The Relationship between Boards of Education and the Superintendents

in Michigan's Upper Peninsula: The Superintendents' Perspectives

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Abstract

Timothy D. Hall. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BOARDS OF

EDUCATION AND THE SUPERINTENDENTS IN MICHIGAN'S UPPER

PENINSULA: THE SUPERINTENDENTS' PERSPECTIVES. (Under the direction of

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The relationship between a board of education and superintendent is one of the most

critical in a school district. Research has shown that a positive working relationship

between a school board and superintendent has positive effects on a school district. This

study examined the perceived relationships between the superintendents of the school

districts in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and their boards of education, from the

perspective of the superintendents. School districts in Michigan's Upper Peninsula face

declining enrollments and budgetary shortfalls. The intent of the study was to determine

if the superintendents' perception of their relationships with their boards of education

changed as a result of declining enrollments, budgetary shortfalls and the

superintendents' longevity. The study presents pertinent demographic information for the

superintendents and the districts they serve. Additionally, statistical analysis revealed five

significant relationships related to 21 null hypotheses.

Dedication

The completion of this dissertation marks the culmination of a personal odyssey that lasted more than 10 years. Joining me, albeit without much choice, on this odyssey were my wife and children. To my children Brooke, David, and Tim, I cannot put into words how your support and positive attitudes have given me strength and made me even more proud to be your dad. There were many times I was too busy working to join in the family fun, yet each of you always encouraged me to finish the project. Each of you is a precious gift and I thank you for your sacrifices. To my wife Joan, your unwavering support kept me going during the times I felt overwhelmed. I could not have completed this journey without you by my side.

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Much appreciation goes to Dr. Samuel Smith and Dr. Mathew Towles. They were valuable members of my committee, and I appreciated their input on this project.

The dissertation process is one that requires patience and commitment. Fortunately for me, the chairwoman of my dissertation committee Dr. Ellen Lowrie Black, had abundant resources of each. I extend my most heartfelt appreciation for her assistance and encouragement in guiding me through this project. Indeed, I could not complete this project without quoting Dr. Black just one more time: "It is what it is."

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Chapter One: Introduction to the Study

The relationship between the board of education and a superintendent of schools is critical to all stakeholders in a school district – the board, the superintendent, the community, and perhaps most importantly, to the students. This relationship may be influenced by the pressure put on school leaders during times of financial challenges. Budgetary shortfalls can lead to increased class sizes and reduced teaching staff. Students may spend increased time on buses as routes are reduced, and computer technology becomes outdated as districts delay purchases of new equipment. In severe instances of financial strife, neighboring districts consolidate schools. The list of visible difficulties can be extensive, and less obvious resource shortages also affect relationships critical to continued function of the district. The focus of this study was: What happens to the relationship between boards and superintendants in districts when resources are scarce?

One important factor in defining the relationship as successful is agreement between the board and the superintendent on the roles that each should play in guiding the district. Petersen and Fusarelli (2001) used a simple comment to make a powerful statement on the need for a strong working relationship between a board and superintendent when they wrote, "A superintendent and a board can't sing two different tunes and then expect the public to hum along" (p. 3).

Never before in our country has the need for leadership in our schools been greater. Increasing federal and state requirements coupled with declining resources create additional pressure on those who work to educate our youth. Carr commented on the arduousness of the superintendency. She noted, "Forget Enron, WorldCom and Arthur

Anderson. Forget the war on terrorism and the worst economy since the Great Depression. The toughest job in America today is school leadership, and school board members and administrators are feeling the heat" (2003).

Those selected to serve as school superintendents report to boards and communities that have increasingly higher expectations. The public often calls for significant structural change in its schools, which can lead to tension between the community and the superintendent. Bjork, Bell and Gurley (2002) commenting on this tension wrote:

> During the past several decades, the perception that education had failed the nation's children and jeopardized America's well being has heightened public concern and launched what is arguably the most comprehensive, intensive, and sustained effort to improve public education in America's history. National commission and task force reports released through the reform era (1983-2002) increased expectations for student performance and called for fundamentally changing classroom instruction, how schools are structured and led, as well as the composition and characteristics of school and district governance (p. 294).

Communities, school boards and other district stakeholders seek qualified, motivated and committed leaders who can effect change and improve student achievement. Pressure to increase student achievement is immense. Glass, Bjork & Brunner (2000) commented on this pressure to when they wrote, "Starting in 1983, with the publication *A Nation at Risk*, America's schools and educators came under fire from the public, media, and politicians to improve student performance" (p. 1). They noted that states have responded to the pressure by creating and implementing academic

performance standards including "high-stakes" testing. They wrote, "These 'do or die' assessment efforts have, in the 1990's, changed the professional lives of many superintendents and principals" (p. 1).

Well-defined roles for the superintendent and board of education are critical to the development of a strong working relationship. When roles are not clearly defined, tensions can increase. Carr (2003) noted, "Privately and in surveys, superintendents often express dismay at some school boards' tendencies to micromanage, while board members voice concerns regarding the lack of communication and conflict over roles and responsibilities."

Unfortunately, even if boards and superintendents agree upon their respective roles and perform their duties, significant problems often arise from both external and internal sources. These problems can affect the relationship between the superintendent and the board of education. Some board members may be inclined to offer the superintendent "advice" and seek to increase involvement in the day-to-day matters of the district. Ultimately, these problems could affect the ability of the superintendent to lead the district.

Context

The Upper Peninsula of Michigan is large geographically, covering approximately 16,500 square miles, nearly one-third of the state's total land mass. There is not a major industrial/manufacturing center in the Upper Peninsula; tourism, logging and mining are the main industries in the region. The region is sparsely populated, with an estimated 312,153 people as of July, 2005 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005). According to 2005 Census data, the total population in the Upper Peninsula declined by nearly two percent from

2000 to 2005. Census figures show the region's number of school-age children decreased dramatically during that time span. Population figures compiled from the state's census information revealed that the population of children ages 5-9 decreased 12.88%. The population of children ages 10-14 decreased 12.05%, while the population of 15-19 year-olds dropped 6.4%. As a result of the method by which Michigan funds its public schools, the decline in the number of school-age children reduced the amount of money received by school districts in the region.

In 1994, Michigan voters supported an initiative to overhaul the process the state uses to fund its schools. The measure, Proposal A, changed the process by which local districts received financial resources for operations from a local tax-based system based on local housing values to a per-student dollar amount. A significant feature of the proposal increased the state's sales tax from four percent to six percent. The additional revenue generated by the tax increase was earmarked for education. Accordingly, when enrollment declines school districts receive less money from the state. A more detailed analysis of Proposal A and Michigan's funding of public schools are presented in a subsequent chapter of this document.

As enrollments decline, districts in the Upper Peninsula receive fewer dollars from the state to operate and educate the students. For example, many of the school districts in the region cover several hundred square miles, and transportation costs can be significant. When enrollments decrease, districts receive less money from the state, and as a result have less money to earmark for the classrooms. However, they are still required to spend significant resources on transporting the children. Though transportation costs are not a focus of this paper, they do contribute to the overall

financial stress a district must bear, and as such can influence decisions and recommendations of superintendents.

Although the superintendent is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the district, including budget preparation and management, many factors remain beyond the superintendent's control. Transportation is just one of the myriad cost issues that superintendents cannot directly control. Michigan's Upper Peninsula faces extreme winters, and utility costs can be significant. Health care and retirement costs continue to rise and, along with wages, are major issues in contract negotiations. In 2007, Michigan's economy worsened and contributed to the development of the highest unemployment rate in the nation at 7.6 % (United States Department of Labor). Declining birth rates contribute to reduced enrollments, which translates into reduced funding from the state. Individually, these issues can create problems for a superintendent; collectively they can handicap even the most effective superintendent. School leaders in the Upper Peninsula must deal with these issues, and their decisions and recommendations can impact the relationship with the school board.

Statement of the Problem

In 1994, Michigan voters passed a referendum that changed the way the state collects and allocates money for school districts. Prior to the vote, the state collected taxes based on property values, and this money was disbursed to local school districts. Higher property values translated into more money for education for the students in that area. Less developed, less valuable properties resulted in fewer dollars for local school districts in those areas of the state. These inequities, in addition to the push to reduce taxes, contributed to the passage of Proposal A. The referendum raised the state's sales

tax from four percent to six percent. The additional sales tax revenues supplanted a portion of property taxes and were designated for schools. Instead of providing money to districts based on tax values, Michigan began funding its public schools using a formula on a per pupil basis.

Annually, the state legislature sets a level of funding per child as part of the budget process; however recent revenue shortfalls have forced the state to pro-rate payments and send districts less money than the districts had been led to expect. In some cases, this reduction in funding occurred in the middle of the budget year. This caused severe problems in some districts as the budget approved by the board of education was based on the amount the state set at the start of the budget cycle.

As a result of declining student enrollments and state budgetary difficulties in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, school districts receive less funding from the state and must educate their students with diminishing resources. District superintendents and boards of education are faced with difficult decisions regarding services and programs they can provide to students. Differing points of view and perspectives can lead to discord between board members and the superintendent. This discord can lead to a strained relationship between boards and superintendents.

The overall problem for this study was to determine the effect that the factors of budgetary shortfalls, declining enrollments, and the superintendents' longevity had on the superintendent's perceived relationship with the board of education. Three research questions were the focus of the study. Twenty-one null hypotheses were developed from the survey questions. The null hypotheses were accepted or rejected based on cross tabulation analysis of the responses provided by the superintendents.

Research Questions

1. Do declining enrollments have an effect on the superintendents' perceptions of their relationships with their boards of education?

2. Do budgetary shortfalls have an effect on the superintendents' perceptions of their relationships with their boards of education?

3. Does the superintendents' longevity, when controlled for declining enrollments and budgetary shortfalls, have an effect on the superintendents' perceptions of their relationships with their boards of education?

Null Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of whether they and their Boards of Education share a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and declining enrollments.

2. There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of whether they and their Boards of Education share a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and budgetary shortfalls.

3. There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of whether they and their Boards of Education share a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and the superintendents' longevity.

4. There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of increased involvement by the Boards of Education in the day-to-day activities of the district, and declining enrollments.

5. There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of increased involvement by the Boards of Education in the day-to-day activities of the district, and budgetary shortfalls.

6. There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of increased involvement by the Boards of Education in the day-to-day activities of the district, and the superintendents' longevity.

7. There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of negative changes in the relationships between themselves and their Boards of Education, and declining enrollments.

8. There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of negative changes in the relationships between themselves and their Boards of Education, and budgetary shortfalls.

9. There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of negative changes in the relationships between themselves and their Boards of Education, and the superintendents' longevity.

10. There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of their expected longevity and declining enrollments.

11. There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of their expected longevity and budgetary shortfalls.

12. There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of their expected longevity and the superintendents' longevity to date.

13. There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of their effectiveness and declining enrollments.

14. There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of their effectiveness and budgetary shortfalls.

15. There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of their effectiveness and the superintendents' longevity.

16. There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of their collaborative working relationships with their Boards of Education, and declining enrollments.

17. There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of their collaborative working relationships with their Boards of Education, and budgetary shortfalls.

18. There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of their collaborative working relationships with their Boards of Education, and the superintendents' longevity.

19. There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of their working relationships with their Boards of Education, and declining enrollments.

20. There is no significant relationship between the superintendents'
perceptions of their working relationships with their Boards of Education,
and budgetary shortfalls.

21. There is no significant relationship between the superintendents'
perceptions of their working relationships with their Boards of Education,
and the superintendents' longevity.

Professional Significance of the Problem

The school board-superintendent relationship is the most vital relationship in the district. A sound, professional relationship allows the superintendent to lead the district knowing that the board is generally supportive and willing to discuss different options for the district, even when faced with divergent opinions. Geisick (2006) noted:

The unique relationship between the full-time professional school superintendent and the volunteer, part-time, untrained school board creates challenges in the governance partnership for school districts across the nation. The superintendent-school board relationship is at the core of the governance team and essential to the success of the superintendency, and ultimately the building blocks for a school system which supports high academic achievement for all students (p. vi).

Financial woes can cause severe stress in school districts. Schools in Michigan's Upper Peninsula face turbulent times as a result of declining enrollments and budgetary shortfalls. Districts and school boards struggle to maintain programs and increase academic achievement mandated by higher state and federal standards and higher expectations of the public. The budget crisis in Michigan's schools, and in particular in

the Upper Peninsula, will not end soon. The relationship between a superintendent and board of education can suffer as a result of the stress.

Overview of the Methodology

A web-based survey, utilizing Schoolwires software, was administered to superintendents of K-12 public school districts located in Michigan's Upper Peninsula over a four-week period during fall of 2007. No study of this nature had been previously conducted in the region. A web-based survey was chosen due to the ease and the affordability of delivery. Ary et al. (2006) discussed the advantages and disadvantages of web-based surveys. The authors noted that web-based surveys reach respondents over a wide geographic area and allow the respondents to complete the survey at a convenient time. There can also be time and cost savings associated with web-based surveys. With regard to the disadvantages of web-based surveys Ary et al. (2006) wrote, "An obvious limitation of Internet surveys is that samples are restricted to those with access to the technology" (p. 415). Another disadvantage of web-based surveys is that response rates are lower than those from other forms of surveys. Cook et al. (2000) conducted a meta-analysis of 68 web-based surveys and found a mean response rate of 39.6 percent.

The survey presented in this study is a census of intangibles. A census of intangibles measures attitudes, opinions and values. Ary et al. noted, "A survey that covers the entire population of interest is referred to a census …" (p. 402). This study sought feedback from all superintendents of K-12 school districts in the region regarding their attitudes about their relationship with the board of education.

The survey was developed and administered using the Schoolwires software package used by the author's school district for a variety of tasks including district,

building, and individual teacher web pages. The package also includes several different modules, including a survey module. The software has the capability to export the data in SPSS format for analysis.

The superintendents in the Upper Peninsula were sent an e-mail message inviting them to participate in the study. The e-mail message included a link to a URL (Uniform Resource Locator – the address of a World Wide Web page) that led superintendents to the survey. A thorough discussion of the methodology is presented in Chapter Three.

Definition of Key Terms

School Board – Board of Education: The *Michigan Revised School Code* defines a school board as the governing body of a local school district.

Superintendent: The chief administrator of a local school district.

Public School: The *Michigan Revised School Code* defines a public school as an "elementary or secondary educational entity or agency that is established under this act, has as its primary mission the teaching and learning of academic and vocational-technical skills and knowledge, and is operated by a school district."

