals consistently pointed to the relationship between the schools and the district. Principal Alice's comments best summarized the data, "We talk about programs and designs, it is really an ongoing process. We talk two or three times per week. So the accountability process is just a continuing, ongoing dialog."

These five benchmarks provide a descriptive guide on how the superintendent through his organizational approach can impact student success. These steps were a

combination of the goal implementation process and defined autonomy as discovered by Waters and Marzano's (2006) meta-analysis.

Recommendations for Further Research

The importance of the superintendent expanding his or her role to include instructional leadership is well documented, and according to Bjork (1993), research began on this topic in the early 1980s. However, more study is needed to further clarify this role and to provide specific direction on how to integrate the demands of instructional leadership into the already overwhelming responsibilities of the superintendent. This single-case study can be likened to an individual book in a library of qualitative research describing the instructional role of the superintendent. Thus, in an era of academic accountability, greater knowledge of district leaders who have been recognized as leading and facilitating academically successful school districts will benefit both researchers and practitioners.

As the superintendent's role continues to transform to meet the ever-evolving need of educating all children so will the relationship with other stakeholders, such as building administrators, Board of Trustees and community members. Each of these relationships should be considered as a starting point in investigating the instructional leadership of the superintendent.

As political pressures mount, School Boards need to work closely with superintendents to clarify their expectations for performance and evaluation. Traditional managerial objectives used to measure the district leader's job performance will be out of

sync, and not aligned with society's expectations. Further research must be completed studying the new Board/Superintendent relationship. Only with strong and highly visible Board support will district administrators take the bold steps for transforming schools and positively impacting student success.

NCLB has brought to the forefront the need for instructional leadership on the district level. The mandate confirms and gives authority to ensure all children will learn. Waters and Marzano (2006) provided the statistical data on observable practices that correlate with student success. Kouzes and Posner's (2002) findings that leadership practices can be learned and applied. The missing research link is professional development for superintendents. Research must be conducted to determine best practices for continually educating district leaders.

Final Summary

The history of the superintendent's role proves to be a continually moving target, shifting from instructional to managerial and back to instructional. The early 1980s marked the most recent change in the district leaders' job description. Bjork (1993) reinforces this timeline with findings from his work.

Since '*A Nation at Risk*' crystallized the nation's commitment to improve its school in 1983, numerous other national commission reports that followed made urgent and compelling arguments for improving classroom instruction and underscored the need for strong instructional leadership at both the school and district levels (p.246).

In 1987 then Secretary of Education William Bennett characterized superintendents, central office staff and school boards as the education "blob" which

further emphasized the urgency to accept the district level instructional leadership role. He explained that these bureaucratic entities (people in the education system who work outside of the classroom), soak up resources and resist reform. Indeed, instructional leadership at the district level needed guidance, and at the time, very little research existed to help with the transition.

The 1990s saw transition from within as superintendents realized the need to assist each school in reaching academic goals. Rather than instituting a contextual change, superintendents used their traditional roles to assist in student academics. According to Lashway (2002) superintendents were dependent on principals and teachers to implement academic goals. They supported this by providing resources, buffering staff from outside influences, being visible, engaging others, and empowering collaborative risk taking.

The new century introduced an era of accountability backed by the federal mandate, NCLB. Suddenly the public demanded that districts accept the responsibility of educating all students. This contextual change, backed by increasing research-based data, began to provide guidance to practitioners to ensure necessary systemic changes occurred to expand the instructional role to include district leadership.

The statistical data provided by Waters and Marzano's (2006) meta-analysis coupled with Kouzes and Posner (2002) leadership data suggest district leadership can change and make a positive effect on student achievement. This study adds to the growing body of knowledge, helping fill the gap that exists in the literature, a holistic description of how the superintendent's organizational approach impacts student success.

This single-case qualitative study examined the organizational approaches of a superintendent in a Montana School District. The research questions that guided this study asked how the superintendent's organizational approach; as it pertained to defined autonomy and the goal-implementation procedure, impacted student achievement. Through interviews, purposeful observations and document analysis, this researcher extrapolated information and pattern-matched it with empirical data, suggesting the real-life actions of the superintendent does affect student success.

The implication of this research serves to assist practicing superintendents as they strive to make personal and contextual changes to expand into the instructional leader of their district. This study suggests that research-based superintendent practices can be learned and applied. The Luther School District provided how its instructional leader, Superintendent Oliver, impacted student success through a five-step process: (1) Develop a shared vision, (2) Implement district goals, (3) Consistently communicate expectations, (4) Allow principals to implement, (5) Hold principals accountable through monitoring.

In conclusion, this one small study adds to the world of educational literature by building on other's findings and creating a stronger foundation for future researchers. The need for district instructional leaders who can make a positive effect on student success is imperative. This study is a purposeful commitment toward developing district leaders who, if willing, can make a contextual change in their profession.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

PILOT CASE STUDY

Introduction

Waters and Marzano's (2006) meta-analysis "*School District Leadership that Works: The Effect of Superintendent Leadership on Student Achievement*," provided a quantitative foundation for investigating the instructional role of the superintendent. They discovered a statistically positive correlation between district leadership and student success. Their findings prompted this researcher to create a qualitative single case study titled "The Superintendent's Organizational Approach to Goals and Defined Autonomy as it Impacts Student Success." Furthermore, this researcher developed two research questions to guide and provide focus for this project. First, "How does defined autonomy as an element of the superintendent's organizational approach impact student success?" and, "How does the goal implementation process as an element of the superintendent's organizational approach impact student success?"

This trial study allowed the researcher to test the substantive and methodological issues of the study. The researcher can adjust and focus interviews and observations to ensure proper data is collected. Invaluable field experience gained, will add credibility to this research.

Pilot Design

This study focuses on a superintendent with a minimum of 10 years experience at the helm of a district that has a proven record of student success. Before proceeding the researcher will discuss and define the two variables of this study. First, the organizational approach of a superintendent as defined by Waters and Marzano (2006)

meta-analysis found six leadership responsibilities that statistically linked the district leader to student achievement. Furthermore, they broke these six actions into observable practices, or propositional theories. The second variable of this study, student success, defined in this study as, graduation rates and innovative programs. The Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) sets the standard percentage for acceptable graduation rates for all high schools at 80%. The other tentacle of student success is district, school or staff recognition for innovative student programs by state, federal or professional organizations.

This researcher will conduct a qualitative single-case study with data collection occurring through interviews, observations and document analysis. After the information is collected, it will be analyzed through pattern matching using Yin's (2003) strategy as guidance. Waters and Marzano's (2006) propositional theories will be used as patterns to match with responses, actions and documents provided by the pilot district.

The interview portion of the data collection process included the superintendent, high school principal and Trustee. Each was asked an identical set of eight open-ended questions, with the interview lasting approximately one hour. The second portion of data, document analysis, was completed with the use of available information from the school's website. Unfortunately, due to the timing of the data collecting portion of this pilot study, there were no opportunities for purposeful observation. The study was conducted at the end of the school year when no faculty or administrative meetings occurred. The superintendent had tendered his resignation/retirement months earlier, causing a time of transition as the district prepared for the leadership change.

Pilot District

For this pilot study the researcher chose a mid-sized rural K-12 school in southwestern Montana. The enrollment of the district has mirrored that of the community. Through the late 1980s to the early years of this century, student population steadily increased with a boom in the mid-1990s. The numbers have leveled and during the current year, the district saw a slight decrease of 17 students. However, forecasts of enrollment predict a steady increase. Overall, this district has a consistent student count when compared to the plummeting enrollment occurring statewide.

The district's governing body is Typical of all Montana schools, the district's governing body consists of the Board of Trustees. Local citizens elect this seven-member (currently five males and two females) on a three-year rotating cycle from the district at large. Board turnover remains minimal, as Trustees typically go unchallenged when seeking re-election. The most veteran of Trustees has served for 23 years, and the member with the least experience has been recently elected to their second three-year term.

Superintendent

Raised in a small town in a mid-western state, Mr. George Smith, the unit of analysis for this trial study had a very humble education beginning. During his early school years, he experienced a small one-room school house with very few classmates. After completing his secondary education, he attended the University of Nebraska-

Omaha and received his teaching credentials in Music Education. Mr. Smith's short teaching experience in Nebraska consisted of six months in the Omaha Public School system. Wanting a new experience, he threw a dart at a map and landed in Prior Montana, on the Crow Indian Reservation. During the first five years, he taught music and took on a few assigned administrative duties. Dr. Smith took a sabbatical in 1986 to attend Montana State University in Bozeman to attain a master's degree in educational leadership. With his administrative credentials, he returned to the Prior School District as the elementary principal, then the high school principal, and finally superintendent, a position he held for eight years before moving to his current district.

As district leader for 11 years, Mr. Smith had many challenges at the pilot school system. Just months before taking the position, the Middle School burned and his first task was the construction of a new building. Finances were always a struggle as the conservative community hesitated to vote in support of higher taxes for education.

In Montana the school funding system aims at equalization by providing revenue sources for 80 percent of a school's budget based on enrollment. Each district can then levy the remaining 20 percent through local voted levies. Of the 22 Montana schools in the pilot districts classification, it ranks 19th with a revenue percentage at 85.46 percentage (OPI, 2008). This apparent lack of financial support plagues all aspects of the school environment, such as teachers' wages, supplies and textbooks. Even though the community didn't want their school taxes raised, they instead rallied around the school with volunteerism and fundraising. Their hard work of gathering donations paid for the largest project, a new sports complex for soccer, track and football.