Upper Peninsula: The northern of the two major landmasses that comprise the state of Michigan. The region is bordered on the North by Lake Superior, on the South by Wisconsin, Lake Huron and Lake Michigan, on the East by the St. Mary's river, and on the West by Wisconsin.

Fund Equity: An amount of money in a district's general fund not spent; the money is saved. The Michigan School Business Officials organization recommends districts maintain a fund balance equal to 15% of their general fund expenditures.

Proposal A: The Michigan Department of Treasury's 2002 report *School finance reform in Michigan Proposal A: A Retrospective,* described Proposal A as ballot initiative approved by Michigan voters in 1994, with four main goals: 1) Reduce property taxes; 2) Improve school funding equity; 3) Implement various reforms to improve the quality of education; and 4) Redefine state and local government relations.

Summary of Chapter One

The chapter discussed the importance of the relationship between superintendents and boards of education and presented the research question considered for the study. The overall problem for this study was to determine the effect that the factors of budgetary shortfalls, declining enrollments, and the superintendents' longevity had on the superintendent's perceived relationship with the board of education. The chapter presented three research questions and 21 null hypotheses investigated for the study.

A web-based survey was administered to glean information from current superintendents in K-12 districts in the Upper Peninsula to ascertain their views on their relationship with their respective boards of education, and whether the relationship has changed as a result of the financial difficulties experienced by the districts. In addition the superintendents' longevity was considered in terms of declining enrollments and budgetary shortfalls. Superintendents also provided comments to open-ended questions. The comments offer readers of the research with additional insights from the superintendents' perspective. The chapter discussed the methodology used to conduct the web-based survey utilizing the Schoolwires software package and discussed advantages and disadvantages of conducting web-based surveys.

    Subsequent chapters review the relevant literature, report specific findings and analyses of the data, and discuss conclusions and inferences from the findings.

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

The literature is replete with commentary and research on the importance of the relationship between superintendents and school boards. This chapter will review the literature on the topic beginning with the history of the relationship between superintendents and board of educations. Additionally, the section presents a discussion of other important issues including leadership, school boards and the relationship between the boards of education and superintendents. Finally, there is a section discussing the process by which Michigan funds its public school districts.

Superintendent – Board Relationship: A Historical Perspective

The discussion on the relationship between boards of education and superintendents is not a recent phenomenon. In 1992, McCurdy and Hymes noted, "As long ago as 1958, political scientist Neal Gross called for more research into the roles of boards and superintendents because their relationship 'is at the heart of any educational problem and its solution'" (p. 4). In their research, McCurdy and Hymes (1992) found, "92 percent of the superintendents said conflicts between the superintendents and boards arise from confusion over proper roles, and only 8 percent disagreed with that statement" (p. 6).

In their study on the American School Superintendency, Glass, Bjork & Brunner (2000) commented on the importance of the relationship between boards of education and superintendents when they wrote, "Historically, the partnership between superintendents and school boards has been a subject of discussion and substantial research. The function

of the board, and its relationship with the superintendent, has been important in the development of the superintendency" (p. 2).

Massachusetts passed the nation's first law authorizing local communities to elect committees to oversee the schools in 1789. McCurdy and Hymes (1992) noted, "This bit of history is important to the question of board-superintendent roles because it underscores the tradition of citizen control of schools in America" (p. 7).

Near the middle of the 19th century, it became evident to many that public education needed more than just the leadership of interested citizens. The next step in the evolution of school leadership was to create the position of a superintendent of schools. Glass, Bjork and Brunner (2000) noted, "By 1860, 27 cities with school districts had created a position called the *superintendency*" (p. 1). Initially, the superintendent was not granted significant authority, but the presence of the superintendent "served to cloud the board's authority" (McCurdy and Hymes, 1992, p. 7).

Accusations of corruption, with respect to the hiring practices of school boards, contributed to the calls for administrators to oversee school districts and to extricate the districts from local party politics. McCurdy and Hymes (1992) noted that William Bruce, who created the *School Board Journal* in 1891, agreed with the notion that the superintendent should be considered the educational expert in the district, but felt the board's responsibility should include administrative functions as well as legislative. Conversely, Joseph Rice, a leading education reformer of the time, urged school boards to place more power in the hands of the superintendents. McCurdy and Hymes (1992) commented that Rice wanted school boards to give the superintendent, "… a sufficient

amount of independent power to enable him to improve the schools in any manner he see

fit" (p. 8).

McCurdy and Hymes (1992) commenting on the issue of power and the roles of

the board and superintendent wrote:

> The lesson to be learned from this slice of history is that present-day board
>
> members and superintendents are hardly justified in blaming each other when
>
> sincere efforts to achieve clear roles prove difficult. Even their ancestors who
>
> built the institution couldn't find the formula (p. 9).

Initially, the role of the superintendent was expected to be more schoolmaster

than administrator. Glass, Bjork and Brunner (2000) noted, "… the earliest

superintendents were head teachers and clerks. By the end of the 19th century, most

superintendents in the cities had shed this role of clerical supervisor of students and

teachers to become master teachers and educators" (p. 2). They noted that several early

superintendents who also wrote on the topic of the superintendency, Ellwood Cubberly,

George Strayer and Frank Spaulding, "… championed the cause of the common school,

and advocated an executive type of leadership" (p. 2).

During the late 19th century and into the 20th century, superintendents assumed

more direct day-to-day control of the district. This transition was in sync with what was

occurring in the country at the time: a move from a farm-based, rural culture to a

manufacturing-based economy. As this transition occurred, superintendents and districts

adopted the principles of scientific management promulgated by Frederick Taylor,

focusing on practices to manage the business of the district more efficiently and increase

production levels. This trend continued and by the late 1920's, "… larger schools slowly

moved towards a more corporate model of management and governance. The board became more of a policy-making body that met periodically, while day-to-day decisions were made by the superintendent" (Glass, Bjork and Brunner, 2000, p. 3). This trend continued during the middle of the century; superintendents became more assertive as they grew more comfortable working with school boards. Eventually, districts moved to centralize more and more of the district's operations. While this was consistent with the principles of scientific management, some non-superintendent educators grew concerned that the model was not the most beneficial for students. Glass, Bjork and Brunner (2000) noted, "Nonetheless, the drive for hierarchical bureaucracy and scientific management continued mostly unabated until the late 1980's, when the role of the superintendent as 'expert manager' came under attack by school reformers" (p. 3).

The social unrest prevalent in the nation in the 1960's also affected educational institutions. The Civil Rights movement prompted changes in the makeup of local school boards. Prior school boards were predominantly comprised of businessmen; however through the 1960's, 1970's and 1980's, more blue-collar workers and homemakers sought and were elected to positions on boards of education. They were intent on making changes in a system they viewed as unresponsive to their needs. The publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 spurred the movement to reform schools, motivating the private sector, politicians, and parents to become actively involved in the process. Glass, Bjork and Brunner (2000) noted, "As the sole person in charge, the superintendent was the most visible school figure and the target of criticism" (p. 5). The desire for change led to strained relationships between superintendents and boards of education. Glass, Bjork and Brunner wrote:

Relationships between boards and superintendents began changing; in many

districts, boards assumed greater leadership in formulation of policy. There is

little doubt that the level of conflict between boards and superintendents increased

in the 1990's as both tried to stabilize school districts in a fast-changing time

(2000, p. 5).

Superintendent – Board Relationship: A Current Perspective

At the onset of the 21st century, the importance of the superintendent – board

relationship continues to be a focus of much discussion and research. A 1998 book

authored by members of the school board associations of California, Illinois, Maine,

Pennsylvania and the Washington State School Director's Association characterized the

relationship between boards and superintendents by stating, "In simple terms, the

relationship between boards and superintendents is that school boards govern while

administrators manage the school on a daily basis" (p. 4). The authors noted that boards

are responsible for governance and policy-making, hiring and evaluating the

superintendent, adopting policies and budgets, approving local student learning standards,

and evaluating program and policy effectiveness. The superintendent is charged with

managing the district through implementing policies, recommending the hiring of and

supervising certificated and other employees, evaluating program and staff effectiveness

and maintaining order. In addition to day-to-day responsibilities, the superintendent is

responsible for providing advice and recommendations to the board. The authors noted,

"Governance, in reality, requires strong teamwork between the board and superintendent"

(p. 5).

Petersen and Fusarelli (2001) explored the relationship between boards and superintendents and noted three trends that affect the relationship: 1) changing demographics; 2) changes brought about by school reform; and 3) changes in superintendents themselves. They wrote:

There are individuals within and outside of the educational arena that perceive the leadership roles played by the superintendent and board of education in governing the educational organization as well defined. Yet, numerous investigations examining the complexity of this relationship and the influence it has on the leadership of the school organization indicates otherwise (p. 3).

Other authors have discussed and lent support for the need for an effective working relationship between boards and superintendents. Thomas (2001) discussed a study by Glass that asked superintendents to rank impediments to their ability to perform the duties of their position. Thomas's article noted, "Although the typical concerns of funding, accountability, and planning and goal setting were identified, superintendents ranked administrator/board relations as a leading barrier" (p. 8). Thomas also noted that research (Grady & Bryant, & Norton et al.) on the experiences of board members found that the members, "… acknowledged relations with superintendents as a key factor in the ability to fulfill their duties" (2001, p. 8).

Houston and Eadie (2005) in their book *The Board Savvy Superintendent* advised superintendents, "Investing your time and energy in becoming a board-savvy superintendent will produce rich dividends over time – for your school district and for you, professionally" (p. 1). They describe the board-savvy superintendency as one in which, "… first, a school board that consistently produces what we call high-impact

governance; second, a close positive and productive board-superintendent working partnership; and third, a school board that takes deep satisfaction in – and feels strong ownership of – its governing work," (p. 1). Expanding on the importance of the relationship between a superintendent and the board of education, Houston and Eadie (2005) wrote:

> One of your primary responsibilities as superintendent and CEO of your district is to play a leading role in building and maintaining strategically significant relationships, and the one that is at the heart of your district's strategic and policy-level leadership – and most critical to your effectiveness as CEO – is between you and your school board (p. 73).

> Townsend et al. (2007) commented on the importance of a well-developed relationship between superintendents and their boards of education and wrote, "Building effective board relationships is a continuous process. Whether a new or seasoned veteran, the effective superintendent knows that building a solid board relationship takes priority" (p. 1). The authors also noted, "Achieving district goals requires that the governance team work together. The superintendent and board must not only create, but also maintain, a strong governance team" (p. 24).

Board members, too, recognize the need for a positive board – superintendent relationship. In an article describing the struggles of the school board in La Crosse, Wisconsin, Duresky (2003) discussed the importance of clarifying the roles of the board and superintendent. The LaCrosse district sought outside assistance after an attempt to integrate schools based on socio-economic status failed miserably. Attempts to recall board members and open hostility between some members of the board and the

superintendent followed the effort. Hoping to focus the board on student achievement, the district turned to a consultant to assist in creating a new model of governance for the district. A key component of the model was the relationship between the board and superintendent. The governance model adopted by the district, "… has taken us out of the micromanagement arena, fostered a better relationship among board members, and allowed us to focus on student achievement goals" (p. 45). Duresky (2003) commented on the clarification of roles, "I know the governance model has profound potential for those boards that believe their primary focus must be student achievement and effective governance rather than micromanagement" (p. 46).

The relationship between the superintendent and board is so vital that the quality of the relationship can impact a superintendent's tenure. Patterson (2000) presented profiles of 14 superintendents and offered superintendents several suggestions to increase effectiveness and survive the stress of the position. For example, he suggested that superintendents can build positive relationships with their boards by finding opportunities to have quality time with the board, outside of the usual contact. Patterson quoted a sitting superintendent who commented on the importance of developing a good relationship between a board and superintendent: "It's hard to demonize a person whom you know *as a person*" (2000, p. 60). Other suggestions for superintendents included asking the board under what conditions they want change, helping the board make decisions under tough conditions, and not allowing single-focus board members to dominate board sessions. Each suggestion centered on, and reinforced, the importance of the board – superintendent relationship.

Butera (2006) studied the longevity of superintendents and noted, "The most important relationship a superintendent must establish is with the members of the board of education …" (p.86). Certainly there are other relationships within the school community, and the community at large, that the superintendent must foster. During their tenure, superintendents can face challenges and criticisms from many sources. Butera commented, "It is imperative, therefore, that superintendents listen to and build relationships with many constituent groups" (2006, p. 90).

While this is true, superintendents who negotiate and clarify their roles with the board of education can minimize at least this source of conflicts. Patterson (2000) wrote, "One of the most consistent areas of tension between superintendents and board members is over policy versus administration" (p. 61).

A common theme for school leadership is that the superintendent and school board must have a clear understanding of roles each is expected to fill, and that there must be a spirit of teamwork if the district is going to improve student achievement. Henderson et al. (2001) presented eight primary areas in which the board and superintendent must cooperate in order to form an effective leadership team, and in turn improve student achievement. They included:

1. Vision: The ultimate goal that student achievement is the top priority not only in the school district but also in the community.

2. Standards: What students are expected to know and be able to do at critical points in their school careers.

3. Assessment: Measures to gauge student progress toward standards.

4. Accountability: Examining, reporting, and analyzing responsibility for progress toward standards.

5. Alignment: Coordination of all resources to ensure student achievement.

6. Climate: The quality of relationships and attitudes among staff, students, and parents regarding the operations of the school and its programs.

7. Collaboration: Building support with all stakeholders, with special emphasis on business and political leaders in the community, so that high levels of student achievement are commonly understood and become a community-wide priority.

8. Continuous Improvement: Using date to assess progress toward standards and to make necessary changes in the instructional program and school operations to help students meet standards (pp. 14-15).

Other writers have commented on the importance of role clarification between superintendents and boards of education. Goodman and Zimmerman (2000) wrote, "Strong, collaborative leadership by local school boards and school superintendents is a key cornerstone of the foundation for high student achievement" (p. 1). In their recommendations to school district leaders they also noted:

When board members and superintendents are unclear about who is responsible for which duties, conflict, inefficiency, and frustration are inevitable. Above all else, an effective leadership team requires that the board and superintendent establish and maintain a constructive working relationship with each other (Goodman and Zimmerman, 2000, p. 17).

The quality of the relationship between a board of education and superintendent is critical for all constituents in the district. The relationship should be viewed as a

partnership in which both sides benefit. Eadie (2003) wrote, "The fact is, board-superintendent partnerships are not only extremely important to their school districts, but are also notoriously difficult to build, extremely fragile once built, and prone to deteriorate if not continuously and creatively supported and nurtured" (p. 26).

Griffin (2005) likened the board-superintendent relationship to a marriage. He wrote:

> In short, the relationship between boards and superintendents is like a marriage. To work, each party must understand and respect the other's role. They must share a mutual vision and work together as partners for the benefit of the district and its students. When such constructive relationships exist, academic performance rises and other problems become more manageable (p. 55).

Drawing on his experiences as chair of North Carolina's Charlotte-Mecklenberg school board, Griffin noted there are four imperatives to improving student achievement in school districts. First, the board and superintendent must agree that improving student performance is the highest priority in the district. Second, the board and superintendent must share a common vision for the district. Third, the board and superintendent both must recognize the roles they must play. If there is no agreement, it becomes likely that the board will micromanage the day-to-day affairs of the district. Finally, he noted that it is important to remember that board members are in the post for a brief time, and they must receive training to be effective. He wrote that during his tenure on the board, "… I learned firsthand the importance of a healthy partnership between a school board and its superintendent" (2005, p. 55).

Henderson et al. (2001) discussed the importance of teamwork between superintendents and boards of education, noting the essential ingredients of teamwork as, "… trust, respect, shared values and knowledge, and each team member's understanding of his or her role" (p. 6). They continued:

These elements are virtually intuitive and permeate our culture from the workplace to the playing fields. If the board and superintendent are to function as a team, however, they need to go beyond identifying the elements of teamwork. They need to know how to put these elements into practice (2000, p. 6).

In a study about the superintendents of the country's 100 largest school districts, Fuller et al. (2003) found that a major concern for respondents was their relationship with the board and the struggle to define and separate their roles from the board's. The report stated:

School superintendents direct highly complex bureaucracies and deal with teachers, unions, students, parents, community organizations, the business community, governing boards and politicians. Although to the outsider they appear to be in charge, insiders understand that they are pressured by many different interests and rarely control their own agendas (p. 11).

Stress of any kind can impact the quality of the relationship between a board and superintendent. One critical factor that can be a stressor for both the board and the superintendent is the process of evaluating the superintendent. Frequently, the evaluation is based upon the superintendent's communication and relationship with the board (Soares and Soares, 2000).

While the evaluative process can elicit stress and possibly strain the board's relationship with the superintendent, the process can have a positive result. Townsend et al. (2007) noted that, "A frequently overlooked strategy for keeping boards and superintendents focused is the superintendent evaluation. A facilitated process can be effective for the whole teams as a way to assess progress toward goals, thus maintaining a strong team focused on providing the best education for the students" (p. 24).

Richardson (1998) conducted a survey of superintendents in Connecticut seeking to identify sources of perceived stress. A significant number of respondents noted board relations as a primary source of stress. The report noted, "Time management, politics and board relations appear to be the most prevalent sources of stress for Connecticut superintendents" (p. 8). The issue of board turnover was particularly troublesome for Connecticut superintendents. Richardson (1998) summarized:

> With regard to board relations, the issue of board turnover, in particular, is of concern to Connecticut superintendents in that it appears to exacerbate problems already inherent in the superintendent/board relationship. … Furthermore, the internal politics of the board changes when new members are elected, and this impacts a superintendent's interaction with the board as a whole (p. 16).

Eadie (2003, July) promoted the concept of High Impact Governing, which focuses on the evaluation process of the superintendent. He noted, "… one key to keeping the relationship healthy is for your school board to play an active role in overseeing the performance of the superintendent as your district's chief executive officer (CEO)" (p. 26).

Many district superintendents must deal with problems stemming from poor finances, labor issues, socio-economic status of students and their families, and increased expectations from federal and state governments. Fuller et al. (2003) noted that although these issues are critical, they are not the underlying basis for difficulties faced by the superintendent. They wrote, "Rather, they (the superintendents) pointed to complex relationships and lack of authority that virtually preclude them from doing what they have been hired to do" (p. 12).

Cox-Buteau (2005) examined the relations between school boards and superintendents in rural school districts in New Hampshire. The survey utilized interviews and survey questions as the means of gathering data for the report. Commenting on the importance of the relationship between the superintendents and their boards of education, she wrote:

There is no doubt that there has been change in the state of education in New Hampshire in the past fifteen years, but the basic system of school boards and superintendents working together in small school districts to govern the schools has remained unchanged… I suspect that school boards and superintendents will continue to strive to adjust how they work together (p. 167).

Clodfelter (2002) conducted a similar study to gauge the status of the relationship between school boards and superintendents. The study sought to describe the changing nature of the superintendency. With regard to the importance of the board-superintendent relationship, and a possible outcome if the relationship is not a positive one, Clodfelter noted, "Superintendents are most likely to leave the superintendency permanently because of poor relationships with the boards …" (p. 119).

The relationship between superintendents and board of educations has been an issue since the creation of the position. Effective school leaders foster this relationship to form a collaborative team with the board. Glass, Bjork and Brunner (2000) in their analysis of the superintendency wrote, "At the beginning of the 21st century, most citizens probably think of the superintendent as the 'chief expert on schools in the community.' Certainly, school boards look to the superintendents for 'expert' knowledge and leadership that will result in peace and harmony in the district" (p. 3). Superintendents are selected to lead school districts; their leadership skills are judged on a daily basis. The issue of leadership is at the core of any discussion on school superintendents. The next section will discuss leadership as it relates to the position of superintendent of schools.

Leadership

At the onset of the section on leadership, it is appropriate to consider some definitions of leadership. Some examples follow.

- Bennis: Leaders manage the dream. All leaders have the capacity to create a compelling vision, one that takes people to a new place, and the ability to translate that vision into reality (1999, p. 26).

- Senge: Leaders in learning organizations … focus predominantly on purpose and systemic structure. Moreover, they 'teach' people through the organization to do likewise (1990, p. 353).

- Wheatley: Those who help us center our work in deeper purpose are leaders we cherish, and to whom we return love, gift for gift (1999, p. 133).

- Reeves: Leaders are the architects of improved individual and organizational performance (2002, p. 12).

In discussing his definition, Reeves noted the architect, "designs, but does not do, the work of building" (p. 12). In terms of the superintendent, Reeves wrote that the leader cannot be expected to be an expert in writing, school finance, assessment, personnel management and the multitude of other necessary tasks in a school district – just as the architect is not an electrician, welder or plumber. Rather, the architect is the visionary who sees the final product. The next part of the definition indicates that the leader is not satisfied with the status quo. This aligns well with the concept presented by Sergiovanni, Schmoker and many other writers that superintendents are expected to be change agents for the districts. Reeves noted, "Because the emphasis is on improvement at the individual and organizational levels, the sentiment that 'everything is just fine so leave us alone' is alien to this leader" (2002, p. 12). The last part of the definition implies, "…the inclusive emphasis on individual and organizational performance" (p. 12).

Teachers are expected to lead the classrooms; principals are expected to lead the schools; superintendents have the burden of leading entire districts. A substantial amount of material is available on the topic of leadership. For example a search for the phrase "educational leadership" in the books category of the online sales giant Amazon.com resulted in more than nine thousand titles. A search for "educational leadership" using the Internet search vehicle Google resulted in nearly eight million references to the phrase. The search results included textbooks, personal seminars and self-help books, strategies for current and aspiring leaders, graduate and undergraduate courses, and myriad other topics related to educational leadership.

Many writers agree that effective leadership is clearly evident to those who have contact with an effective organization. Long (1988) commented on the visibility of leadership. The author noted:

> Analyzing leadership … is like studying the abominable snowman; you see footprints, but never the thing itself. Leadership is like electricity. You can't see it, but you certainly can't miss its effect. And yet, this elusive, intangible thing we call leadership might very well be the most essential ingredient in personal and business success (p.21).

The overarching goal of school districts is to increase student achievement. Research has shown that district-level leadership from the superintendent can have a positive impact on student achievement. Waters and Marzano (2006) cited a 1999 report authored by Bennett, Finn, and Cribb that described superintendents, district office staff, and local school board members as part of a "blob" that utilizes school resources, resists school reform, and does not contribute to student achievement. Waters' and Marzano's meta-analysis of 27 studies conducted since 1970 found, in contrast to the Bennett report, that school superintendents have a positive effect on student achievement. Waters and Marzano noted:

> This finding stands in sharp contrast to the notion that district administration is part of an amorphous blob that soaks up valuable resources without adding value to a district's instructional program. To the contrary, these findings suggest that when district leaders are carrying out their leadership responsibilities effectively, student achievement across the district is positively affected (2006, p. 16).

School boards, whether elected or appointed are responsible for setting district policy. The effective school leader must have an effective relationship with the school board. The next section presents a discussion about school boards.

School Boards

Current Research.

Hess (2002) conducted a survey of school board members from across the nation. Survey results were reported for more than 800 respondents. The report provided results based on district size: the large group had districts of more than 25,000 students, the middle group ranged from 5,000 – 24,999 students and the small group had less than 5,000 students. Nearly 40 percent of the survey respondents were from rural districts with student enrollments of fewer than 5,000 students. This group is similar to districts in Michigan's Upper Peninsula where no district in the region has more than 4,000 students. This paper will comment on the findings reported for the smallest group, those having fewer than 5,000 students. The report noted:

> The greatest challenge confronting school boards is to ensure that every child has the opportunity to learn. Boards must provide that opportunity while meeting the needs of the communities they serve and taking care not to micromanage or to invade the appropriate realm of professional educators (p. 6).

With regard to the professional background of school board members, Hess found that nearly 50% of members have business/professional backgrounds. The report found that only 13% of board members come from an educational background. Thirty-seven percent of board members from small districts had at least some college; nearly 60% have at least a four-year college degree.

Board members reported spending more time than they had in the past focused on student achievement. Hess (2002) found that in small districts, more than 68% of respondents indicated they were increasing the amount of time they spent on activities directly related to improving student achievement. This is consistent with the increased emphasis on academic standards required by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Time spent on board activities is related to the number of committees utilized by each board. The report found that, "Surprisingly, although small-district boards oversee fewer students … they are more likely to use committees than their large-district counterparts" (p. 29). Seventy-two percent of small districts responding to the survey indicated the board has a committee for budget and finance; 68% responded the board has a policy committee; 66% responded their board has a facilities committee; and 60% responded the board has personnel committee. Only 50% of respondents from small districts responded their board has a committee designated for student achievement (Hess, 2002).

Respondents to the survey did not feel that school violence is of major concern. Slightly more than seven percent of board members from small districts reported school violence was a major concern while 72% indicated that school violence is either a moderate (29%) or mild (43%) concern. Conversely, board members from larger districts place a much higher emphasis on school violence. Nearly 70% of respondents from districts with more than 25,000 students indicated that school violence is a major (26%) or moderate (43%) concern (Hess, 2002).

The respondents in the Hess (2002) survey reported that, while boards differed widely on the importance attached to such issues as school violence, standardized testing and even student achievement, most agreed that their relationship with their

superintendents were overwhelmingly important. More than 85% of respondents said the superintendent's relationship with the board was very important. Comparatively, only 62% of respondents indicated that the district's performance on standardized tests was very important.

Ethics.

Webster's Online Dictionary defines *ethics* as the general term for attempts to state or determine what is good, both for the individual and for the society as a whole; motivation based on ideas of right and wrong; the philosophical study of morals and values.

Reide (2004) presented scenarios designed to stir dialogue on whether some actions by some board members are ethical. He posed the following questions:

♦ A school board member walks into her son's school and starts asking detailed questions about school operations. Is she a concerned parent or an overly intrusive board member?

♦ A board member openly criticizes a policy his board colleagues have passed but he voted against. Is he dutifully representing a constituency that opposed the policy or creating undue strife within the board and the district?

♦ A board member's wife proposes a charter school that would compete in attracting students within the district. Should her husband acknowledge a conflict of interest? (p.20).

A National School Boards Association article (1997) posed a similar ethical "dilemma" for a school board member. In the example, a parent asked a fictional school board member, "Bill," if he could pressure some teachers to get the daughter of the

community member accepted into an advanced class. The article noted, "How school board members react to these situations can make all the difference in how properly, or not, they perform their jobs," (p. 1).

The ethical behavior of individual board members can impact the relationship between the board and superintendent. Reide (2004) wrote, "For obvious reasons superintendents are often wary about getting involved in board discussions about ethics, where they could be perceived as meddling …" (p. 21). If a board member feels a superintendent is "meddling," the possibility exists that the relationship between the two could be strained as a result.

In a study designed to compare the ethical reasoning process of superintendents and school board members, Slaten et al. (1994) wrote, "In an increasingly complex educational environment, superintendents and school board members are more frequently being confronted with situations where there are no specific rules or precedents for the ethical decision …" (p. 18). The issue of ethical behavior by board members is something that superintendents (and other board members) must be willing to address. Slaten et al. commented, "Board members have been accused of pursuing hidden agendas, focusing on single issues, mismanaging, occasionally being corrupt, and often being preoccupied or unduly influenced with personality differences" (p. 2).

Holster (2004) commented on the need for ethical behavior by members of school boards. At the time of the article, he was the superintendent of schools for Passaic, NJ. Holster wrote:

Too often, those who say they are stakeholders in governing public education

come armed with personal agendas, rather than an ethical commitment to work

for the benefit of all children ... School board members must be at the forefront to respect the need for ethical boundaries (2004, p. 24).

Some writers promote the use of board committees designed to assist with the administration of the district. Examples include communications, personnel, buildings/grounds and finance. Holster promoted the concept of a board committee to oversee ethical behavior by individual members. He noted such a committee, "… may be one way for a school system to prevent inappropriate behavior" (2004, p. 24).

Many states, including Michigan, and local districts have reacted to what some stakeholders in the educational system see as the need for ethical standards for board members and district administrators. In 1976, a joint committee of the Michigan Association of School Boards and the Michigan Congress of School Administrator Associations developed a code of ethical relationships for board members and educational administrators. The code has undergone several revisions, the last in 2001. The organizations noted the purpose of the document is:

> … to provide guidelines for ethical relationships which are essential to the successful operation of the educational system. This Code of Ethics presumes a relationship between boards of education, administrators and community which promotes trust, open and honest communication, credibility and educational purpose (n.p.).

The document presented four principals of behavior for board members and administrators: 1) Commitment to be Trustworthy; 2) Commitment to Educational Mission; 3) Commitment to be Responsible; and 4) Commitment to Serve Others Above Self.