Over his tenure, Mr. Smith has been actively involved in various professional organizations: President of the South Central Administrators, President of the Indian Impact Schools of Montana, Board member of the Yellowstone West Special Education Cooperative, Board member of the Superintendent's Council for Multicultural Education Northwest Region and a member of the Montana Association for School Superintendents.

Mr. Smith has come to the end of his 20 years as an administrator and has tendered his resignation. His retirement will enable him to pursue his next challenge, earning his doctorate in educational leadership.

High School Principal

The pilot study's high school principal, Mr. Carney in his 12th year of education, seven as a teacher and five as an administrator. Raised in Pennsylvania, he moved to Montana in 1993, initially working full time and attending the University of Montana part time. After switching majors from biology to education, he started attending full time and graduated in 1998 with a double Bachelor of Arts in Environmental Biology and Biological Education.

Mr. Carney education experience from student teaching, teaching, assistant principal and principal has all occurred at the pilot school. While teaching, he began his master's degree program in education and at the prompting of his principal, switched to educational leadership.

Trustee

The Trustee, Mrs. Soaker moved to the district in 1972 and local citizens first elected her to the Board in 1987. She and her husband have had two sons attend the pilot district for their entire educational career. As a very active member in community civic groups and state educational organizations, Trustee Soaker has currently been appointed as the secretary of the Civic Club and serves on the boards of the Schools Foundation and the local Land Trust. Professionally, she was elected to the board of directors of the Montana School Boards Association for eight years and served as its president in 2000-01.

Evidence of Student Success

For the purpose of this study, two factors determine student success. First, graduation rates as defined by the Montana OPI. This concept of graduation is core to the educational system as it is the ultimate goal for every child. If students succeed in graduating, then one could conclude that all instructional goals are an effort to enable students to graduate. Furthermore, superintendent's actions of leading, or even managing the district could affect graduation rates. Second and final student success factor as defined by this study, is the recognition for innovative programs aimed at providing the opportunity for student success. The recognition could be state or national awards on either the district or school level, or accolades received by individual educators through their professional organizations.

The OPI specifically defines the graduation rate as the percentage of total students who complete all high school requirements on time, which means, finishing high school in four years or less from when enrolled in 9th grade or have an individualized education

program (IEP) allowing for more years to graduate (OPI, 2009). Students, who have achieved anything else, such as the General Education Development Test (GED), are not considered to have graduated.

Dropout students which counter graduation rates are defined by the OPI (2009), as students not attending school regularly, but enrolled on the October count date or at the end of the year. Once absent for 10 consecutive days, these students, if not enrolled in another school, are considered dropouts.

In the last three years of data, the pilot district has increased its graduation rates to 10 percent above the state average in 2004-05. Whereas the state average has held around 85 percent, the district has increased from 77 percent to 94 percent.

In 2000-01, the middle school of the pilot district achieved the national Blue Ribbon School Award. This federally sponsored program has three purposes. First, it identifies and recognizes outstanding schools across the nation. Second, the program provides research-based effectiveness criteria so schools can assess and plan for improvement. Third, the program encourages schools to share information about best practices. Blue Ribbon schools model both excellence and equity. To be recognized, a school must demonstrate a strong commitment to educational excellence for all students.

This district has been repeatedly recognized by the local and state media for being instrumental in the Media Arts in Public Schools (MAPS) program. Local film and video professionals developed this program in an effort to educate students in the art of film making. MAPS became highly successful when a group of students, contracted with companies, created commercials that aired nationwide.

In an effort to challenge all students, the pilot district implemented a tiered academic honors system. During the program's first year, 2009, it had three levels of distinction: Honors, High Honors and Highest Honors. Aimed at recognizing students who achieved academically, its criteria included both grade point averages (GPA) and classes taken. The Honors student must maintain a 3.0 GPA and take the basic Montana college course requirement. High Honors increases the GPA to 3.4 and adds three years of Social Studies. Highest Honors' GPA must be a minimum of 3.75 and include the criteria of three advanced placement courses.

Recognition of the sports complex must also be mentioned as an innovative program because extra-curricular activities give students the motivation to attend and finish school, thus affecting graduation rates. The community feels pride in the multi-million dollar facility that showcases the region's top football field, all-weather track and soccer fields.

Interview Process

The researcher interviewed Superintendent Smith, Principal Carney and Trustee Soaker on three separate visits, each at the convenience of the interviewee. Each were asked three questions about defined autonomy and five questions on the goal implementation process. Based on Waters and Marzano's (2006) six superintendent responsibilities, the interviews varied in length from the superintendent's response of 52 minutes, principal 33 minutes and the Trustee 27 minutes, all were recorded and transcribed.

The strategy used to analyze the collected data was pattern-matching logic, which compares an empirically based pattern with a predicted one (Yin, 2003). The known patterns include Waters and Marzano's (2006) propositional theories provided by specific superintendent practices that correlate with defined autonomy and goal implementation.

Prior to each interview the researcher provided to the interviewee information explaining the research project. Information included introduction of researcher, explanation of study, intent to participate form, definitions of key terms, introductory personal information questions, eight interview questions and their corresponding propositional theories and a copy of Waters and Marzano's (2006) meta-analysis. The researcher and interviewee thoroughly discussed all the information provided, except the meta-analysis, which provided as purely as a source for the interviewee to reference at his or her leisure.

Defined Autonomy

Waters and Marzano (2006), defines autonomy as the superintendent setting clear, non-negotiable goals for learning and instruction, yet providing school-level leaders with the authority for determining how to meet those goals. The first three open-ended questions to each interviewee centered on defined autonomy.

When asked what defined autonomy looks like in the district, more specifically what methods hold administrators accountable, and who or what supports the leadership team, interviewees remarked on several characteristics that aligned with Waters and Marzano's (2006) superintendent practices. When examining the data, all three interviewees mentioned the propositional theory, terminating poor staff performances.

Superintendent Smith stated, “I’m not going to hang on to this person and at that point and the recommendation go in and they’re gone.” Principal Carney and Trustee Soaker supported this statement by sharing the Superintendent helps with progressive discipline and that the Board has never gone against a recommendation for renewal or termination.

Promoting innovation was another propositional theory that was discussed During the interviews all three participants also mentioned the district promoting innovation, another propositional theory. Both members of the administrative team specifically discussed the importance of innovation. Principal Carney stated, “That thinking outside of the box and trying something new helped motivate teachers (Principal interview May 5, 2009). Data suggested that Mr. Smith supported innovation by providing resources for funding new programs (Interview, April 21, 2009).

Goal Setting Process

Five of the six superintendent responsibilities provided by Waters and Marzano (2006) are based on creating, implementing and monitoring goals. When asked to describe the goal setting process, Superintendent Smith talked in length about goals and goal setting, but this pattern was not apparent in the other interviews. The principal, Mr. Carney, briefly mentioned goals relating to the five-year plan and the Trustee specifically stated that goal setting had not been done for quite some time. None of the four propositional theories were matched for this question.

The researcher’s fourth question concerning goals asks how one monitors goals for achievement and instruction. The strongest data collected came from question which matched data to propositional theories. The superintendent states that he gives reports to

the Board on a regular basis and the Trustee concurred by stating monitoring occurs more and more. The principal monitors student achievement as the propositional theories suggest by providing feedback through the instructional evaluation program. Principal Carney states he carefully reviews the teachers, instructional and assessment techniques. More time could have been spent on this question, probing response questions could have been asked to discuss certain assessments that state and federal mandates require. The propositional theory, "Monitoring student achievement through feedback from the instructional evaluation program," generated discussion during all three interviews. Superintendent Smith saw this as a strength as his district has used the data for student achievement.

We have, we have improved, we've gone from 36 percentile in 4th grade math to almost 80 percentile in fourth grade math and we've done some of that in some of the assessment things that we've brought in and the staff and the principals have bought into these assessment models the piece that we've really been missing is once you get it assessed how to remediate.

Principal Carney diverted into the actual teaching methods as a way to monitor the instructional program. He states,

I will pick a few teachers out and I will go through them with a fine tooth comb and I will go through how they are assessing and what they are assessing and grades and if students aren't being successful in there we will sit down and have a talk about that, how you're instructing, which becomes a piece of it to how you're assessing and what you're assessing. As individuals non tenured have two submitted evaluations per year and tenured have one and a part of that is part of their own instructional or assessment goals or curricular goals.

Trustee Soaker adds,

I think for achievement it's primarily through the various assessment and I think there are a pretty good variety and I think that you know I think it's

done more and more effectively in terms of instruction you know the evaluation of instruction is pretty much done by the principals.

The fifth and final question of the goal implementation process the researcher asks the interviewees how resources support achievement and instruction goals. The superintendent's continually commented on resource allocation for achievement and instruction. When asked this question about resource support, the Superintendent Smith's main point discussed the district's hiring a curriculum director. This new position required the employee be responsible for not only curriculum, but also textbooks, effectiveness reporting, vertical alignment and professional development.

Trustee Soaker collaborated with Mr. Smith's resource decisions by stating:

I think that that's done pretty well and obviously we don't have enough resources but I think that the administration has been pretty creative in making resources stretch as far as they can and effectively the board has not questioned those kinds of decisions on the recommendations.