The Georgia School Boards Association (2004) published a similar document outlining its expectations for school board members with regard to ethical behavior. The document stated, "… when a board is suffering from some form of unethical behavior on the part of a board member, it can get distracted from its core mission of effectively governing a school system." The document also reminded board members that they are expected to, "… conduct themselves in a way that inspires trust from school system staff, students and the community."

Ethical behavior is not just the responsibility of school board members. Boards of education, communities, and all stakeholders in a district deserve, and expect, that the superintendent will conduct himself or herself in an ethical manner. As the most visible person in a school district, the superintendent's behavior and actions are constantly scrutinized. Edmonson et al. (2003) commented, "Recent events in corporate scandals have led to an increased community awareness and expectation for ethical behavior on the part of public school administrators, who are the CEOs of school districts and campuses" (p.3).

To address the need for ethical actions by superintendents, ethics classes have been introduced in some educational administration programs. Shapiro and Stefkovich (1994) commented on the importance of ethics training for school administrators, "Whether required or not for entrance to the profession, our rationale for this type of preparation extends beyond the basic assumption that an educational administrator should be aware of professional ethics (p. 2).

Ethical behavior is the responsibility of any professional, whether an unpaid, elected school board member or the superintendent of schools. Unethical behavior by

either party can have a debilitating effect on the district, cause the relationship between the two to become strained, and ultimately have a negative impact on student achievement.

Governance.

Much has been written about how boards exercise their responsibilities. Fractious boards with members more interested in pursuing personal agendas than improving student achievement can cause strife within the districts, and create problems for the superintendents. In an analysis of the role and effectiveness of school boards, Land (2002) quoted a 1992 report published by the Twentieth Century Fund:

> What has made many school boards an obstacle to – rather than a force for – fundamental education reform? Our answer: The tendency for most boards to micromanage, to become immersed in the day-to-day administration of their districts that is properly the realm of the professional administrator (p. 27).

Land also discussed research by Goodman (1997), Grady and Bryant (1991), Anderson (1992) that found the tendency by board members to micromanage, as well as role confusion between the board and superintendent, causes stress in the district and can influence the board-superintendent relationship. Conversely, Land (2002) noted, "The roles of the school board and superintendent are highly interdependent, making complete separation of policymaking and administration impractical, if not impossible" (p.28).

In order to foster a solid working relationship, it is necessary for boards and superintendents to find a balance in the distribution of governance responsibilities. McGonagill (1987) noted that the personalities of board members and superintendents, leadership styles and situations in the district might necessitate the intermixing of policy-

making and administrative duties. Crane emphasized that an effective school board must work well together and that, "… cooperation and trust among board members and between the board and superintendent is the first step down that road" (2005, p. 61).

The establishment of board committees has been noted as one way to improve communication between individual board members, and between the board and superintendent (Radakovich, 1999). The committee structure offers several advantages. All board members have the opportunity to assume leadership roles, board members learn more detailed knowledge about certain aspects of the district, and board members can be actively involved in the educational process without micromanaging the process. According to Radakovich (1999) several steps should be followed to increase the possibility of success of a committee structure.

- ♦ Committees should reflect major areas on which the board and administration would like to focus.
- ♦ The role of the committee chair must be clearly defined.
- ♦ Committee reports should be shared with the entire board.

Edwards (2000) believed that for real school improvement to occur there must be a change in the current school board structure. He wrote, "The basic governing structure of the board of education must be changed. … Let the superintendents do the job that they were (or at least should have been) hired to do" (p. 20). He served for many years as a school board member and felt that the board was an impediment to the superintendent's performance of his duties. Rather than be more involved, he felt that boards should lessen their involvement in trying to run the district and allow the administrators the latitude to make the day-to-day decisions they deemed necessary.

Motivations for school board membership have also been the subject of research. Board members generally choose to serve for civic or personal reasons, or from a desire to serve special interest groups (Mountford and Brunner, 1999). Mountford and Brunner, citing Alby's 1979 research, noted persons aspiring to fill board positions often did not disclose their true motivations for pursuing the position until after they were elected. Superintendents were surprised to learn the real reason for the board members' desire to serve. They wrote there was, "… a clear indication that motivations for membership were not fully exposed or fully understood at the time of election or appointment by either superintendents or board members" (1999, p. 6).

Despite all the attention, both positive and negative, school board members often receive little credit for their efforts and service to the district. Very few receive any compensation and many often spend more than 25 hours per month on school board issues (Hess, 2002). Crane (2005) commented, "… school board members are not in the job for the glory" (p. 64). When asked about her more than 10 years as a member of a school board, G. Worley commented, "I love the job, even with all the phone calls and stress that go with it. I like to think we're having a positive impact on the kids in our district" (personal communication, July 19, 2007).

Roles and Relationships

Houston wrote, "For today's superintendent, the challenge is to bring out the best in all the players, harmonizing them into a symphony of success. The work is all about relationships" (2007). This highlights the importance of the need for superintendents to spend considerable time in developing positive relationships with school boards and other stakeholders in the district.

According to a 1994 report published jointly by the American Association of School Administrators and the National School Boards Association, three major factors influence relationships between boards of education and superintendents. The report noted that the nature of policy development and administration is a factor that influences these critical relationships. One of the primary roles of the superintendent is that of advisor to the board. A board is not required to follow the superintendent's advice; however the judicious board will give the recommendation strong consideration. The increased influence of external factors on the schools also impact the board-superintendent relationship. Occasionally, situations arise that require immediate action by the superintendent. If no policy was in place to govern the superintendent's reaction, the action becomes de facto board policy. Finally, it is incumbent upon a board of education to grant sufficient authority to a superintendent to carry out designated responsibilities. Likewise, the superintendent must provide the board with assurances that the duties are being performed. The report noted, "How boards and superintendents work together can mean the difference between exhilaration and frustration for both parties and, more important, between success and failure for the student's in our nation's public schools" (p. 2).

The issue of school board members attempting to micromanage the daily affairs of the district is often noted as a concern for superintendents. Dawson and Quinn commented that, "… boards must learn to lead from the level of policy, not from a lower level of decision making. Most boards have never developed a complete understanding of how board decisions can and must be policy decisions rather than operating-level decisions" (2001).

In order to ensure that boards are indeed doing the work they are supposed to, some have suggested that boards adopt a practice of self-evaluation. Castallo (2000) noted that boards should consider developing a focus on improving student achievement, agreeing on the role of the board in handling internal conflicts, and ensuring a regular and honest review of the board's performance. Too often, boards are unfamiliar with their role regarding student achievement. Castallo wrote, "Board members, in conjunction with their superintendent, should review results and set specific achievement goals for the district based on local, state and national assessments" (2000). In order to protect against a board member attempting to micromanage in the district, Castallo (2000) suggested that board members should only communicate with staff members through the superintendent, or at least with his or her knowledge.

Fulbright and Goodman (1999) offered ten steps for a superintendent to take to form an effective governance team in the district. The authors suggested that superintendents should:

- Establish a firm foundation for teamwork.

- Nurture mutual respect and support.

- Get straight on [their] roles.

- Be a coach, not just a team player.

- Strive for frequent, two-way communication.

- Avoid surprises.

- Don't invite micromanagement.

- Don't waste [the] teammates' time.

- Learn to deal with conflict.

- Regularly check how [the] team is doing.

Fulbright and Goodman noted the result of these steps is an effective governance team that can, "… focus on what matters most – improving student achievement" (1999, p. 3).

It is generally accepted that boards of education have the responsibility of setting policy for the district, and the superintendent has the responsibility of administering the policy. When the actions of one or the other cause the line to become blurred, problems can occur and student achievement – the stated goal of most boards and districts – can suffer as a result.

The next section presents a brief discussion on Michigan's current economic woes. In 1994, Michigan voters passed Proposal A, which radically changed the way the state finances public schools. This has added significantly to the stressors experienced by both superintendents and their boards. In addition to the budget information, Proposal A and its consequences are discussed.

Michigan Economy

Michigan's economy has been one of the nation's weakest in recent years. Vock termed the current financial crisis as a "One State Recession" (2007). Vock noted, "… the state has lost jobs for six consecutive years, Michigan's longest run of workplace shrinkages since the Great Depression" (2007). The state ranks 50th in the nation in personal income growth, unemployment rate, and employment growth. He cited Bureau of Labor Statistics figures that showed manufacturing jobs declined from slightly more than 900,000 in July 1999 to approximately 620,000 in August 2007. Downturns in

Michigan's largest industry, the automobile sector, contributed to the precipitous drop in manufacturing jobs (Clay, 2007).

McHugh (2007) commented, "Michigan has become a poor state – and compared to the rest of the country, it's getting poorer". He noted that between 2001 and 2006, the real per-capita personal income of residents fell by 0.9 percent; nationwide it rose by 5.3 percent. The unemployment rate for 2007 was 7.7 percent; the highest in the nation.

Michigan's poor economy has contributed to a decline in sales tax revenues which are the main source of money to operate its schools. Prior to 1994, the state relied on local property taxes to fund its schools. However, in 1994 voters overwhelmingly supported a ballot measure that would fundamentally change the method by which the state funds its schools. The measure, Proposal A, is discussed in the next section.

Proposal A

In October 1993, Michigan Governor John Engler's document, *Our Kids Deserve Better,* proposed (in addition to other measures) a new state property tax and an increase in the state's sales tax from four percent to six percent. The major goals of Engler's package of finance reform were to reduce the state's reliance on local property taxes as the primary source of funding school districts and to increase equity in per-pupil funding for Michigan's schools (Prince, 1996). The proposal came on the heels of the legislature's vote in July 1993 which eliminated local property taxes. This reduced by more than $6 billion the annual funding for Michigan's public schools. Harvey (1995) termed this vote the "July bombshell." Indeed, the vote by the legislature occurred before any plan to replace the revenue was adopted. Harvey (1995) noted, "Intense policy debate ensued between July and December 1993, about the appropriate mix of taxes and state

revenues to be used in replacing the $6.1 billion in property taxes previously allocated to public schools" (p. 172). The legislative debate focused on what elements should be included in the package to improve the quality of education in the state. Legislators were subjected to intense lobbying efforts such diverse groups as the Michigan Education Association and the state Chamber of Commerce.

Towne et al. (1994), commenting on Michigan's tax issues wrote, "For many years prior to 1994, the property tax burden in Michigan, compared with the average property tax burden in the United States, had been among the highest in the nation" (p. 1). Approximately 67% of the property taxes collected in Michigan prior to the passage of Proposal A were distributed to schools for operations. In late 1993, reacting to pressure from the public to reduce the tax burden and to change the process to finance schools (as well as significant pressure from the Governor's office), the state's legislative body approved two competing revenue plans.

The decision to introduce two separate plans, "… grew out of a political compromise and insured that schools would have a funding plan in place when school doors opened in September, 1994" (Harvey, 1995, p. 172).

Although quite similar, there were differences in the plans. The "Ballot Plan" required voter approval to increase the sales tax from four percent to six percent. Revenue generated from the additional sales tax, along with a six-mill levy on homestead property, was to be designated to the School Aid Fund. The Ballot plan also offered taxpayers a reduction in the income tax from 4.6% to 4.4%. The "Statutory Plan" proposed a 1.4% increase in the state income tax rate, plus a 12-mill levy on homestead property. Both plans would have levied a 24-mill tax on non-homestead property.

(Harvey, 1995, Prince, 1996 & Towne et al. 1994). The Statutory Plan would have been implemented had the voters rejected Proposal A (Ballot Plan). In March, 1994 Michigan voters overwhelmingly approved Proposal A, 69% to 31%. As a result of the vote, operational property taxes were cut in aggregate by nearly 50% (Harvey, 1995 & Prince, 1996). Prince wrote, "Reduction in property taxes was the major goal of the tax-structure aspect of Michigan's finance reform, and the Legislature achieved that objective" (1996).

The second part of the state's initiative was to reduce disparities in the per pupil amount districts received from the state. The plan created a per-pupil revenue amount called a foundation allowance. The foundation allowance is funded from a combination of state aid and local property tax revenue. In order to receive the full foundation allowance, local districts must levy an operating millage on non-homestead property (i.e. commercial and industrial) of 18 mills. Foundation allowances for the years 2001 – 2006 rose from $6,000 to $6,875 per student. However, in 2003, 2004 and 2005 the amount was frozen at $6,700 per student.

Since 1973, Michigan had utilized a DPE (district power equalizing) formula to determine funding levels for the schools. The state did not, however, allocate sufficient funds to the DPE formula to bring most districts into "in-formula status," which contributed to the funding inequities. In the 1980's and 1990's, the state attempted to rectify the inequities with a program called "recapture" which redirected some funds from wealthier districts to poorer districts. However, not enough funds were "recaptured" and redirected to the DPE formula. As property values grew at different rates over the next two decades, the funding inequities between wealthy and less-wealthy areas increased (Prince, 1996). Although not a focus of this research, readers should note there

are still inequities in funding levels across the state. The Michigan House of

Representatives (February, 2007, House Joint Resolution E) and the Michigan Senate

(April, 2007, Senate Joint Resolution C) introduced legislation that would require the

state to provide equal funding for all students not later than the 2018-2019 state fiscal

year.

Fund Equity

The fund equity balance is an amount of money in a district's general fund not

spent; the money is saved. The Michigan Department of Education does not require

school districts to maintain a minimum fund equity balance. However, the Michigan

School Business Officials (MSBO) recommends districts maintain a fund equity balance

equal to 15% of the district's total budget. The MSBO organization tracks, among other

financial details, fund equity balances for schools throughout the state. In January 2008,

the MSBO reported that the statewide decline in fund equity balances from FY 2005-06

to FY 2006-07 totaled 9.2%. Average fund balances in 2005-06 were 13.01% of school

districts' total budgets; in 2006-07 the average fund balances fell to 11.81%. This decline

represents a spend-down of approximately $150 million (Michigan School Business

Officials, 2008). As indicated by these figures, the financial problems faced by school

districts in the Upper Peninsula are shared by many public schools throughout the state.

Summary of Chapter Two

The chapter reviewed related literature beginning with a historical perspective on

the superintendent-board relationship. A review of the literature revealed that the

relationship has been the subject of discussion and research since the 19th century, and

this discussion continues today. Current perspectives consider a variety of issues

including leadership, governance, ethics and finance. Discussion on Michigan's current

economic woes was presented. The chapter closed with a discussion on Proposal A, the

1994 ballot measure that changed the way Michigan funds its public schools. The next

chapter presents discussion on the methodology used to conduct this study.