Summary

Before attempting to summarize the data the researcher will restate the intent of the pilot study. As the title indicates, the researcher collected data to examine the superintendent's impact on student success through defined autonomy and the goal implementation process. To simply analyze the data and match Waters and Marzano's (2006) propositional theories to empirical data would be misleading. The researcher intends to investigate how the superintendent's actions become evident throughout the district. The superintendent interview is key in determining the number of propositional theories in his organizational approach. Then in the remaining interviews and analysis of

documents the researcher will determine the impact of the superintendent by searching and possibly identifying those same propositional theories.

Conversely, the main rival to this study would be another entity besides the superintendent who implemented the propositional theories in the district that leads to student success. For example, data may point to the principal instead of the superintendent for the district's apparent student success.

The process used for organizing the data must be understood. Yin (2003) states that for analyzing case studies using pattern-matching logic creates one of the most desirable techniques. This study collected data through interviews and document analysis to pattern-match with Waters and Marzano's (2006) 51 propositional theories. Before proceeding, the researcher needs to define two terms: matches and sources. First, matches, theoretical propositions that correspond with the empirical data, came to a total of 51 matches, 26 for the goal implementation process and 25 for defined autonomy. Sources, the area or person, where the researcher collected the data: e.g., the superintendent, principal, Trustee and documents, represent a higher number due to a single matched proposition that could have as many as four sources. Thus, this study could have a maximum of 204 sources. Multiple sources for a single match indicate a shared commitment in the propositional theory. The more sources for a propositional theory, the more embedded it is in the district. The number of sources to a match is, in this researcher's opinion, the nexus to the superintendent's impact on student success.

Because Waters and Marzano (2006) did not report statistical differences between superintendent's practices, the specific matched propositional theories remain irrelevant, thus all will be treated equal.

The problem statement and research questions of this research project required the information be massaged using three different spreadsheets. First, the researcher tallied the sums to determine the total number of matches for both defined autonomy and the goal implementation process. The analyzed data suggests about half of the propositional theories matched during the interviews or in the document analysis.

Second, the researcher tallied the matches according to their source: superintendent, principal, Trustee and documents. Organizing the data by source allows the researcher to determine the superintendent's impact throughout the district. The total number of sources is higher due to a matched proposition possibly having as many as four sources. Of the ones matched, both the superintendent and principal ran even with 13 each, documents with 10 and the Trustee with eight.

The third and final tally of matched propositional theories addresses the rival explanation that the phenomenon of district leadership affecting student achievement comes from someone else besides the superintendent. During this stage, the researcher analyzed the data to determine if any one source had matches independent of other sources. For example, if the principal matched all the propositional theories and the superintendent only had a few, data could suggest that the impact on student success would be on the school level.

If all the matches included the superintendent as a source, then data would suggest that the responsibilities proposed by Waters and Marzano (2006) affected student success did indeed originate from the superintendent. Furthermore, the ultimate match would be one that tallied under all four data sources. By doing so, one could surmise that the theory is deeply embedded in the district.

The overall data provided by the spreadsheets found that of the 25 matching propositions, only 13 originated from the superintendent. This researcher avoided the conclusion that the superintendent did not have an impact student success due to the presumably low match numbers. This researcher believes that the number of matches provided in this study does not constitute a correlation with student success; in fact, Waters and Marzano (2006) did not offer any statistical number of propositional theories that had to be matched to achieve student success.

Sources are the data that suggests how embedded the propositional theories are in the district. Each one of the 25 matches could have four sources, for a total of 100. The data tallied from this study indicate 44 sources of which 32 involve the superintendent.

Defined Autonomy

To further break down the information and discuss the data by topic allows for a more in-depth look at the pilot district. Defined autonomy produced three interview questions with 22 propositional theories. Each match had the possibility of four sources for a total of 88. The data for this pilot study provided 13 matches, seven of which had the superintendent as the source, indicating that the remaining six matches were independent of the superintendent. This researcher believes that the low number of

matches does not automatically discount the superintendent's impact on student success, although the low number does create a more concerted effort to look further at the data.

Of the seven superintendent matches, 15 sources of the possible 28 were evident. As mentioned earlier, the researcher found all matches statistically equal, and up to this point, have been irrelevant to the data. However, in order to qualitatively understand the relevancy of the sources of each match, the researcher finds it essential to discuss the specific propositional theories in order to paint a more vivid picture of the organizational approach of the superintendent and his impact on student success.

The defined autonomy propositional theory with the most sources (three out of the possible four) referred to terminating poor performers. In his interview, Superintendent Smith stated, "I'm not going to hang on to this person and at that point and the recommendation goes in and they're gone." Principal Carney addresses the teamwork between the administrative team when handling poor performance by stating:

I work with him (superintendent) when it comes to disciplining teachers. Usually I do it to the point of verbal warning letters of reprimand, that's my deal. But we had a couple that they are at the point where they have been reprimanded by him because we have gone through so many disciplinary meetings. He (superintendent) helps in the progressive discipline.

Trustee Soaker also discussed the Boards support of the administrative team's decisions when working with employees by stating, "I cannot think of a time when the Board has gone against a recommendation for renewal or termination."

The Propositional Theory of expecting principals to fulfill instructional leadership responsibilities became clearly evident throughout the superintendent's interview. The following two statements specifically places the expectation of instructional leadership

squarely on the principals' shoulders. The principal states they have yearly evaluations, however he states academics is not part of the evaluation. Data gathered from Superintendent Smith's interview collaborates with the principal's statement:

I view my principals and hold them to be the instructional leaders, I don't pretend to be an instructional leader, I don't try to be an instructional leader, I try to be a supportive person. It was on the principals to kind of say this is what I think we need to do and my role was providing resources and providing the positive attitude. I see my role as they (principals) comes to me with a great idea, how do you do it, what do you need? What do you need I'll try to figure it out alright.

Promoting innovation is the second and final match that has both the superintendent and principal as a source. Mr. Smith supports innovation and data from his interview expresses his philosophy, "Teachers got a good idea on a new program, well we try to figure out how to fund it." Principal Carney's interview describes his support of innovation by explaining his support of the staff, "Sort of motivating them (teachers) and getting them to think outside the box and try something new. For me, with tenured teachers it is motivation, let's try something different."

Both the superintendent and Trustee, mentioned developing principal awareness of district goals and actions directed at goal accomplishment, but the principal did not mention this. Superintendent Smith gave examples how the principals were made aware of goals by stating in his interview:

We would provide reports to the board on specific goals. The principals knew the goals and the teachers were informed about the goals. We brought all of the administrators together and spent two days and came up with three goals, they were: we want the best academic program possible, we want our employees valued and well paid and we want our facilities to be second to none.

Trustee Soaker agreed with Mr. Smith on the awareness of district goals by the principals. In the interview Ms. Soaker mentioned, “I think that there are a lot of ways and ideas that the administration has to increase that kind of monitoring and measuring of student achievement. I think that it’s been a big step forward when we actually hired a curriculum director.”

The defined autonomy propositional theory of using standards for content and instruction had two sources, the superintendent and district documents. Mr. Smith stated, “We did a lot of work on curriculum, trying to make sure we have curriculum to start with and it was appropriate and within the state standards.” This was further backed by district documents that revealed, “A school wide curriculum will be developed, implemented and evaluated to ensure that students are provided with an opportunity for excellence in education.”

The superintendent tied hiring experienced teachers directly to autonomy. The document analysis tied this together by stating highly qualified staff, not necessarily experienced teachers, is a key to success. Superintendent Smith stated, “I have always believed that if you hire good administrators who in turn hire good teachers and provide them some guidance and them a great deal of autonomy that things would grow.” District Documents collaborated with Mr. Smith’s beliefs, “The educational program of the district will function successfully when highly qualified staff is employed.”

The final defined autonomy propositional theory, establishing teacher evaluations as a priority for teachers only had one source, Superintendent Smith, “I tried to create

with the principals meaningful evaluation tools, not just bulletin boards, appearance and relationships with kids, but did they actually meet the goals and objectives?”

As mentioned several times throughout this analysis, the number of matches is important, but the key to the impact of the superintendent on student success is the number of sources for each propositional theory. The more sources for each match, the more the evidence suggests that the theory is embedded throughout the district. The superintendent may have great research based ideas and philosophies, but if they are not evident throughout the district then the impact on students is minimal.

The pilot study data on defined autonomy suggests minimal evidence of Waters and Marzano's (2006) superintendent's responsibilities that statistically link district leadership to student success. Seven matches with 15 sources and no theory had a maximum of four sources. Only one match had three sources, five had two and one had one.

Goal Implementation Process

The researcher produced five interview questions with 29 propositional theories in the goal implementation process. Each match had the possibility of four sources for a total of 116.

The data for goals provided 12 matches, in which the superintendent was the source for six, indicating that the remaining six matches were independent of the superintendent. This researcher's believes that the low number of matches does not

automatically discount the superintendent's impact on student success, although the low number does create a more concerted effort to look further at the data.

Of the six superintendent matches, 15 sources of the possible 24 were evident. As mentioned earlier, all matches are statistically equal and up to this point have been irrelevant to the data. However, in order to qualitatively understand the relevancy of the sources of each match, the researcher finds it essential to discuss the specific propositional theories in order to paint a more vivid picture of the organizational approach of the superintendent and his impact on student success.

Resource allocation is the only propositional theory that matched all four sources. Data collected in the interview revealed Superintendent Smith described his role as a resource provider in the interview. Information from the other three sources also discussed this theory. Mr. Smith stated, "That's how I felt my role was, providing resources providing the positive attitude towards a great idea, if I can figure out a way to fund it." Principal Carney's observation of the district's resource disbursement process, "We have site based management and I have my own pot of money...it is rare that I talk to the superintendent about money." Trustee Soaker states, "I think that the administration has been pretty creative in making resources stretch as far as they can and effectively the board has not questioned those kinds of decisions on the recommendations." Lastly, data from the documents discusses how the district utilizes its funds:

The quality of learning programs is directly dependent on the provision of adequate funds and their effective and efficient management. The district will utilize all available sources of financing to insure that educational programs are adequately funded.

Monitoring student achievement through feedback from the instructional evaluation program was included in three sources. The superintendent states that the Board receives reports on a regular basis, and Trustee Soaker concurs by stating monitoring occurs more and more. The principal monitors student achievement as the propositional theories suggest, by providing feedback through the instructional evaluation program. Principal Carney states, “I carefully evaluate teachers instructional and assessment techniques.” More time could have been spent on this question, by asking probing response questions to further clarify certain assessments as required by state and federal mandates. Superintendent Smith gives his input on monitoring of goals, “

We have improved, we’ve gone from 36 percentile in 4th grade math to almost 80 percentile in fourth grade math and we’ve done some of that in some of the assessment things that we’ve brought in and the staff and the principals have bought into these assessment models the piece that we’ve really been missing is once you get it assessed how to you remediate.

Principal Carney discusses his method of monitoring student achievement through the instructional evaluation program.

I will pick a few teachers out and I will go through them with a fine tooth comb and I will go through how they are assessing and what they are assessing and grades and if students aren’t being successful in there we will sit down and have a talk about that, how you’re instructing, which becomes a piece of it to how you’re assessing and what you’re assessing. As individuals non tenured have two submitted evaluations per year and tenured have one and a part of that is part of their own instructional or assessment goals or curricular goals.

Trustee Soaker sums up the Board members’ feelings about achievement and assessment.

I think for achievement it’s primarily through the various assessment and I think there are a pretty good variety and I think that you know I think it’s done more and more effectively it terms of instruction you know the evaluation of instructions is pretty much done by the principals.

The next goal implementation match, establishing agreement with the Board on district goals, was based on the interview question, “How are expectations for non-negotiable goals conveyed and implemented?” Data collected from Superintendent Smith’s interview provides a glimpse into his philosophy of the relationship between the Board and goals.

It’s my theory that if you give the board the ownership to set their goals and say whatever you say in the context with this thing we’re going to roll with it because we work for you I think it draws them in and I think it makes them more connected.

Principal Carney provided information that gave insight to the Board and their commitment to the school and their knowledge of goals.

We have a great relationship with our board we try to involve them. I think the best thing to do is always communicate what you’re working on and what the goals are and why and why those are the goals so there’s not a big surprise. I think the board can probably at least most of them could probably tell you why I am doing the things I am doing because it is pretty important.

Trustee Soaker’s data differed on her interpretation of establishing agreement with the Board on district goals. Although the Board is aware of the goals, she believes there needs to be more communication. Ms. Soaker stated:

Okay I think it’s a little bit muddy because I think that the administration sets goals and I think somewhat haphazardly the board sets goals. I know there is a difference between operational goals and overall goals but I think sometime we could have a more effective dialog about how their goals and especially about what our goals are.

The goal implementation match of setting goals jointly developed by the Board and Administration garnered support from two sources, the superintendent and Trustee.

Mr. Smith is very specific on how he envisions the goal process, as evident from the data collected from his interview.

I went to work right away with the board on goals and that was one of the things that I started right away is what's on your mind. But I used the board as my guidance as apposed to me coming in and saying this is the way were going to it in a sense you work for me. Alright that came to work here because we had a board that was interested we had a board that was involved and wanted to be involved and so the way I approached it is and I did this on an annual basis for several years what's on your mind this year and we'd come up with five, six seven goals for that year. Sometimes the superintendent had goals the board had goals and they didn't always mesh but they were there and so we had so many goals that sometimes it was hard to get them all fulfilled they ranged from building on facilities to let do a study on our student drug use and see how that is lets improve our extra coat curricular program wide ranging things and we took those goals and lived by them like they were the ten commandments for that year.

Trustee Soaker, on the other hand, did not see the direct link between the superintendent and the Board. Her statements proposed a disconnect, "I think that's an area where we really need to improve yet for the distant past there has been no formalized goal setting."

Mentioned by two sources the match, reporting student achievement data to the Board on a regular basis, was supported by the superintendent and documents. Mr. Smith supports providing data to the board in his statements:

So we have opportunities to monitor those as well on a pretty regular basis at board meeting the principals provide information in their reports to the board as how we are doing in different testing models they you know probably as far as my overall monitoring of it once every two month I sit down with the curriculum director and say how we doing here?

District documents collaborated with Superintendent Smith's comments, "Ensure that the results of the Measured Progress CRT are reported to the Board, staff and community as required by the No Child Left Behind Act."

The pilot study data on the goal-implementation process suggests moderate evidence of Waters and Marzano's (2006) superintendents' responsibilities that statistically link district leadership to student success. Six out of the 12 matches attributed to the superintendent with 15 of 24 sources. The top three matches had 10 out of 12 sources, showing the strength of his area in the number of sources matched. Resource allocation had four, with the topic being very evident throughout the superintendent's interview. Monitoring student achievement through feedback from the instructional evaluation had three sources and in a sense was the strongest due to the narrative of the interviews. Lastly, the proposition establishing agreement with the Board on district goals had three sources. The other three matches for the goal implementation process had a combined 5 out of 12 possible sources.

Rival Explanation

The main rivals for this study are sources other than the superintendent that promote the theoretical propositions within the district. The Trustee could encourage the propositions, but without direct contract or authority over the teaching staff, there is no opportunity to implement them without the assistance of the superintendent and/or principal. The documents provide a good source for triangulation, but have no power without an authoritative figure. In this pilot

study the main rival is the principal. He has the knowledge, authority and the motivation to implement practices that would directly impact student success. In fact, research tells us these actions indeed describe the principals' duties. The principal's role as an instructional leader is needed and this study does not want to insinuate that the principal would be stepping outside of his realm by implementing Waters and Marzano (2006) propositional theories. Rather, this study is investigating the superintendent's role and in doing so must rule out the affects of the principal's influence.

To examine the effects of the principal while holding the superintendent constant, this researcher returned to the propositional matches and their sources. Through analyzing the data matches, the researcher found that either the principal was a source and not the superintendent, or vice versa.

Defined autonomy matches have the superintendent with a slight three-to-two edge and goals the principal with a four-to-three advantage. Overall each leader had six matches, independent of each other. As for sources, the principal shared only one match with the documents, the remaining five matches had no other sources. The superintendent's matches shared sources with the Trustee twice, and three times with documents, leaving only one match to have no other sources.

The six superintendent independent matches suggests these are, at best, personal philosophies of the leader or examples of his knowledge. Superintendent Smith, in the following comments, made it clear in his interview that the role of the instructional leader lays with the principal.

I view my principal and I hold them to be the instructional leaders I don't pretend to be an instructional leader I don't try to be an instructional leader, I try to be a supportive person as to what their ideas are so for the academic piece of that, so if there are three goals and I say okay how are we doing here how are the test scores how we going to get this done and it was on the principals to kind of say this is what I think we need to do how much is that going to take okay we need to update the language art curriculum textbooks how much money do you need, that's how I felt my role was, providing resources providing the positive attitude.

This traditional chain of command would suggest that the superintendent's independent matches did not trickle down to affect student success. The principal's six independent matches strengthen the notion of him being the sole instructional leader for his school. The following statement backed up this concept made in his interview.

From the superintendent, I think Corvallis is....we have pretty much site based management from top to bottom and by that I mean once you develop a good relationship and there is a clear understanding that you are doing your job and you're making improvements and you're making changes where you need superintendents give the principal a lot of autonomy, we have a huge amount of autonomy I think probably at times it might teeter on too much autonomy.

The six independent matches of data for each leader give strength to the rival explanation that student success could originate from the principal as well as the superintendent. Additionally, matches with shared sources also indicated the superintendent and principal to be equal with 13 matches each.

Conclusion

This researcher must be mindful of the exact intent of this pilot study when providing conclusions. A novice mistake would be providing a conclusion based on the manipulation of the pilot study's data interpreting the impact of the superintendent on

student success. The objective of this pilot study was to allow the researcher to test the substantive and methodological protocols that would withstand the four qualitative case study design tests: credibility, conformability, transferability and dependability. Thus, through a careful examination of the data collected, this researcher will pinpoint weaknesses in the pilot study and use this information to redesign the main project. This hybrid design, coupled with research experience, will provide the best opportunity to achieve a robust study with strong qualitative conclusions.

Yin (2003) provides the four design tests for a case study. All four of these tests will be applied to the data collected to reveal weaknesses and allow for adjustments to the main study design.

Construct validity provides the test of whether the research design measures the intended behaviors or social phenomenon. This pilot study used two of Yin's (2003) tactics to overcome this obstacle. First, pursue multiple sources of evidence. The design of the trial study required many different sources, interviews from three sources, observation and document analysis. The triangulation from these sources would provide strength to the case. Many unforeseen barriers prohibited the multiple data collection strategy. The first barrier included the inexperience of the researcher. The researcher designed the interviews to allow an open-ended discussion, but due to a lack of interviewing experience, the discussion tended to get off subject and present the opportunity for the interview to wander. Although the questions will be changed to be more specific toward academics and instruction, the researcher must keep the interview on track and guide the discussion towards purposeful dialogue.