Chapter Three: Methodology

A web-based survey, utilizing Schoolwires software, was administered to superintendents of K-12 public school districts located in Michigan's Upper Peninsula over a four-week period during the fall of 2007. No previous study of this nature had been conducted in the region. A web-based survey was chosen due to the ease of administration and data collection and the affordability of delivery. Thomas (2004) commented, "Electronic questionnaires are being used more often with many target audiences, including teachers, administrators, parents and students …" (p. 15).

Ary et al. (2006) discussed the advantages and disadvantages of web-based surveys. The authors noted that web-based surveys reach respondents over a wide geographic area and allow the respondents to complete the surveys at convenient times. Time and cost savings can also be associated with web-based surveys. A potential limitation of Internet surveys is that they are restricted to those with access to the technology. Prior to the beginning of the research project, the author confirmed that each superintendent in the Upper Peninsula had an active e-mail address.

Another disadvantage of web-based surveys is that response rates are often lower than those from other forms of surveys. Ary et al. noted, "There is somewhat conflicting evidence about response rates in web-based surveys. The consensus, however, is that response rates for web surveys are lower than rates obtained by other methods" (2006, p. 415). Cook et al. (2000) conducted a meta-analysis of response rates for web-based surveys and found a mean response rate of 39.6 percent.

Schonlau et al. (2002) discussed the costs associated with web-based surveys. They commented, "The notion that Web surveys are much cheaper to conduct than traditional mail surveys is not necessarily true" (p. 78). The authors cited several possible cost issues for researchers to consider including programming and software costs and labor costs to manipulate data. The survey conducted for this study was developed and administered using the Schoolwires software package; utilized by the author's school district for a variety of tasks including district, building and individual teacher web pages. The package also includes several different modules, including a survey module. Superintendents did not need to have access to the Schoolwires software in order to access and respond to the survey.

Ary et al. (2006) described a variety of types of surveys and noted that a survey that seeks attitudes, opinions, and values measures intangibles. The survey presented in this study is a census of intangibles. The authors noted, "A survey that covers the entire population of interest is referred to as a census …"(p. 402). This study sought feedback from all superintendents of K-12 (N=53) school districts in the region regarding their attitudes about their perceptions of their relationships with their boards of education.

Research Context

The Upper Peninsula of Michigan is large, covering 16,500 square miles, nearly one-third of the state's total land mass. The region is approximately the same size as Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut combined. Sparsely populated, with approximately 312,000 residents as of 2005, the Upper Peninsula is home to just three percent of Michigan's total population. The population of the Upper Peninsula declined approximately two percent from 2000 to 2005. During the same period, the region

experienced a significant decline in the number of school-age children. Population figures compiled from the state's census information revealed that the population of children ages 5-9 decreased 12.88%. The population of children ages 10-14 decreased 12.05%, while the population of 15-19 year-olds dropped 6.4%. Michigan funds its schools on a per-pupil basis, and as a result of declining enrollments, districts have received reduced funding to operate the schools. The region lacks a manufacturing base; tourism, logging and mining are the main industries. Unemployment in 2007 was nearly one and a half times the national average.

Superintendents and boards of education must make difficult choices when deciding whether and how to cut programs or staff, to make curricular or technology purchases, or when making the myriad other decisions required. Often these decisions can lead to strained relationships between boards of education and their superintendents, even when resources are plentiful. When resources are scarce and the impact of these decisions on the district's financial health is magnified, the likelihood of strain is increased. Even if the boards and superintendents have agreed-upon roles and both parties perform the duties required by their respective roles, significant problems can and do arise. These stressors seem likely to impact and eventually affect the relationships between the boards of education and superintendents, and ultimately, affect the ability of the superintendents to lead the districts. Consideration of this has led to the overall focus of this study, which was to determine the effects that the factors of budgetary shortfalls, declining enrollments, and the superintendents' longevity had on the superintendents' relationships with the boards of education.

Procedures/Instrument

The survey was administered using the Schoolwires software package; used by the author's school district for a variety of tasks including district, building, and individual teacher web pages. The package also includes several different modules, including a survey module.

During the survey development stage, possible questions were suggested and reviewed by a panel of experts that included six current or former school superintendents, none of whom were potential respondents. A primary responsibility of the panel was to determine if the content of the survey was valid. An instrument has content validity when the items accurately represent what is being measured. Vogt (1993) noted that, "Content validity is not a statistical property; it is rather a matter of expert judgment" (p. 45). Supporting the use of expert reviews to validate the content of surveys, Fink and Kosecoff (1998) wrote, "Content validity is usually established … by asking experts whether the items are representative samples of the attitudes and traits you want to survey" (p. 35).

After the panel submitted their comments and suggestions, the questions were revised and sent back to the panel for further review. This process was repeated several times. The multiple revisions of the survey, based on reviews by the panel of experts, assured that the survey had content validity. After the questions were finalized, the panel participated in a pilot test to ensure the functionality of the process and the Schoolwires software. Thomas (2004) commented on the importance of the pilot test this way: "This step is so critical that if you don't have the time or resources to conduct a pilot test of all

pieces of your survey project, then you should probably not be doing the project" (p. 108).

The survey asked respondents about the length of their tenure as superintendents, their educational backgrounds, and the enrollments and fund equity balances of their districts. A series of Likert Scale questions sought the superintendents' perspectives on their relationships with their boards of education. Ary et al. (2006) noted that a Likert Scale, "… assesses attitudes toward a topic by presenting a set of statements about the topic and asking respondents to indicate whether they strongly agree, agree, are undecided, disagree or strongly disagree," (p. 227).

 Additionally, superintendents had the opportunity to add their comments to several of the survey questions. These open-ended questions allowed respondents to elaborate on particular aspects of the survey questions. Thomas (2004) commented on open-ended questions. She wrote, "Responses to such questions often provide interesting insights and seldom affect response rates" (p. 48).

The study was conducted over a four week period in fall 2007. The superintendents of K-12 public school districts (N=53) in Michigan's Upper Peninsula were sent e-mail messages inviting them to participate in the study by the immediate past-president of the Upper Peninsula Superintendents' Association. His involvement lent credibility to the survey and eased any concerns the superintendents may have had regarding the authenticity of the invitation. The messages included a link to a URL (Uniform Resource Locator – the address of a World Wide Web page) that led superintendents to the survey. Thomas (2004) described the process for this type of survey as, "… questionnaires invite the participant to respond to the questionnaire by

either clicking on an embedded URL or copying and pasting the URL to their Web browser. The participant responds to the questionnaire on the web," (p. 15). Reminder e-mail messages were sent during the second week of the survey period.

Data was exported from the Schoolwires software to the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software for analysis.

Data Analysis

This survey used cross tabulations to determine whether relationships exist between the independent variables of declining enrollment, budgetary shortfalls, the superintendents' longevity, and the superintendents' perceived relationships with their boards of education. Cross tabulation analysis reveals whether relationships exist between variables (Weisberg, et al. 1996). Cross tabulation analysis conducted for this study provided values for p values and Cramer's V. Both of these measure the strength of the relationship between variables.

The level of significance of these relationships, chosen prior to research, is the alpha value. Fink and Kosecoff (1998) noted, "The alpha gives the probability of rejecting the null hypothesis when it is actually true" (p.48). The alpha value is typically small, which helps researchers avoid rejecting a null hypothesis when it is true.

Chi square analysis compares the observed distribution of the values with the expected frequencies and determines whether the difference between the expected and the observed is due to chance. Further statistical analysis of the chi square values that resulted from this study provided p values. Fink and Kosecoff (1998) wrote, "The p value is the probability that an observed result (or result of a statistical test) is due to chance (rather than to participation in a program)" (p. 48). Correlations that are significant at the

.05 level indicate there is a 5% chance or less that a strong (or stronger) correlation than the given one would result from an unusual random sampling of data, when in reality there was no correlation (Garson, n.d.). The level of significance for this study was $p <$ .05.

Cramer's V measures the strength of association or dependency between nominal variables. This statistic measures the reduction in the amount of error in predicting the dependent variable's distribution that results from knowing the distribution of the independent variable. A Cramer's V value of 0 indicates no relationship between the variables, while a 1 indicates a perfect relationship.

The analysis of the data was limited due to the large percentage of school districts in the target population that have suffered decreases in enrollment and budgetary shortfalls. For example, 26 of 29 (89.7%) respondents indicated student enrollment decreased during the past five years. This imbalance skewed the distribution of cases. Specifically, in using cross tabulations, some of the cells were empty since so few of the reporting districts experienced growth, either in enrollment or revenues, in the past five years. The sample's distribution of cases accurately reflects the situation among all the K-12 public school districts in the Upper Peninsula. Where appropriate and without distorting the meaning of the data, some of the response categories have been combined to allow for more extensive statistical analysis.

Three research questions were the focus of the study. Twenty-one null hypotheses were developed from the research questions. The null hypotheses were accepted or rejected based on the results of cross tabulation analysis of the responses provided by the superintendents.

Research Questions

1. Do declining enrollments have an effect on the superintendents' perceptions of their relationships with their boards of education?

2. Do budgetary shortfalls have an effect on the superintendents' perceptions of their relationships with their boards of education?

3. Does the superintendents' longevity, when controlled for declining enrollments and budgetary shortfalls, have an effect on the superintendents' perceptions of their relationships with their boards of education?

Null Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of whether they and their Boards of Education share a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and declining enrollments.

2. There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of whether they and their Boards of Education share a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and budgetary shortfalls.

3. There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of whether they and their Boards of Education share a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and the superintendents' longevity.

4. There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of increased involvement by the Boards of Education in the day-to-day activities of the district, and declining enrollments.

5. There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of increased involvement by the Boards of Education in the day-to-day activities of the district, and budgetary shortfalls.

6. There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of increased involvement by the Boards of Education in the day-to-day activities of the district, and the superintendents' longevity.

7. There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of negative changes in the relationships between themselves and their Boards of Education, and declining enrollments.

8. There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of negative changes in the relationships between themselves and their Boards of Education, and budgetary shortfalls.

9. There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of negative changes in the relationships between themselves and their Boards of Education, and the superintendents' longevity.

10. There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of their expected longevity and declining enrollments.

11. There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of their expected longevity and budgetary shortfalls.

12. There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of their expected longevity and the superintendents' longevity to date.

13. There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of their effectiveness and declining enrollments.

14. There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of their effectiveness and budgetary shortfalls.

15. There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of their effectiveness and the superintendents' longevity.

16. There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of their collaborative working relationships with their Boards of Education, and declining enrollments.

17. There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of their collaborative working relationships with their Boards of Education, and budgetary shortfalls.

18. There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of their collaborative working relationships with their Boards of Education, and the superintendents' longevity.

19. There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of their working relationships with their Boards of Education, and declining enrollments.

20. There is no significant relationship between the superintendents'

    perceptions of their working relationships with their Boards of Education,

    and budgetary shortfalls.

21. There is no significant relationship between the superintendents'

    perceptions of their working relationships with their Boards of Education,

    and the superintendents' longevity.

Summary of Chapter Three

       This chapter discussed the development of the web-based survey, as well as some of the advantages and disadvantages of using web-based surveys. A panel of six current or former superintendents assisted in the development and revision of the survey questions and also piloted the survey to ensure the technology and Schoolwires software were functional and appropriate. The chapter also discussed the research context in which the survey was conducted. Other topics of discussion in the chapter included the focus of the survey questions and the types of analyses performed with the results. Cross tabulation analysis was performed to determine whether relationships exist between the variables of declining enrollments, budgetary shortfalls, the superintendents' longevity, and the superintendents' perspectives on their perceived relationships with their boards of education. In addition, p values and Cramer's V scores were analyzed to gauge the strength of relationships between the variables. The level of significance for this study was $p < .05$.

Chapter Four: Results of the Study

This study sought to ascertain from the superintendents' perspectives whether their relationships with their boards of education had changed as a result of declining enrollments, budgetary shortfalls, and the superintendents' longevity. To determine the effects of these variables on the superintendents' perceived relationships with their boards of education, web-based surveys were administered during the fall of 2007. Potential respondents received e-mail messages inviting them to participate in the study. Each e-mail message was sent to all superintendents of K-12 public school districts (N=53) located in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. The messages included a link to a URL, which led to the survey. Reminder e-mail messages were sent to all superintendents during the second week of the survey period. A total of 29 (n=29) usable surveys (of a total of 53) were returned, generating a robust response rate of 54.7%.

This chapter presents the results of the survey. The first 26 questions in the survey sought demographic data about the superintendents and their districts, including enrollment and budget trends. Responses to these questions are presented in tables in this chapter.

The final portion of the survey asked respondents a series of questions regarding their perceptions of their relationships with their boards of education. Cross tabulation analysis of the relationship data was performed and provided p values and Cramer's V scores. These analyses were performed to analyze the responses to the questions in the last section of the survey. In order to group the questions for presentation, some survey questions are not presented sequentially. If cross tabulation analysis revealed significant

relationships between the variables, the data tables are included in this chapter. All results of the cross tabulation analyses are in presented in table form in Appendix C.

Demographic Data

   Superintendents/Districts.

   Survey Question 1: How long have you served as a superintendent? Table 1 presents the data on the superintendents' years of experience in the position.

Table 1

Years as Superintendent

Years	1 – 5 Years	6 – 10 Years	More than 10 years
Total	9	11	9
Percentage	31%	38%	31%

   Survey Question 2: How long have you served as the superintendent in your current district? Table 2 indicates the number of years the respondents have served as the superintendents in their current districts.

Table 2

Years as Superintendent in Current District

Years	1 – 5 Years	6 – 10 Years	More than 10 years
Total	16	6	7
Percentage	55.2%	20.7%	24.1%

Survey Question 3: Prior to assuming the superintendency, were you employed in the district? Table 3 indicates the number of current superintendents that had been previously employed by the district before assuming the superintendency.

Table 3

Previously Employed in the District

	Yes	No
Total Districts	13	16
Percentage	44.8%	55.2%

Survey Question 4: Please indicate your level of education. Table 4 presents data on the educational levels of the superintendents.

Table 4

Superintendents' Education

Degree	Bachelor's	Master's	Education Specialist	Doctorate
Total	0	19	6	4
Percentage	0%	65.5%	20.7%	13.8%

Enrollment.

Survey Question 5: What is the enrollment in your district? Table 5 shows the breakdown of district student enrollments.

Table 5

District Enrollments

Enrollment	< 100	101 – 500	501 – 900	> 900
Total Districts	1	10	8	10
Percentage	3.5%	34.5%	27.5%	34.5%

Survey Question 6: During the past five years, has your district's enrollment increased, decreased, or stayed the same? Table 6 indicates the number of districts that experienced decreases in enrollments during the past five years.