The timing of the pilot study formed an insurmountable barrier. Conducting the study at the end of the school year provided little time for follow-up interviews and observations. No purposeful observation opportunities presented themselves due to very few scheduled academic meetings, typical of many schools, administrators and teachers spent time preparing for the end of the year with all of its demands. Once school was released for the summer, many of the key participants in this study became unavailable. This predicament completely disallowed the document analysis portion of the study, as the person responsible for this data had left for the summer. Two other events, one known, one not, occurred that strengthened this time barrier. The superintendent retired and one of the key participant's mother passed away. Lastly, the unavailability of the participants provided no opportunity for Yin's (2003) second tactic, draft review.

The pilot study cannot stand up to the demands of construct validity. The inexperience of the researcher along with time constraints created barriers that could not be overcome. This will not be looked upon as a failure, but rather a rich opportunity to learn and apply to the main study ensuring a better prospect for success.

For studies focused on establishing a causal relationship the researcher becomes concerned with internal validity or credibility. This trial study examined the superintendent's impact on student success, analyzing the possible link between the two. In determining if one action causes another, credibility is realized when all other threats are dealt with, rival explanations, both craft and real life must be addressed.

Craft rivals naturally occur in research and unless detected can cause the case to be invalid. Examples include investigator bias, subjective questions, inexperienced

interview techniques and chance circumstances. The real-life rival in this case is often referred to as a direct rival; it is a suspect other than the unit of analysis that accounts for the results.

The design strategy for this case study planned for both types of rivals. The advanced planning in the case design minimizes the chances for craft rivals to occur. And as Yin (2003) states, a researcher should pursue data collection concerning the rivals to the point where the rival seems to be the focus of the study.

As mentioned earlier, the direct rival for this study is the principal. The researcher collected the data and analyzed it to understand the effects of the principal's actions. This proved difficult as the theories sought were research-based principal characteristics. The researcher spent time and energy analyzing the data to conclude which source had an impact on student success. Although the outcome remained inconclusive, this valid process will serve its purpose in the main study.

External validity or transferability generalizes the findings of the study beyond the scope of the immediate project. Yin's (2003) tactic to enhance transferability incorporates theory into the research. The strength of this case lies in Waters and Marzano's (2006) robust quantitative meta-analysis that provided six superintendent responsibilities and 51 propositional theories. The complete data collecting-process entrenched in theory, and strengthened transferability. The intention of this study also defines the boundaries of external validity. This case study is only meant to be one of many studies on this topic, and collectively, these studies will examine the superintendent's impact on student success. As researchers repeat a scientific experiment

in a lab to strengthen its validity, this study will also be repeated as one of many qualitative experiments that will add to existing and future research.

The ability for the study to be repeated and arriving at the same conclusions means it has achieved reliability or dependability. This test suggests that if the case study were done again, would it have the same results. It must be noted that Yin (2003) emphasized that reliability is doing the same case study again, not replicating it. The design of the case study will determine the reliability, the more operational the procedure, the easier to replicate. This study, enhanced by the pilot study, will create a well-planned protocol that will have the ability to be repeated. The data collection with pattern-matching logic using statistically accepted theories will allow the researcher to base the analysis on a firm foundation.

Adjustments to the Case Study

The interview process must be tightened and although the researcher wants open-ended questions, he must be mindful to keep the interviewee on task and aware when the discussion digresses. To further achieve this goal, each question will be rewritten to specify the desired outcomes based on academics and instruction.

Due to the pilot study being conducted at the end of the school year, this caused many obstacles that could have been avoided if the timing of the project had been adjusted. The major problems created by the pilot study time period were: (1) purposeful observations were not available because none were scheduled, (2) essential documents could not be collected because key staff members were released for summer vacation,

and (3) the inability to conduct follow up interviews. Thus, the case study will be conducted when ample time is available to attend to all evidence and the lack of time does not create unforeseen barriers. This pilot study served its purpose, providing experience to the researcher and making obvious the structural deficiencies in the research design.

APPENDIX B

WATERS AND MARZANO'S (2006) PROPOSITIONAL THEORIES

WATERS AND MARZANO'S (2006) PROPOSITIONAL THEORIES

Superintendent Responsibility	Theoretical Propositions
Goal Implementation Process	• Develop a shared vision for the goal setting process • Setting goals jointly developed by the Board and Administration • Developing goals that are coherent and reflect attendant values which support involvement and quality in achievement rather than maintenance of the status quo • Communicating expectations to the central office staff and principals • Modeling understanding of instructional design • Establishing clear priorities among the district's instructional goals and objectives • Adopting instructional methodologies that facilitate the efficient delivery of the district's curriculum • Incorporating varied and diverse instructional methodologies that allow for a wide range of learning styles that exist in a multi-racial student population • Adopting 5-year non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction • Ensuring that a preferred instructional program is adopted and implemented • Establishing agreement with the Board on district goals • Establishing agreement with the Board on the type and nature of conflict in the district • Along with the Board, remaining aware, agreeing on the political climate of the school district • Establishing agreement with the Board on the nature of teaching/learning strategies to be used in the district • Providing professional development for Board members • Establishing agreement with the board on the effectiveness of board training • Using an instructional evaluation program that accurately monitors implementation of the district's instructional program • Monitoring student achievement through feedback from the instructional evaluation program • Using a system to manage instructional change • Annually evaluating principals • Reporting student achievement data to the board on a regular basis • Ensuring that the curricular needs of all student populations are met • Observing classrooms during school visits • Coordinating efforts of individuals and groups within the

	organization to increase reliability of the system, with adjustments by individuals to quickly respond to system failures • Adopting an instructional and resource management system supporting implementation of the district's instructional philosophy • Providing extensive teacher and principal staff development • Training all instructional staff in a common but flexible instructional model • Controlling resource allocation • Providing access to professional growth opportunities through the design of a master plan to coordinate in-service activities of the district •
Defined Autonomy	• Developing a shared vision • Discussing an understanding of defined autonomy • Using Standards for content and instruction • Committing the districts and schools to continuous improvement • Screening, interviewing and selecting teachers along with the principals • Being involved in the hiring process • Hiring experienced teachers • Rewarding good teaching • Terminating poor performances • Establishing teacher evaluations as a priority for teachers • Ensuring principals speak with teachers about the results of the evaluations • Establishing strong agreed upon principles/values which direct the actions of the people • Ensuring that schools have a clear mission focused on school performance • Ensuring the opportunity for all students to learn • Including socializing functions at district meetings • Maintaining high expectations for school performance • Expecting principals to fulfill instructional leadership responsibilities • Providing a stable yet improving and well balanced work force • Ensuring that schools are characterized by an orderly climate • Promoting innovation • Developing principal awareness of district goals and actions directed at goal accomplishment • Ensuring that homogeneous ability groupings within classrooms do not segregate students into racial or other inappropriate groups

APPENDIX C

SUPERINTENDENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

SUPERINTENDENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

The interview matrix is divided into three categories. The general information sets the tone and provides the opportunity for building a relationship. The following two categories are based on the theoretical propositions of the research questions. These categories will begin with asking the superintendent to answer/discuss the research questions. This will provide an opportunity to create a common vocabulary.

General Information

1. Describe to the researcher your background.
 - a. Total Years in Education?
 - b. Total Years as a Teacher?
 - c. Disciplines and grade levels taught?
 - d. Total Years as an administrator?
 - e. Administrative Assignments?
 - f. Highest level of education acquired?
2. Why did you choose education as a career?
3. Why did you choose to become an administrator?
4. What is your greatest challenge as an administrator?
5. Describe your role as an instructional leader?

Research Question No. 1

How does defined autonomy as an element of the superintendent's organizational approach affect student success?

The administrative team interview process will begin with a definition and discussion of defined autonomy. This will provide the administrator the opportunity to understand the boundaries of defined autonomy and set the tone for the questions.

There are three open ended questions with the list of Waters and Marzano's (2006) theoretical propositions. The interviewer will listen; matching the terms used by the administrator to the propositions and provide prompts to the administrator to ensure a deep, rich discussion.

Defined Autonomy Question No. 1

Now that you have a fundamental definition of defined autonomy, discuss, in your own terms, what this looks like in your school.

Waters and Marzano's (2006) Theoretical Propositions

- a. Developing a shared vision
- b. Ensuring that schools have a clear mission focused on school performance
- c. Discussing an understanding of defined autonomy

- d. Developing principal awareness of district goals and actions directed at goal accomplishment
- e. Ensuring the opportunity for all students to learn
- f. Ensuring that homogeneous ability groupings within classrooms do not segregate students into racial or other inappropriate groups
- g. Being involved in the hiring process
- h. Screening, interviewing and selecting teachers along with the principals
- i. Including socializing functions at district meetings

Defined Autonomy Question No. 2

How is your administrative team held accountable for all the responsibilities demanded by defined autonomy?

Waters and Marzano's (2006) Theoretical Propositions

- a. Using Standards for content and instruction
- b. Committing the districts and schools to continuous improvement
- c. Establishing teacher evaluations as a priority for teachers
- d. Ensuring principals speak with teachers about the results of the evaluations
- e. Establishing strong agreed upon principles/values which direct the actions of the people
- f. Maintaining high expectations for school performance
- g. Expecting principals to fulfill instructional leadership responsibilities

How do you support your administrative team?

Waters and Marzano's (2006) Theoretical Propositions

- a. Hiring experienced teachers
- b. Rewarding good teaching
- c. Terminating poor performances
- d. Providing a stable yet improving and well balanced work force
- e. Ensuring that schools are characterized by an orderly climate
- f. Promoting innovation

Research Question No. 2

How do goals as an element of the superintendent's organizational approach impact student success?

The superintendent interview process will start with a definition and discussion of Waters and Marzano's (2006) five goal responsibilities. This will provide the superintendent the opportunity to understand the boundaries of goal responsibilities and set the tone for the questions.

There are five open ended questions with the list of Waters and Marzano's (2006) theoretical propositions. The interviewer will listen; matching the terms used by the

superintendent to the propositions and provide prompts to the superintendent to ensure a deep, rich discussion.

Goals Question No. 1

Describe your goal setting process.

Waters and Marzano's (2006) Theoretical Propositions

- a. Develop a shared vision for the goal setting process
- b. Setting goals jointly developed by the Board and Administration
- c. Developing goals that are coherent and reflect attendant values which support involvement and quality in achievement rather than maintenance of the status quo
- d. Communicating expectations to the central office staff and principals

Goals Question No. 2

How are expectations for non-negotiable goals conveyed and implemented?

Waters and Marzano's (2006) Theoretical Propositions

- a. Modeling understanding of instructional design
- b. Establishing clear priorities among the district's instructional goals and objectives
- c. Adopting instructional methodologies that facilitate the efficient delivery of the district's curriculum
- d. Incorporating varied and diverse instructional methodologies that allow for a wide range of learning styles that exist in a multi-racial student population
- e. Adopting 5-year non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction
- f. Ensuring that a preferred instructional program is adopted and implemented

Goals Question No. 3

Describe the Board's relationship and/or support of district goals.

Waters and Marzano's (2006) Theoretical Propositions

- a. Establishing agreement with the Board on district goals
- b. Establishing agreement with the Board on the type and nature of conflict in the district
- c. Along with the Board, remaining situationally aware, agreeing on the political climate of the school district
- d. Establishing agreement with the Board on the nature of teaching/learning strategies to be used in the district
- e. Providing professional development for Board members
- f. Establishing agreement with the board on the effectiveness of board training

Goals Question No. 4

How are goals for achievement and instruction monitored?

Waters and Marzano's (2006) Theoretical Propositions

- a. Using an instructional evaluation program that accurately monitors implementation of the district's instructional program
- b. Monitoring student achievement through feedback from the instructional evaluation program
- c. Using a system to manage instructional change
- d. Annually evaluating principals
- e. Reporting student achievement data to the board on a regular basis
- f. Ensuring that the curricular needs of all student populations are met
- g. Observing classrooms during school visits
- h. Coordinating efforts of individuals and groups within the organization to increase reliability of the system, with adjustments by individuals to quickly respond to system failures

Goals Question No. 5

How are resources used to support goals for achievement and instruction?

Waters and Marzano's (2006) Theoretical Propositions

- a. Adopting an instructional and resource management system supporting implementation of the district's instructional philosophy
- b. Providing extensive teacher and principal staff development
- c. Training all instructional staff in a common but flexible instructional model
- d. Controlling resource allocation
- e. Providing access to professional growth opportunities through the design of a master plan to coordinate in-service activities of the district

APPENDIX D

ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

The interview matrix is divided into three categories. The general information sets the tone and provides the opportunity for building a relationship. The following two categories are based on the theoretical propositions of the research questions. These categories will begin with asking the superintendent to answer/discuss the research questions. This will provide an opportunity to create a common vocabulary.

General Information

1. Describe to the researcher your background.
 - a. Total Years in Education?
 - b. Total Years as a Teacher?
 - c. Disciplines and grade levels taught?
 - d. Total Years as an administrator?
 - e. Administrative Assignments?
 - f. Highest level of education acquired?
2. Why did you choose education as a career?
3. Why did you choose to become an administrator?
4. What is your greatest challenge as an administrator?
5. Describe your role as an instructional leader?

Research Question No. 1

How does defined autonomy as an element of the superintendent's organizational approach affect student success?

The administrative team interview process will begin with a definition and discussion of defined autonomy. This will provide the administrator the opportunity to understand the boundaries of defined autonomy and set the tone for the questions.

There are three open ended questions with the list of Waters and Marzano's (2006) theoretical propositions. The interviewer will listen; matching the terms used by the administrator to the propositions and provide prompts to the administrator to ensure a deep, rich discussion.

The common vocabulary as expressed through the superintendent's interview will be integrated into the interview.

Defined Autonomy Question No. 1

Now that you have a fundamental definition of defined autonomy, discuss, in your own terms, what this looks like in your school.

Waters and Marzano's (2006) Theoretical Propositions

- a. Developing a shared vision
- b. Ensuring that schools have a clear mission focused on school performance
- c. Discussing an understanding of defined autonomy

- d. Developing principal awareness of district goals and actions directed at goal accomplishment
- e. Ensuring the opportunity for all students to learn
- f. Ensuring that homogeneous ability groupings within classrooms do not segregate students into racial or other inappropriate groups
- g. Being involved in the hiring process
- h. Screening, interviewing and selecting teachers along with the principals
- i. Including socializing functions at district meetings
- j.

Defined Autonomy Question No. 2

How are you held accountable for all the responsibilities demanded of defined autonomy?

Waters and Marzano's (2006) Theoretical Propositions

- a. Using Standards for content and instruction
- b. Committing the districts and schools to continuous improvement
- c. Establishing teacher evaluations as a priority for teachers
- d. Ensuring principals speak with teachers about the results of the evaluations
- e. Establishing strong agreed upon principles/values which direct the actions of the people
- f. Maintaining high expectations for school performance
- g. Expecting principals to fulfill instructional leadership responsibilities

Defined Autonomy Question No. 3

How are you supported by the district?

Waters and Marzano's (2006) Theoretical Propositions

- a. Hiring experienced teachers
- b. Rewarding good teaching
- c. Terminating poor performances
- d. Providing a stable yet improving and well balanced work force
- e. Ensuring that schools are characterized by an orderly climate
- f. Promoting innovation

Research Question No. 2

How do goals as an element of the superintendent's organizational approach impact student success?

The administrative team interview process will start with a definition and discussion of Waters and Marzano's (2006) five goal responsibilities. This will provide the administrator the opportunity to understand the boundaries of goal responsibilities and set the tone for the questions.

There are five open ended questions with the list of Waters and Marzano's (2006) theoretical propositions. The interviewer will listen; matching the terms used by the

administrator to the propositions and provide prompts to the administrator to ensure a deep, rich discussion.

The common vocabulary as expressed through the superintendent's interview will be integrated into the interview.

Goals Question No. 1

Describe the district's goal setting process.

Waters and Marzano's (2006) Theoretical Propositions

- a. Develop a shared vision for the goal setting process
- b. Setting goals jointly developed by the Board and Administration
- c. Developing goals that are coherent and reflect attendant values which support involvement and quality in achievement rather than maintenance of the status quo
- d. Communicating expectations to the central office staff and principals

Goals Question No. 2

How are expectations for non-negotiable goals conveyed and implemented?

Waters and Marzano's (2006) Theoretical Propositions

- a. Modeling understanding of instructional design
- b. Establishing clear priorities among the district's instructional goals and objectives
- c. Adopting instructional methodologies that facilitate the efficient delivery of the district's curriculum
- d. Incorporating varied and diverse instructional methodologies that allow for a wide range of learning styles that exist in a multi-racial student population
- e. Adopting 5-year non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction
- f. Ensuring that a preferred instructional program is adopted and implemented

Goals Question No. 3

Describe the Board's relationship and/or support of district goals.

Waters and Marzano's (2006) Theoretical Propositions

- a. Establishing agreement with the Board on district goals
- b. Establishing agreement with the Board on the type and nature of conflict in the district
- c. Along with the Board, remaining situationally aware, agreeing on the political climate of the school district
- d. Establishing agreement with the Board on the nature of teaching/learning strategies to be used in the district
- e. Providing professional development for Board members
- f. Establishing agreement with the board on the effectiveness of board training

Goals Question No. 4

How are goals for achievement and instruction monitored?

Waters and Marzano's (2006) Theoretical Propositions

- a. Using an instructional evaluation program that accurately monitors implementation of the district's instructional program
- b. Monitoring student achievement through feedback from the instructional evaluation program
- c. Using a system to manage instructional change
- d. Annually evaluating principals
- e. Reporting student achievement data to the board on a regular basis
- f. Ensuring that the curricular needs of all student populations are met
- g. Observing classrooms during school visits
- h. Coordinating efforts of individuals and groups within the organization to increase reliability of the system, with adjustments by individuals to quickly respond to system failures

Goals Question No. 5

How are resources used to support goals for achievement and instruction?

Waters and Marzano's (2006) Theoretical Propositions

- a. Adopting an instructional and resource management system supporting implementation of the district's instructional philosophy
- b. Providing extensive teacher and principal staff development
- c. Training all instructional staff in a common but flexible instructional model
- d. Controlling resource allocation
- e. Providing access to professional growth opportunities through the design of a master plan to coordinate in-service activities of the district

APPENDIX E

SUPERINTENDENT OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

SUPERINTENDENT OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

Research Question No. 1

How does defined autonomy as an element of the superintendent's organizational approach affect student success?

It is the intent of the observations to look for key terms and statements based on defined autonomy as it pertains to the theoretical propositions that examine the research questions.

Vocabulary, statements and actions recorded in the superintendent's interview will be used as observation cues to indicate theoretical propositions.