Table 6

Enrollment Changes

	Number of Schools	Percentage
Increase	3	10.3%
Decrease	26	89.7%
No Change	0	0.0%

Survey Question 7: If your district's enrollment has increased in the past five years, what is the percentage of the increase? Table 7 presents data on the increases in student enrollment over the past five years.

Table 7

Size of Enrollment Increases

Increase	< 5%	6% - 10%	> 10%
Total Districts	2	1	0

Survey Question 8: If your district's enrollment has decreased in the past five years, what is the percentage of the decrease? Table 8 presents the data on enrollment decreases in the region over the past five years.

Table 8

Size of Enrollment Decreases

Decrease	< 5%	6% – 10%	> 10%
Total Districts	8	10	8

Survey Question 15: What percentage of the students in your district qualify for free/reduced lunch? Table 9 indicates the percentages of students that qualify for free/reduced lunch.

Table 9

Free/Reduced Lunch

Percentage of Students	< 25%	26% – 50%	51% – 75%	>76%
Total Districts	3	22	4	0

Total Revenues/Per Pupil Expenditures.

Survey Question 9: During the past five years, have your district's total revenues increased, decreased, or stayed the same? Table 10 presents the data of schools that experienced changes in total revenues over the past five years.

Table 10

Total Revenue Changes

	Number of Schools	Percentage
Increase	4	13.8%
Decrease	23	79.3%
No Change	2	6.9%

Survey Question 10: If your district's total revenues have increased in the past five years, what is the percentage of increase? Table 11 presents data on the total revenue increases experienced by the districts during the past five years.

Table 11

Total Revenue Increases

_____

Increase	< 5%	6% - 10%	> 10%
Total Districts	2	2	0

_____

Survey Question 11: If your district's total revenues have decreased in the past five years, what is the percentage of the decrease? Table 12 presents the data on the percentage of decreases in total revenues experienced by the districts during the past five years.

Table 12

Total Revenue Decreases

_____

Decrease	< 5%	6% – 10%	> 10%
Total Districts	8	9	6

_____

Survey Question 12: During the past five years, have your district's total per pupil expenditures increased, decreased, or stayed the same? Table 13 presents data on the changes in total per pupil expenditures over the past five years.

Table 13

Per Pupil Expenditures

	Number of Schools	Percentage
Increase	27	93.1%
Decrease	1	3.4%
No Change	1	3.4%

Survey Question 13: If your district's total per pupil expenditures have increased in the past five years, what is the percentage of the increase? Table 14 presents the breakdown of schools that experienced increases in per pupil expenditures over the past five years.

Table 14

Per Pupil Expenditure Increases

Increase	< 5%	6% – 10%	> 10%
Total Districts	12	13	2

Survey Question 14: If your district's total per pupil expenditures have decreased in the past five years, what is the percentage of the decrease? Table 15 presents data on decreases in per pupil expenditures during the past five years.

Table 15

Per Pupil Expenditure Decreases

Decrease	< 5%	6% – 10%	> 10%
Total Districts	1	1	0

Fund Equity.

Survey Question 16: During the past five years, has your district's fund equity balance, as a percentage of the total budget, increased, decreased, or stayed the same? Table 16 indicates the number of districts that experienced changes in fund equity balances over the past five years.

Table 16

Fund Equity Changes

	Number of Schools	Percentage
Increase	4	13.8%
Decrease	22	75.9%
No Change	3	10.3%

Survey Question 17: If your district's fund equity balance has increased in the past five years, what is the percentage of the increase? Table 17 presents data on the districts that experienced increases in fund equity balances over the past five years.

Table 17

Fund Equity Increases

Increase	< 5%	6% – 10%	> 10%
Total Districts	1	1	2

Survey Question 18: If your district's fund equity balance decreased in the past five years, what is the percentage of the decrease? Table 18 indicates the level of fund equity decreases experienced by the respondents' districts over the past five years.

Table 18

Fund Equity Decreases

Decrease	< 5%	6% – 10%	> 10%
Total Districts	4	6	12

Survey Question 19: As a percentage of the district's total budget, what is the district's fund equity balance? Table 19 indicates the size of fund equity balances as percentages of the districts' total budgets.

Table 19

Fund Equity Balances

Balance	< 5%	6% – 10%	> 10%
Total Districts	13	5	11

Survey Question 20: Does the district have a board policy that requires a fund equity balance equal to a minimum percentage of the total budget? Table 20 indicates the number of schools that have board policies requiring minimum fund equity balances.

Table 20

Required Fund Equity Balances

	Yes	No
Total Districts	6	23
Percentage	20.7%	79.3%

Survey Question 21: If the district has a board policy that requires a fund equity balance equal to a minimum percentage of the total budget, what is the percentage? Table 21 presents data on the size of required fund equity balances, expressed as percentages of the districts' total budgets.

Table 21

Required Minimum Fund Equity Balances

Balance	< 5%	6% – 10%	> 10%
Total Districts	2	2	2

Survey Question 22: In the past five years, has the district revised this policy so that the required minimum fund equity balance is reduced? Table 22 indicates the number of districts that reduced the level of board-mandated minimum fund equity balances during the past five years.

Table 22

Reduction of Required Fund Equity Balances

	Yes	No
Total Districts	2	16
Percentage	11.1%	88.9%

Survey Question 23: If the district has revised the policy requiring a minimum fund equity balance in the past five years, what is the percentage of the decrease? Table 23 indicates the percentages of the decreases in the required minimum fund balances.

Table 23

Percentage of Decrease in Required Fund Equity Balances

Decrease	< 2%	3% – 5%	6% – 8%	> 8%
Total Districts	0	1	0	1

Survey Question 24: During the past five years, has the district had to draw from its fund equity balance in order to balance the budget? Table 24 presents data on the number of respondents that reported their districts had drawn money from their fund equity balances in order to balance their budgets during the past five years.

Table 24

Draw from Fund Equity

	Yes	No
Total Districts	26	3
Percentage	89.7%	10.3%

Teaching Staff/Quality of Educational Programs.

Survey Question 25: During the past five years, has your district's total number of teaching staff increased, decreased, or stayed the same? Table 25 presents data on the number of districts that reported changes in the levels of teaching staff over the past five years.

Table 25

Teaching Staff Changes

	Number of Schools	Percentage
Increase	1	3.4%
Decrease	25	86.2%
No Change	3	10.3%

Survey Question 26: During the past five years, the quality of my district's educational program has diminished due to budgetary shortfalls and declining enrollments. Table 26 indicates the number of superintendents that felt the quality of their districts' educational program diminished due to budgetary shortfalls and declining enrollments during the past five years.

Table 26

Educational Program Quality

	Number of Schools	Percentage
Strongly Agree	9	31.0%
Agree	6	20.7%
Neutral	3	10.3%
Disagree	10	34.5%
Strongly Disagree	1	3.4%

Relationship Data

Seven of the survey questions sought the superintendents' perceptions on their relationships with their boards of education. Frequencies are presented for each question. Cross tabulations analysis was performed for each question, while controlling for three factors: Declining enrollments, budgetary shortfalls and superintendent longevity. Cross tabulation analysis is the cross referencing or comparison of two variables to determine how they are interrelated. If cross tabulation analysis revealed significant relationships between the variables, the data tables are included in this section. All results of the cross tabulation analyses are in presented in table form in Appendix C.

The level of significance for the study was at the $p < .05$ level. A p value less than the level of significance is commonly interpreted as justification for rejecting the null hypothesis.

Cramer's V measures the strength of association or dependency between nominal variables. This statistic measures the reduction in the amount of error in predicting the dependent variable's distribution that results from knowing the distribution of the independent variable. A Cramer's V score of 0 indicates no relationship between the variables, while a 1 indicates a perfect relationship.

Survey Question 28: The board and I have a clear understanding of our respective roles and responsibilities. Nearly 90% of superintendents (26 of 29) agreed or strongly agreed with this statement; two chose the neutral response; one respondent disagreed with the statement; no superintendent disagreed strongly with the statement.

When the responses for survey question 28 were considered in terms of enrollment changes, the analysis revealed no significant relationship (p value .824;

Cramers' V: .115). The null hypothesis for this analysis was: There is no significant

relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of whether they and their Boards of

Education share a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and declining

enrollments. The results of cross tabulation analysis indicate no significant relationship

exists between the superintendents' perspectives on whether there is a clear

understanding of roles with the boards and declining enrollment in the districts.

Therefore, this null hypothesis is accepted.

As indicated in Table 27, when the responses for survey question 28 were

compared to budgetary shortfalls, cross tabulation analysis revealed a significant

relationship (p value: .011; Cramer's V: .560). The null hypothesis for this analysis was:

There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of whether

they and their Boards of Education share a clear understanding of their roles and

responsibilities, and budgetary shortfalls. This null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 27

Board Understands Role * Budgetary Shortfalls

| | | Budgetary Shortfalls | | |
		Yes	No	Total
Board Understands Role	Strongly Agree/Agree	24	2	26
	Neutral	2	0	2
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	0	1	1
Total		26	3	29
p value .011				
Cramer's V .560				

When the responses to Question 28 were considered in terms of the superintendents' longevity, cross tabulation analysis revealed a significant relationship between the variables (p value: .007; Cramer's V: 494). Table 28 presents the data for this comparison. The null hypothesis for this analysis was: There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of whether they and their Boards of Education share a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and the superintendents' longevity. Cross tabulation analysis revealed a significant relationship; therefore, this null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 28

Board Understands Role * Superintendent Longevity

		Superintendent Longevity			
		1 - 5 Years	6 - 10 Years	More than 10 Years	Total
Board Understands Role	Strongly Agree/Agree	9	15	2	26
	Neutral	0	0	2	2
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	0	1	0	1
	Total	9	16	4	29
p value .007					
Cramer's V .494					

Survey Question 30: Due to budgetary shortfalls and declining enrollments, the Board of Education has increased its involvement in the day-to-day operations of the district. One superintendent (3.4%) strongly agreed with this statement; seven (24.1%) agreed with the statement. An equal number of respondents chose the neutral response.

Seven superintendents disagreed with the statement, and seven strongly disagreed that the Board of Education had increased its involvement in the day-to-day operations of the district.

When the responses to survey question 30 were considered in terms of declining enrollments, no significant relationship was revealed (p value: .529; Cramer's V: 210). The null hypothesis for this comparison was: There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of increased involvement by the Boards of Education in the day-to-day activities of the district, and declining enrollments. This null hypothesis is accepted.

When the responses to survey question 30 were controlled for budgetary shortfalls, cross tabulation analysis revealed no significant relationship (p value: 582; Cramer's V: .193). The null hypothesis for this comparison was: There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of increased involvement by the Boards of Education in the day-to-day activities of the district, and budgetary shortfalls. Based on statistical analysis, this null hypothesis is accepted.

When the responses to survey question 30 were controlled for the superintendents' longevity, cross tabulation analysis revealed a significant relationship: (p value: .045; Cramer's V: 410). Table 29 presents these findings. The null hypothesis for this comparison was: There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of increased involvement by the Boards of Education in the day-to-day activities of the district, and the superintendents' longevity. This null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 29

Board Increased Involvement * Superintendent Longevity

		Superintendent Longevity			
		1 – 5 Years	6 – 10 Years	More than 10 Years	Total
Board Increased Involvement	Strongly Agree/Agree	2	4	2	8
	Neutral	5	1	1	7
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	2	11	1	14
Total		9	16	4	29
p value .045					
Cramer's V .410					

Survey Question 32: My relationship with the Board of Education has been negatively impacted as a result of budgetary shortfalls and declining enrollments. The majority of superintendents (65.5%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. Three superintendents (10.3%) strongly agreed or agreed with the statement. Seven superintendents (24.2%) chose the neutral response.

When the responses to survey question 32 were considered in terms of whether the district had experienced declining enrollments, cross tabulation analysis revealed no significant relationships between the variables (p value: .793; Cramer's V: .126. The null hypothesis for this comparison was: There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of negative changes in the relationships between themselves and their Boards of Education, and declining enrollments. Statistical analysis revealed no significant relationship; therefore, this null hypothesis was accepted.

When the responses to survey question 32 were considered in terms of whether the districts experienced budgetary shortfalls, cross tabulation analysis revealed no significant relationship (p value: .284: Cramer's V: .295). The null hypothesis for this comparison was: There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of negative changes in the relationships between themselves and their Boards of Education, and budgetary shortfalls. Based on the results of the analysis, this null hypothesis is accepted.

When the responses to survey question 32 were controlled for the superintendents' longevity, cross tabulation analysis did not reveal a significant relationship (p value: .074; Cramer's V: .383). The null hypothesis for this comparison was: There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of negative changes in the relationships between themselves and their Boards of Education, and the superintendents' longevity. Based on the results of the analysis, this null hypothesis is accepted.

Survey Question 34: I feel that my longevity with my district will be negatively impacted as a result of continuing budgetary shortfalls and declining enrollments. Nine superintendents (31%) strongly agreed or agreed with this statement. Four superintendents (13.8%) chose the neutral response, and 16 superintendents (55.2%) strongly disagreed or disagreed.

When the responses to survey question 34 were controlled for declining enrollments, cross tabulation analysis revealed no statistically significant relationship (p value: .257; Cramer's V: .306). The null hypothesis for this comparison was: There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of their expected

longevity and declining enrollments. Based on the results of the cross tabulation analysis, this null hypothesis is accepted.

When the responses to survey question 34 were controlled for budgetary shortfalls, cross tabulation analysis revealed no statistically significant relationship between the superintendents' responses and budgetary shortfalls (p value: .761; Cramer's V: .137). The null hypothesis for this comparison was: There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of their expected longevity and budgetary shortfalls. Based on the results of the cross tabulation analysis, this null hypothesis is accepted.

When the responses to survey question 34 were considered in terms of the superintendents' longevity, cross tabulation analysis revealed no significant relationship between the superintendents' responses and their expected longevity (p value: .714; Cramer's V: .191. The null hypothesis for this comparison was: There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of their expected longevity and the superintendents' longevity to date. Based on the results of the cross tabulation analysis, this null hypothesis is accepted.

Survey Question 36: I believe that budgetary shortfalls and declining enrollments have impacted, or will impact, my ability to be an effective superintendent. Fifteen superintendents (51.7%) either strongly agreed or agreed with this statement. Three superintendents (10.3%) chose the neutral response and 11 superintendents (38%) either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement.