Theoretical Propositions Superintendent's Vocabulary

- a. Developing a shared vision
- b. Discussing an understanding of defined autonomy
- c. Using Standards for content and instruction
- d. Committing the districts and schools to continuous improvement
- e. Screening, interviewing and selecting teachers along with the principals
- f. Being involved in the hiring process
- g. Hiring experienced teachers
- h. Rewarding good teaching
- i. Terminating poor performances
- j. Establishing teacher evaluations as a priority for teachers
- k. Ensuring principals speak with teachers about the results of the evaluations
- l. Establishing strong agreed upon principles/values which direct the actions of the
- m. people
- n. Ensuring that schools have a clear mission focused on school performance
- o. Ensuring the opportunity for all students to learn
- p. Including socializing functions at district meetings
- q. Maintaining high expectations for school performance
- r. Expecting principals to fulfill instructional leadership responsibilities
- s. Providing a stable yet improving and well balanced work force
- t. Ensuring that schools are characterized by an orderly climate
- u. Promoting innovation
- v. Developing principal awareness of district goals and actions directed at goal
- w. accomplishment
- x. Ensuring that homogeneous ability groupings within classrooms do not segregate
- y. students into racial or other inappropriate groups
- z. Observing classrooms during school visits
- aa. Coordinating efforts of individuals and groups within the organization to increase reliability of the system, with adjustments by individuals to quickly respond to system failures
- bb. Adopting an instructional and resource management system supporting implementation of the district's instructional philosophy
- cc. Providing extensive teacher and principal staff development

Research Question No. 2

How do goals as an element of the superintendent's organizational approach impact student success?

It is the intent of the observations to look for key terms and statements based on goals as it pertains to the theoretical propositions that examine the research questions.

Vocabulary, statements and actions recorded in the superintendent's interview will be used as observation cues to indicate theoretical propositions.

Theoretical Propositions

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Develop a shared vision for the goal setting process b. Setting goals jointly developed by the Board and Administration c. Developing goals that are coherent and reflect attendant values which support involvement and quality in achievement rather than maintenance of the status quo d. Communicating expectations to the central office staff and principals e. Modeling understanding of instructional design f. Establishing clear priorities among the district's instructional goals and objectives g. Adopting instructional methodologies that facilitate the efficient delivery of the district's curriculum h. Incorporating varied and diverse instructional methodologies that allow for a wide range of learning styles that exist in a multi-racial student population i. Adopting 5-year non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction j. Ensuring that a preferred instructional program is adopted and implemented k. Establishing agreement with the Board on district goals l. Establishing agreement with the Board on the type and nature of conflict in the district m. Along with the Board, remaining situationally aware, agreeing on the political climate of the school district n. Establishing agreement with the Board on the nature of teaching/learning strategies to be used in the district o. Providing professional development for Board members p. Establishing agreement with the board on the effectiveness of board training q. Using an instructional evaluation program that accurately monitors implementation of the district's instructional program r. Monitoring student achievement through feedback from the instructional evaluation program s. Using a system to manage instructional change t. Annually evaluating principals u. Reporting student achievement data to the board on a regular basis v. Ensuring that the curricular needs of all student populations are met w. Observing classrooms during school visits x. Coordinating efforts of individuals and groups within the organization to increase reliability of the system, with adjustments by individuals to quickly respond to system failures y. Adopting an instructional and resource management system supporting implementation of the district's instructional philosophy z. Providing extensive teacher and principal staff development aa. Training all instructional staff in a common but flexible instructional model bb. Controlling resource allocation cc. Providing access to professional growth opportunities through the design of a master plan to coordinate in-service activities of the district |
|---|

APPENDIX F

ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

Research Question No. 1

How does defined autonomy as an element of the superintendent's organizational approach impact student success?

It is the intent of the observations to look for key terms and statements based on defined autonomy as it pertains to the theoretical propositions that examine the research questions.

Vocabulary, statements and actions recorded in the administrative team's interview will be used as observation cues to indicate theoretical propositions.

Propositional Theories Administrative Team Vocabulary

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Developing a shared vision b. Discussing an understanding of defined autonomy c. Using Standards for content and instruction d. Committing the districts and schools to continuous improvement e. Screening and interviewing teachers along with the principal f. Being involved in the hiring process g. Hiring experienced teachers h. Rewarding good teaching i. Terminating poor performances j. Establishing teacher evaluations as a priority for teachers k. Ensuring principals speak with teachers about the results of the evaluations l. Establishing strong agreed upon principles/values which direct the actions of m. the people n. Ensuring that schools have a clear mission focused on school performance o. Ensuring the opportunity for all students to learn p. Including socializing functions at district meetings q. Maintaining high expectations for school performance r. Expecting principals to fulfill instructional leadership responsibilities s. Providing a stable yet improving and well balanced work force t. Ensuring that schools are characterized by an orderly climate u. Promoting innovation v. Developing principal awareness of district goals and actions directed at goal w. accomplishment x. Ensuring that homogeneous ability groupings within classrooms do not y. segregate students into racial or other inappropriate groups |
|--|

Research Question No. 2

How do goals as an element of the superintendent's organizational approach impact student success?

It is the intent of the observations to look for key terms and statements based on goals as it pertains to the theoretical propositions that examine the research questions.

Vocabulary, statements and actions recorded in the administrative team's interview will be used as observation cues to indicate theoretical propositions.

Theoretical Propositions

Administrative Team

Vocabulary

- | | |
|-----|---|
| a. | Develop a shared vision for the goal setting process |
| b. | Setting goals jointly developed by the Board and Administration |
| c. | Developing goals that are coherent and reflect attendant values which support involvement and quality in achievement rather than maintenance of the status quo |
| d. | Communicating expectations to the central office staff and principals |
| e. | Modeling understanding of instructional design |
| f. | Establishing clear priorities among the district's instructional goals and objectives |
| g. | Adopting instructional methodologies that facilitate the efficient delivery of the district's curriculum |
| h. | Incorporating varied and diverse instructional methodologies that allow for a wide range of learning styles that exist in a multi-racial student population |
| i. | Adopting 5-year non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction |
| j. | Ensuring that a preferred instructional program is adopted and implemented |
| k. | Establishing agreement with the Board on district goals |
| l. | Establishing agreement with the Board on the type and nature of conflict in the district |
| m. | Along with the Board, remaining situationally aware, agreeing on the political climate of the school district |
| n. | Establishing agreement with the Board on the nature of teaching/learning strategies to be used in the district |
| o. | Providing professional development for Board members |
| p. | Establishing agreement with the board on the effectiveness of board training |
| q. | Using an instructional evaluation program that accurately monitors implementation of the district's instructional program |
| r. | Monitoring student achievement through feedback from the instructional evaluation program |
| s. | Using a system to manage instructional change |
| t. | Annually evaluating principals |
| u. | Reporting student achievement data to the board on a regular basis |
| v. | Ensuring that the curricular needs of all student populations are met |
| w. | Observing classrooms during school visits |
| x. | Coordinating efforts of individuals and groups within the organization to increase reliability of the system, with adjustments by individuals to quickly respond to system failures |
| y. | Adopting an instructional and resource management system supporting implementation of the district's instructional philosophy |
| z. | Providing extensive teacher and principal staff development |
| aa. | Training all instructional staff in a common but flexible instructional model |
| bb. | Controlling resource allocation |
| cc. | Providing access to professional growth opportunities through the design of a master plan to coordinate in-service activities of the district |

APPENDIX G

SCHOOL BOARD TRUSTEE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

SCHOOL BOARD TRUSTEE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

The interview matrix is divided into three categories. The general information sets the tone and provides the opportunity for building a relationship. The following two categories are based on the theoretical propositions of the research questions. These categories will begin with asking the Trustee to answer/discuss the research questions. This will provide an opportunity to create a common vocabulary.

General Information

1. Describe to the researcher your educational background.
 - a. Total years serving on the Board?
 - b. Position on the Board?
 - c. Committees served on?
 - d. Total years as Trustee with current superintendent?
2. Why did you choose to become a Trustee?
3. What is your greatest challenge as a Trustee?
4. What is your educational philosophy?

Research Question No. 1

How does defined autonomy as an element of the superintendent's organizational approach impact student success?

The Trustee interview process will begin with a definition and discussion of defined autonomy. This will provide the Trustee the opportunity to understand the boundaries of defined autonomy and set the tone for the questions.

There are three open ended questions with the list of Waters and Marzano's (2006) theoretical propositions. The interviewer will listen; matching the terms used by the Trustee to the propositions and provide prompts to the Trustee to ensure a deep, rich discussion.

Defined Autonomy Question No. 1

Now that you have a fundamental definition of defined autonomy, discuss, in your own terms, what the relationship looks like between the district (superintendent) and each school (principals).

Waters and Marzano's (2006) Theoretical Propositions

- a. Developing a shared vision
- b. Ensuring that schools have a clear mission focused on school performance
- c. Discussing an understanding of defined autonomy
- d. Developing principal awareness of district goals and actions directed at goal accomplishment
- e. Ensuring the opportunity for all students to learn

- f. Ensuring that homogeneous ability groupings within classrooms do not segregate students into racial or other inappropriate groups
- g. Being involved in the hiring process
- h. Screening, interviewing and selecting teachers along with the principals
- i. Including socializing functions at district meeting

Defined Autonomy Question No. 2

How does the Board and superintendent hold the district and schools accountable for student success?

Waters and Marzano's (2006) Theoretical Propositions

- a. Using Standards for content and instruction
- b. Committing the districts and schools to continuous improvement
- c. Establishing teacher evaluations as a priority for teachers
- d. Ensuring principals speak with teachers about the results of the evaluations
- e. Establishing strong agreed upon principles/values which direct the actions of the people
- f. Maintaining high expectations for school performance
- g. Expecting principals to fulfill instructional leadership responsibilities

Defined Autonomy Question No. 3

How does the Board support the administrative team?

Waters and Marzano's (2006) Theoretical Propositions

- a. Hiring experienced teachers
- b. Rewarding good teaching
- c. Terminating poor performances
- d. Providing a stable yet improving and well balanced work force
- e. Ensuring that schools are characterized by an orderly climate
- f. Promoting innovation

Research Question No. 2

How do goals as an element of the superintendent's organizational approach affect student success?

The Trustee interview process will start with a definition and discussion of Waters and Marzano's (2006) five goal responsibilities. This will provide the Trustee the opportunity to understand the boundaries of goal responsibilities and set the tone for the questions.

There are five open ended questions with the list of Waters and Marzano's (2006) theoretical propositions. The interviewer will listen; matching the terms used by the Trustee to the propositions and provide prompts to the Trustee to ensure a deep, rich discussion.

Goals Question No. 1
Describe the District's goal setting process.

Waters and Marzano's (2006) Theoretical Propositions

- a. Develop a shared vision for the goal setting process
- b. Setting goals jointly developed by the Board and Administration
- c. Developing goals that are coherent and reflect attendant values which support involvement and quality in achievement rather than maintenance of the status quo
- d. Communicating expectations to the central office staff and principals

Goals Question No. 2
How are expectations for non-negotiable goals conveyed and implemented?

Waters and Marzano's (2006) Theoretical Propositions

- a. Modeling understanding of instructional design
- b. Establishing clear priorities among the district's instructional goals and objectives
- c. Adopting instructional methodologies that facilitate the efficient delivery of the district's curriculum
- d. Incorporating varied and diverse instructional methodologies that allow for a wide range of learning styles that exist in a multi-racial student population
- e. Adopting 5-year non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction
- f. Ensuring that a preferred instructional program is adopted and implemented

Goals Question No. 3
Describe the Board's relationship and/or support of district goals.

Waters and Marzano's (2006) Theoretical Propositions

- a. Establishing agreement with the Board on district goals
- b. Establishing agreement with the Board on the type and nature of conflict in the district
- c. Along with the Board, remaining situationally aware, agreeing on the political climate of the school district
- d. Establishing agreement with the Board on the nature of teaching/learning strategies to be used in the district
- e. Providing professional development for Board members
- f. Establishing agreement with the board on the effectiveness of board training

Goals Question No. 4
How are goals for achievement and instruction monitored?

Waters and Marzano's (2006) Theoretical Propositions

- a. Using an instructional evaluation program that accurately monitors implementation of the district's instructional program

- b. Monitoring student achievement through feedback from the instructional evaluation program
- c. Using a system to manage instructional change
- d. Annually evaluating principals
- e. Reporting student achievement data to the board on a regular basis
- f. Ensuring that the curricular needs of all student populations are met
- g. Observing classrooms during school visits
- h. Coordinating efforts of individuals and groups within the organization to increase reliability of the system, with adjustments by individuals to quickly respond to system failures

Goals Question No. 5

How are resources used to support goals for achievement and instruction?

Waters and Marzano's (2006) Theoretical Propositions

- a. Adopting an instructional and resource management system supporting implementation of the district's instructional philosophy
- b. Providing extensive teacher and principal staff development
- c. Training all instructional staff in a common but flexible instructional model
- d. Controlling resource allocation
- e. Providing access to professional growth opportunities through the design of a master plan to coordinate in-service activities of the district

APPENDIX H

DISTRICT INTENT TO PARTICIPATE

DISTRICT INTENT TO PARTICIPATE

I have been fully informed of the dissertation research project being conducted by Montana State University, Bozeman Doctoral student Kent Kultgen, under the direction of Dr. Joanne Erickson.

_____ My District will participate in the research project.

_____ My District will not participate in the research project.

District Name

Printed Name

Title

Signature

Date

APPENDIX I

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

The following is a description of the dissertation research project being conducted by Kent Kultgen (777-5481 ext. 138; kultgen@montana.com), under the direction of Dr. Joanne Erickson (994-2290 or jle@montana.edu) from Montana State University, Bozeman.

The purpose of this study is to examine the organizational approach of a superintendent. In particular the research will strive to identify instructional characteristics and match them to Waters and Marzano (2006) propositional theories of goal implementation and defined autonomy.

The results of the study will be used to fulfill the dissertation requirements for the Doctorate in Education. Subsequent publications and/or presentations may result from the work.

This research project, through observations, interviews, and document analysis seeks to analyze the organizational approach of the superintendent to determine if Waters and Marzano's (2006) propositional theories on the goal implementation process and defined autonomy impact student success. The interviews will be conducted in person and consist of eight open ended questions. Observations will occur during your daily interactions with staff and at scheduled meetings. Additional data will be collected through informal discussions and general observations of the daily operations of the district.

Confidentiality is of the highest priority. The District will not be identified, same with the superintendent. Names of the schools, principals and other administrative team members will be held in strictest confidence. The names of all participants will only be known to the researcher and dissertation chairperson. When mentioned in the dissertation all identifiable information will be replaced with pseudonyms.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time, without prejudice. You also have the right to clarify any responses and to refuse to answer any of the questions.

Your signature indicates you have been informed of the purpose and nature of the study and subsequently agree to participate.

Printed Name

Signature

Date

APPENDIX J

INTRODUCTION TO SUPERINTENDENT

INTRODUCTION TO SUPERINTENDENT

December 31, 2008

Superintendent
School District
City, Montana

Dear Superintendent:

Allow me to introduce myself, my name is Kent Kultgen and am a doctoral student at Montana State University, Bozeman completing a dissertation in the Educational Leadership Department. I am also a practicing superintendent at Stevensville Public Schools, Stevensville, Montana. This is my 18th year in education with the last seven in administration. I received my undergraduate degree at Northern Montana College and my masters in Educational Leadership from MSU Bozeman.

This research project, through observations, interviews, and document analysis seeks to analyze the organizational approach of the superintendent to determine if Waters and Marzano's (2006) propositional theories on the goal implementation process and defined autonomy impact student success. The interviews will be conducted in person and consist of eight open ended questions. Observations will occur during your daily interactions with staff and at scheduled meetings. Additional data will be collected through informal discussions and general observations of the daily operations of the district.

Enclosed you will find the "Intent to Participate" form. This form provides approval for your District to participate in this study. In agreeing to participate, this form also gives consent to contact your administrative team for participation, who will be chosen for participation at a later date.

Also enclosed is the "Informed Consent" form. By signing this form it indicates you have been informed of the purpose and nature of the study and subsequently agree to participate.

A pre-addressed, stamped envelope is enclosed for your convenience to return the "Intent to Participate" and "Informed Consent" forms. Please return the form no later than December 1, 2009. Upon receiving the form giving participation to conduct the research project, I will be contacting you by phone to schedule the first three days of your interview and observation. You and your administrative team can be assured of complete confidentiality.

Thank you for considering this valuable research. If you have any questions about this request or the research project, please contact me at 777-5481 ext. 138 or at kultgen@montana.com. If you prefer, you may contact my Program Advisor, Dr. Joanne Erickson at 994-2290 or jle@montana.edu. I look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,
Kent Kultgen
Doctoral Candidate

Dr. Joanne Erickson
Advisor

APPENDIX K

INTRODUCTION TO ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM MEMBER

INTRODUCTION TO ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM MEMBER

December 31, 2008

Administrative Team Member
School District
City, Montana

Dear Administrator:

Allow me to introduce myself, my name is Kent Kultgen and am a doctoral student at Montana State University, Bozeman completing a dissertation in the Educational Leadership Department. I am also a practicing superintendent at Stevensville Public Schools, Stevensville, Montana. This is my 18th year in education with the last seven in administration. I received my undergraduate degree at Northern Montana College and my masters in Educational Leadership from MSU Bozeman.

I have received permission from your superintendent to conduct a qualitative case study at your district. The preliminary title of the dissertation is "The Superintendent's Organizational Approach to Goals and Defined Autonomy as it Impacts Student Success". The basis for this research is to interview and observe the superintendent and specific members of the administrative team to identify instructional leadership characteristics in the daily operations of the district and schools.

This research project, through observations, interviews, and document analysis seeks to analyze the organizational approach of the superintendent to determine if Waters and Marzano's (2006) propositional theories on the goal implementation process and defined autonomy impact student success. The interviews will be conducted in person and consist of eight open ended questions. Observations will occur during your daily interactions with staff and at scheduled meetings. Additional data will be collected through informal discussions and general observations of the daily operations of the district.

Enclosed is the "Informed Consent" form. By signing this form it indicates you have been informed of the purpose and nature of the study and subsequently agree to participate.

A pre-addressed, stamped envelope is also enclosed for your convenience to return the "Informed Consent" form. Please return the form no later than January 1, 2009. Upon receiving the form giving participation to conduct the research project, I will be contacting you by phone to schedule your interview and possible times for observation. You and your administrative team can be assured of complete confidentiality.

Thank you for considering this valuable research. If you have any questions about this request or the research project, please contact me at 777-5481 ext. 138 or at kultgen@montana.com. If you prefer, you may contact my Program Advisor, Dr. Joanne Erickson at 994-2290 or jle@montana.edu. I look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,
Kent Kultgen
Doctoral Candidate

Dr. Joanne Erickson
Advisor