When the responses to survey question 36 were controlled for declining enrollments, cross tabulation analysis revealed no significant relationship (p value: .524;

Cramer's V: .211). The null hypothesis for this comparison was: There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of their effectiveness and declining enrollments. This null hypothesis is accepted.

When the responses to survey question 36 were controlled for budgetary shortfalls, cross tabulation analysis revealed no significant relationship (p value: 775; Cramer's V: .133). The null hypothesis for this comparison was: There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of their effectiveness and budgetary shortfalls. Based on the results of the statistical analysis, this null hypothesis is accepted.

When the responses to survey question 36 were controlled for the superintendents' longevity, cross tabulation analysis did not reveal a significant relationship (p value: .826; Cramer's V: .161). The null hypothesis for this comparison was: There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of their effectiveness and the superintendents' longevity. Based on the results of statistical analysis, this null hypothesis is accepted.

Survey Question 38: My Board of Education and I have a collaborative working relationship. The majority of respondents (90%) strongly agreed or agreed with the statement. Two chose the neutral response, while just one superintendent disagreed with the statement. No superintendents strongly disagreed with the statement.

When the responses to survey question 38 were controlled for declining enrollments, cross tabulation analysis did not reveal a significant relationship (p value: .824: Cramer's V: .115). The null hypothesis for this comparison was: There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of their collaborative

working relationships with their Boards of Education, and declining enrollments. This null hypothesis is accepted.

When the responses to survey question 38 were controlled for budgetary shortfalls, cross tabulation analysis did reveal a significant relationship (p value: .011; Cramer's V: .560) Table 30 presents the data from this analysis. The null hypothesis for this comparison was: There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of their collaborative working relationships with their Boards of Education, and budgetary shortfalls. Based on the results of the cross tabulation analysis, this null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 30

Collaborative Relationship * Budgetary Shortfalls

| | | Budgetary Shortfalls | | |
		Yes	No	Total
Collaborative Relationship	Strongly Agree/Agree	24	2	26
	Neutral	2	0	2
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	0	1	1
	Total	26	3	29
p value .011				
Cramer's V .560				

When the responses to survey question 38 were controlled for the superintendents' longevity, cross tabulation did reveal a significant relationship (p value: .011; Cramer's V: .560). Data for this comparison is presented in Table 31. The null hypothesis for this comparison was: There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of their collaborative working relationships with their

Boards of Education, and budgetary shortfalls. Based on the results of the cross

tabulation analysis, this null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 31

Collaborative Relationship * Superintendent Longevity

		Superintendent Longevity			
		1 - 5 Years	6 - 10 Years	More than 10 Years	Total
Collaborative Relationship	Strongly Agree/Agree	9	15	2	26
	Neutral	0	0	2	2
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	0	1	0	1
	Total	9	16	4	29
p value .007					
Cramer's V .494					

Survey Question 40: I am satisfied with the working relationship I have with the

Board of Education. Superintendents generally agreed with this statement. Ten

respondents (34.5%) strongly agreed and 15 respondents (51.7%) agreed that they are

satisfied with their working relationships with their boards of education. Two

superintendents chose the neutral response. One superintendent disagreed and one

strongly disagreed with the statement.

When the responses to survey question 40 were controlled for declining

enrollments, cross tabulation analysis did not reveal a significant relationship (p value:

.765; Cramer's V: .136). The null hypothesis for this comparison was: There is no

significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of their working

relationships with their Boards of Education, and declining enrollments. This null hypothesis is accepted.

No significant relationship between the variables was revealed when the responses to survey question 40 were controlled for budgetary shortfalls (p value: .152; Cramer's V: .361). The null hypothesis for this comparison was: There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of their working relationships with their Boards of Education, and budgetary shortfalls. Based on the results of cross tabulation analysis the null hypothesis is accepted.

When the responses to survey question 40 were controlled for the superintendents' longevity, cross tabulation analysis did not reveal a significant relationship (p value: .209; Cramer's V: .318). There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of their working relationships with their Boards of Education, and the superintendents' longevity. Based on the results of cross tabulation analysis, this null hypothesis is accepted.

Summary

This chapter presented the results of the study. Cross tabulation analysis of the results found there were five significant relationships between the variables of declining enrollments, budgetary shortfalls, the superintendents' longevity and the superintendents' responses to the survey questions. Tables highlighting these relationships were presented. The next chapter presents a discussion of the results, limitations of the study, and recommendations for further research.

Chapter Five: Summary and Discussion

The previous chapter presented data from a survey of superintendents of K-12 public school districts in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. This chapter presents a discussion of the results, conclusions and recommendations for further research.

Review of the Problem and Methodology

In 1994, Michigan voters overwhelmingly passed Proposal A, a ballot initiative that changed the process by which local school districts received financial resources for operations from a local tax-based system based on local housing values to a per-student dollar amount. A significant feature of the proposal increased the state's sales tax from four percent to six percent. Prior to the vote, the state collected taxes based on property values, and this money was disbursed to local school districts. Higher property values translated into more money for education for the students in that area. Less developed, less valuable properties resulted in fewer dollars for local school districts in those areas of the state. These inequities, in addition to the push to reduce taxes, contributed to the passage of Proposal A. The referendum raised the state's sales tax from four percent to six percent. The additional sales tax revenues supplanted a portion of property taxes and were designated for schools. Instead of providing money to districts based on tax values, Michigan began funding its public schools using a formula on a per pupil basis. The state legislature annually sets a level of funding per child as part of the budget process. The per pupil amount is termed the foundation allowance. Foundation allowances for the years 2001 – 2006 rose from $6,000 to $6,875 per student. However, in 2003, 2004 and 2005 the amount was frozen at $6,700 per student. Revenue shortfalls during the past five years forced the state to pro-rate payments and send districts less money than the districts

had been led to expect. In some cases, this reduction in funding occurred in the middle of the budget year. These mid-year reductions caused severe financial problems in some districts as the budgets approved by the boards of education were based on the foundation amount the state set at the start of the budget cycle.

The Upper Peninsula of Michigan covers 16,500 square miles, nearly one-third of the state's total land mass. The region is approximately the same size as Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut combined. Sparsely populated, with approximately 312,000 residents as of 2005, the Upper Peninsula is home to just three percent of Michigan's total population. The population of the Upper Peninsula declined approximately two percent from 2000 to 2005. During the same period, the region experienced a significant decline in the number of school-age children. Population figures compiled from the state's census information revealed that the population of children ages 5-9 decreased 12.88%. The population of children ages 10-14 decreased 12.05%, while the population of 15-19 year-olds dropped 6.4%.

The region lacks a manufacturing base; tourism, logging and mining are the main industries. Indicative of the economic woes in the region, unemployment in the Upper Peninsula during 2007 was nearly one and a half times the national average.

As a result of declining student enrollments in districts in the Upper Peninsula, and Michigan's budgetary difficulties, school districts received less funding from the state and were forced to educate their students with diminishing resources. District superintendents and boards of education face difficult decisions regarding services and programs they can provide to students. Differing points of view and perspectives can lead

to discord between board members and the superintendents. This discord can lead to strained relationships between boards and superintendents.

The overall problem for this study was to ascertain, from the superintendents' perspectives, whether their relationships with their boards of education had changed as a result of declining enrollments, budgetary shortfalls, and the superintendents' longevity. A web-based survey was administered to superintendents of K-12 (N=53) public school districts located in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. The study was conducted over a four-week period during the fall of 2007. The survey was administered utilizing Schoolwires software; used by the author's school district for a variety of tasks including district, building and individual teacher web pages. The package also includes a survey module. Superintendents did not need to have access to the Schoolwires software in order to access and respond to the survey.

The survey asked respondents about the length of their tenure as superintendents, their educational backgrounds, and the enrollments and fund equity balances of their districts. A series of Likert Scale questions sought the superintendents' perspectives on the perception of their relationships with their boards of education. Additionally, superintendents had the opportunity to add their comments to several of the survey questions. These open-ended questions allowed respondents to elaborate on particular aspects of the survey questions.

This survey used cross tabulations to determine whether significant relationships exist between the independent variables of declining enrollment, budgetary shortfalls, the superintendents' longevity, and the superintendents' perceived relationships with their boards of education. The study analyzed the results of the cross tabulations to determine

p values and Cramer's V scores. Both of these measure the strength of the relationship between variables.

Chi square analysis compares the observed distribution of the values with the expected frequencies and determines whether the difference between the expected and the observed is due to chance. Further statistical analysis of the chi square values that resulted from this study provided p values. The p value is a probability with a value ranging from zero to one. Correlations that are significant at the .05 level indicate there is a 5% chance or less that a strong (or stronger) correlation than the given one would result from an unusual random sampling of data, when in reality there was no correlation (Garson, n.d.). The level of significance for this study was $p < .05$.

Cramer's V measures the strength of association or dependency between nominal variables. This statistic measures the reduction in the amount of error in predicting the dependent variable's distribution that results from knowing the distribution of the independent variable. A Cramer's V score of 0 indicates no relationship between the variables, while a 1 indicates a perfect relationship.

Data was exported from the Schoolwires software to the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software for analysis. The analysis of the data was limited due to the large percentage of school districts in the target population that had suffered decreases in enrollment and budgetary shortfalls. For example, 26 of 29 (89.7%) respondents indicated student enrollment had decreased during the past five years. This imbalance skewed the distribution of cases. Specifically, in using cross tabulations, some of the cells were empty since so few of the reporting districts experienced growth, either in enrollment or revenues, in the past five years, and the vast majority of the districts

experienced budgetary shortfalls during the same period. The sample's distribution of cases accurately reflects the situation among all the K-12 public school districts in the Upper Peninsula. Where appropriate and without distorting the meaning of the data, some of the response categories have been combined to allow for more extensive statistical analysis.

Summary and Discussion of the Results

The first 26 questions in the survey sought demographic data about the superintendents and the districts, including enrollment and budget trends. The last section asked respondents a series of questions regarding their perceptions of their relationships with their boards of education.

In the previous chapter, the results were presented in two main sections: demographic data and relationship data. This chapter follows the same format.

Demographic Data.

In general, the respondents did not have significant experience as superintendents. Approximately 70% of the respondents had 10 years or less experience as superintendents. In their analysis of the superintendency, Glass and Franceschini (2007) found that, "The mean tenure for superintendents is 5.5 years. The median tenure for superintendents is near 6 years" (p. xvii). Superintendents in the Upper Peninsula generally seemed to fit these profiles.

Fifty-five percent of the respondents had been employed by the district prior to assuming the superintendency. Most (65.5%) had master's degrees; the rest had either education specialist or doctoral degrees. These results were similar to those reported in

the Glass and Franceschini (2007) report that found 80% of superintendents hold master's degrees in educational administration.

In their study, Glass and Franceschini (2007) reported that 71% of districts nationwide have enrollments of 2,499 or fewer students. Only three districts in the Upper Peninsula have enrollments of more than 2,499, and just one of these has an enrollment of more than 3,000. Data from this survey revealed that one respondent indicated district enrollment of less than 100 students; 10 respondents indicated district enrollments of 101-500 students; eight respondents indicated district enrollments of 501-900 students; 14 respondents indicated district enrollments of more than 900 students.

Most districts (89.7%) in the region experienced declining enrollments during the past five years. Eight districts reported decreases of less than five percent; 10 districts reported enrollment decreases of 6% - 10%; eight districts reported decreases of more than 10%.

Three superintendents indicated their districts' student enrollments had increased during the past five years. Of those that reported increased enrollments, one reported an increase of 6% - 10%, while the others reported increases of less than five percent. These figures are supported by census data that shows reductions in the number of school-age children in the region.

Nearly 80% of respondents indicated the district had experienced reductions in total revenues during the past five years; two had no change, and four reported increases. While most districts experienced reductions in total revenues, an even higher number of districts (93.1%) reported increases in per pupil expenditures during the time span. The costs of operating school districts including health care, retirement, textbooks,

technology, transportation, and utilities continued to rise over the past five years. One significant factor missing from the previous list is salaries. Few collective bargaining agreements settled in the past five years in the region included salary increases. Despite holding the line on salaries, districts experienced higher per pupil expenditures as other costs increased.

Fund equity is defined as an amount of money in a district's general fund not spent by the district. The Michigan School Business Officials organization recommends districts maintain a fund balance equal to 15% of their general fund expenditures. The majority of respondents (79.3%) indicated their districts do not have board policies requiring minimum fund equity balances. Two districts reported their boards revised the policies so that the minimum required fund equity balances were reduced. One of the two responding superintendents indicated that the district had reduced this figure by more than eight percent during the past five years. The other district reported reductions of three to five percent. Approximately 38% of survey respondents indicated their districts have fund equity balances of more than 10% of their total budgets. The rest of the districts have fund equity balances of less than 10% of their districts' total budgets; and approximately 45% of the districts have fund equity balances of less than five percent of their total budgets.

Most districts (75.9%) reported that their districts' fund equity balances had declined during the past five years. More than half of the districts that reported decreases in their fund equity balances (54.5%) experienced reductions in their fund equity balances of more than 10%. The remaining districts indicated reductions in their fund

equity balances of less than 10%. Four districts reported increases in their fund equity balances, while two districts reported no changes.

The results of this study revealed that most districts in the region had experienced budgetary shortfalls during the past five years. The vast majority of respondents (89.7%) indicated their districts had drawn from their fund equity balances during the past five years in order to balance their budgets. Districts must submit balanced budgets to the state. If budgeted expenses are greater than budgeted revenues, districts must draw from their fund equity balances in order to cover the shortfalls.

Most respondents (86.2%) reported the number of teachers in their districts had declined during the past five years. There is a connection between a decline in student enrollment and the number of teachers. If there are fewer students to teach, fewer teachers are required. A slight majority of respondents (51.7%) agreed or strongly agreed that the quality of their districts' educational program had greatly diminished over the past five years. One respondent commented, "The quality of the programs has not decreased, but our availability of program offerings has decreased." One common indicator of a quality educational program is class sizes. It is possible superintendents included increased class sizes in their rationale for agreeing with the statement that the quality of their districts' educational program had greatly diminished.

Relationship Data.

The final seven questions in the survey sought to ascertain a sense of the superintendents' perspectives on their relationships with their boards of education through a series of Likert Scale questions. Responses to these questions were compared against the variables of declining enrollments, budgetary shortfalls, and the

superintendents' longevity. Three null hypotheses were developed for each of the seven questions, and they were accepted or rejected based on the results of cross tabulation analysis. The level of significance for this study was $p < .05$. Data revealed five significant relationships exist among the variables.

As reported in Chapter Four, the vast majority of respondents (90%) felt that they and their boards of education have a clear understanding of their respective roles and responsibilities (Question 28).

During times of tight budgets, decisions concerning which programs or services to cut can polarize boards of education and superintendents. The decisions about the best ways to solve dilemmas may create great dissension. Edwards (1999) commented, "The elected board member … must be able to give up control and accept the recommendation of those district staff who were educated, trained, and hired to be the experts" (p.9). Trusting the superintendents' recommendations may be more difficult for some board members than for others, which may lead to stress between them and their superintendents.

Superintendents with more longevity (more than six years) tended to disagree more than their less-tenured counterparts that their boards of education increased their involvement in the day-to-day activities of the district as a result of budgetary shortfalls.

Superintendents with the least experience (1 – 5 years) tended to be more neutral on this question. Members of this group have only experienced tight financial times during their tenure as superintendents. Due to declining enrollments and budgetary shortfalls, their boards of education may have been more inclined to intercede in the day-to-day activities of the district at the beginning of the superintendents' tenure with the

district. Longer-serving superintendents, who had more experience when there was more money in the districts, would quickly notice increased involvement by their boards of education as financial conditions worsened in their districts.

The superintendents whose districts had drawn down their fund equity balances overwhelmingly felt they have collaborative relationships with their boards of education. This finding could be surprising to readers of this study as it may be counterintuitive to think that collaborative relationships between boards of education and superintendents can exist during tight financial times. One possible explanation for this scenario follows.

When faced with shortfalls in their budgets, districts can either draw from their fund equity balances or borrow funds to cover the shortages. In either case, the superintendents make the recommendations, and boards of education vote on them. Most districts in Michigan's Upper Peninsula have experienced declining enrollments and budgetary shortfalls during the past five years. The economic realities in the region have been such that there were limited options for boards and superintendents to pursue. As a result, the districts cut costs by reducing staff, limiting purchases, or both. Once the recommendations were made and the votes cast, the decisions were shared ones; both the superintendents and the boards of education were tied to the choices and shared the responsibility for them. In reality, the board and superintendents had to collaborate in order to help the districts survive the budgetary shortfalls.

Conclusions

The overall problem for this study was to determine the effect that the factors of budgetary shortfalls, declining enrollments, and the superintendents' longevity had on the superintendent's perceived relationships with their boards of education. Three research

questions were the focus of the study. Twenty-one null hypotheses were developed from the survey questions. The null hypotheses were accepted or rejected based on cross tabulation analysis of the responses provided by the superintendents.

The research questions for this study were:

1. Do declining enrollments have an effect on the superintendents' perceptions of their relationships with their boards of education?

2. Do budgetary shortfalls have an effect on the superintendents' perceptions of their relationships with their boards of education?

3. Does the superintendents' longevity, when controlled for declining enrollments and budgetary shortfalls, have an effect on the superintendents' perceptions of their relationships with their boards of education?

The results of this study showed five significant relationships exist between the variables of budgetary shortfalls, the superintendents' longevity, and their perceptions of the relationships between themselves and their boards of education. Overall the superintendents did not feel the variables had affected their relationships with their boards of education. Even though most districts experienced budgetary shortfalls during the past five years, the superintendents remained surprisingly positive about their relationships with their boards of education. Longer-tenured superintendents may have more experiences dealing with the factors of declining enrollments and budgetary shortfalls than their less-tenured counterparts, but the data shows that neither group felt their relationships with their boards of education suffered as a result of the variables. No significant relationships were revealed between declining enrollments and the

superintentendents' perceptions of the relationships between them and their boards of education. Most school districts in the Upper Peninsula experienced declining enrollments; however after analysis of the data, this variable did not appear to adversely affect the superintendents' relationships with their boards of education.

The following section lists the five null hypotheses that were rejected, indicating a significant relationship.

Rejected Null Hypotheses.

2. There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of whether they and their Boards of Education share a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and budgetary shortfalls. Rejected.

3. There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of whether they and their Boards of Education share a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and the superintendents' longevity. Rejected.

6. There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of increased involvement by the Boards of Education in the day-to-day activities of the district, and the superintendents' longevity. Rejected.

17. There is no significant relationship between the superintendents' perceptions of their collaborative working relationships with their Boards of Education, and budgetary shortfalls. Rejected.

18. There is no significant relationship between the superintendents'

perceptions of their collaborative working relationships with their Boards

of Education, and the superintendents' longevity. Rejected.

Limitations of the Study

The study was not designed to replicate other studies on board-superintendent

relationships, but rather to add to the body of knowledge on this highly important

relationship. Glatthorn (1998) noted that limitations do not mean flaws or weaknesses. He

wrote, "Instead the term should be construed as having two other related denotations: the

boundaries of the study, and ways in which the findings may lack generalizability" (p.

135). The following limitations were noted in this study:

1. The Upper Peninsula is a remote, sparsely populated area, and it would be

   difficult to compare the results of this study to one conducted in a large

   metropolitan area such as Detroit or Grand Rapids.

2. It would be difficult to generalize the results of this study to all public and

   non-public districts in the state. Superintendents (or head administrators)

   of non-public schools or districts, as well as those who oversee districts

   structured differently than traditional K-12 districts, often face different

   budgetary pressures. Additionally, some superintendents of these districts

   do not interact with traditional school boards.

3. School board members are elected annually in Michigan. These annual

   elections can change the make-up and tenor of the board, and thus could

   impact the superintendents' perceptions of the relationships with the board

   of education.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study sought the perspectives of superintendents of K-12 public school districts in Michigan's Upper Peninsula concerning changes in their relationships with their boards of education as a result of declining enrollments and budgetary shortfalls. Other research on the relationships between superintendents and boards of education has been conducted, however further research would add to the body of knowledge. Based upon the results of this study, the following are recommendations for further research:

1. A study should be conducted to gauge the perspectives of superintendents across the entire state.

2. Research should be conducted that will seek the perspectives of the boards of education, both in the Upper Peninsula and across the state.

3. A research project should be conducted to identify specific strategies to assist board members and superintendents during times of financial crisis.

4. A similar study should be conducted to gauge the attitudes and perceptions of students and district staff during times of financial crisis.

5. A study should be conducted to gauge the effects of stress on the superintendents caused by strained relationships with the boards of education.

6. Research should be conducted to determine if board member turnover impacts the superintendents' perceived relationships with the boards of education.

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Appendix A

Population Changes 2000 – 2005 by Age Group

County	Ages 5-9		Ages 10-14		Ages 15-19	
	2000	2005	2000	2005	2000	2005
Alger	529	451	640	535	647	592
Baraga	559	476	603	548	543	542
Chippewa	2185	2029	2396	2149	2829	2624
Delta	2376	2117	2846	2407	2950	2754
Dickinson	1972	1561	2079	2008	1962	1877
Gogebic	908	791	1105	907	1269	1258
Houghton	2078	1856	2337	1981	3685	3433
Iron	712	569	864	730	865	800
Keewenaw	109	101	130	112	240	155
Luce	399	343	429	403	475	425
Mackinac	740	535	863	716	743	770
Marquette	3665	3210	4080	3624	5571	5159
Menominee	1589	1491	1822	1618	1848	1704
Ontonagon	398	336	505	401	458	451
Schoolcraft	560	495	570	568	602	529
	18779	16361	21269	18707	24687	23073
	PERCENT CHANGE -12.88%		PERCENT CHANGE -12.05%		PERCENT CHANGE -6.54%	

Compiled from data retrieved from:
http://www.michigan.gov/documents/hal_lm_census_ca5s0005-t_167585_7.xls
July 9, 2007

Appendix B

Survey Questions

1. How long have you served as a superintendent?

    A. 1 – 5 years

    B. 6 – 10 years

    C. 11 – 15 years

    D. 16 – 20 years

    E. More than 20 years

2. How long have you served as the superintendent in your current district?

    A. 1 – 5 years

    B. 6 – 10 years

    C. 11 – 15 years

    D. 16 – 20 years

    E. More than 20 years

3. Prior to assuming the superintendency, were you employed by the district?

    A. Yes

    B. No

4. Please indicate your level of education.

    A. Bachelor's Degree

    B. Master's Degree

    C. Education Specialist Degree

    D. Doctoral Degree

5. What is the enrollment in your district?

    A. Less than 100 students

    B. 101 – 500 students

    C. 501 – 900 students

    D. 901 – 1300 students

    E. More than 1300 students

6.   During the past five years, has your district's enrollment increased, decreased, or stayed the same?

    A. Increased

    B. Decreased

    C. Stayed the same

7.   If your district's enrollment has increased in the past five years, what is the percentage of the increase?

    A. Less than 5%

    B. 6% - 10%

    C. More than 10%

8.   If your district's enrollment has decreased in the past five years, what is the percentage of the decrease?

    A. Less than 5%

    B. 6% - 10%

    C. More than 10%

9.   During the past five years, have your district's total revenues increased, decreased, or stayed the same?

    A. Increased

    B. Decreased

    C. Stayed the same

10.   If your district's total revenues have increased in the past five years, what is the percentage of the increase?

    A. Less than 5%

    B. 6% - 10%

    C. More than 10%

11.   If your district's total revenues have decreased in the past five years, what is the

      percentage of the decrease?

          A. Less than 5%
          B. 6% - 10%
          C. More than 10%

12.   During the past five years, have your district's total per pupil expenditures

      increased, decreased, or stayed the same?

          A. Increased
          B. Decreased
          C. Stayed the same

13.   If your district's total per pupil expenditures have increased in the past five years,

      what is the percentage of the increase?

          A. Less than 5%
          B. 6% - 10%
          C. More than 10%

14.   If your district's total per pupil expenditures have decreased in the past five years,

      what is the percentage of the decrease?

          A. Less than 5%
          B. 6% - 10%
          C. More than 10%

15.   What percentage of the students in your district qualify for free/reduced lunch?

          A. Less than 25%
          B. 26% - 50%
          C. 51% - 75%
          D. More than 75%

16.   During the past five years, has your district's fund equity balance, as a percentage of the total budget, increased, decreased, or stayed the same?

      A. Increased

      B. Decreased

      C. Stayed the same

17.   If your district's fund equity balance has increased in the past five years, what is the percentage of the increase?

      A. Less than 5%

      B. 6% - 10%

      C. More than 10%

18.   If your district's fund equity balance has decreased in the past five years, what is the percentage of the decrease?

      A. Less than 5%

      B. 6% - 10%

      C. More than 10%

19.   As a percentage of the district's total budget, what is the district's fund equity balance?

      A. Less than 5%

      B. 6% - 10%

      C. More than 10%

20.   Does the district have a board policy that requires a fund equity balance equal to a minimum percentage of the total budget?

      A. Yes

      B. No

21.   If the district has a board policy that requires a fund equity balance equal to a minimum percentage of the total budget, what is the percentage?

A. Less than 5%

B. 6% - 10%

C. 11% - 15%

D. More than 15%

22. In the past five years, has the district revised this policy so that the required

minimum fund equity balance is reduced?

A. Yes

B. No

23. If the district has revised the policy so requiring a minimum fund equity balance

in the past five years, what is the percentage of the decrease?

A. Less than 2%

B. 3% - 5%

C. 6% - 8%

D. More than 8%

24. During the past five years, has the district had to draw from its fund equity in

order to balance the budget?

A. Yes

B. No

25. During the past five years, has your district's total number of teaching staff

increased, decreased, or stayed the same?

A. Increased

B. Decreased

C. Stayed the same

26. During the past five years, the quality of my district's educational program has

diminished due to budgetary shortfalls and declining enrollments.

A. Strongly agree

B. Agree

C. Neutral

D. Disagree

E. Strongly disagree

27. Please share any thoughts you have on Question 26.

28. The board and I have a clear understanding of our respective roles and

responsibilities.

A. Strongly agree

B. Agree

C. Neutral

D. Disagree

E. Strongly disagree

29. Please share any thoughts you have on Question 28.

30. Due to budgetary shortfalls and declining enrollments, the Board of Education has

increased its involvement in the day-to-day operations of the district.

A. Strongly agree

B. Agree

C. Neutral

D. Disagree

E. Strongly disagree

31. Please share any thoughts you have on Question 30.

32. My relationship with the board of education has been negatively impacted as a

result of budgetary shortfalls and declining enrollments.

A. Strongly agree

B. Agree

C. Neutral

D. Disagree

E. Strongly disagree

33.   Please share any thoughts you have on Question 32.

34.   I feel my longevity with my district will be negatively impacted as a result of

budgetary shortfalls and declining enrollments.

   A. Strongly agree

   B. Agree

   C. Neutral

   D. Disagree

   E. Strongly disagree

35.   Please share any thoughts you have on Question 34.

36.   I believe that budgetary shortfalls and declining enrollments have impacted, or

will impact, my ability to be an effective superintendent.

   A. Strongly agree

   B. Agree

   C. Neutral

   D. Disagree

   E. Strongly disagree

37.   Please share any thoughts you have on Question 36.

38.   My Board of Education and I have a collaborative working relationship.

   A. Strongly agree

   B. Agree

   C. Neutral

   D. Disagree

   E. Strongly disagree

39.   Please share any thoughts you have on Question 38.

40.   I am satisfied with the working relationship I have with the Board of Education.

A. Strongly agree

B. Agree

C. Neutral

D. Disagree

E. Strongly disagree

41.   Please share any thoughts you have on Question 40.

42.   Please add any comments you wish regarding your relationship with the Board of

Education.

Appendix C

Results of Cross Tabulation Analysis Tables

Table 1

Board Understands Role * Enrollment Change

| | | Enrollment Change | | |
		Increased	Decreased	Total
Board Understands Role	Strongly Agree/Agree	3	23	26
	Neutral	0	2	2
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	0	1	1
Total		3	26	29
p value .824				
Cramer's V .115				

Table 2

Board Understands Role * Budgetary Shortfalls

| | | Budgetary Shortfalls | | |
		Yes	No	Total
Board Understands Role	Strongly Agree/Agree	24	2	26
	Neutral	2	0	2
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	0	1	1
Total		26	3	29
p value .011				
Cramer's V .560				

Table 3

Board Understands Role * Superintendent Longevity

| | | Superintendent Longevity | | | |
		1 - 5 Years	6 - 10 Years	More than 10 Years	Total
Board Understands Role	Strongly Agree/Agree	9	15	2	26
	Neutral	0	0	2	2
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	0	1	0	1
Total		9	16	4	29
p value .007					
Cramer's V .494					

Table 4

Board Increased Involvement * Enrollment change

| | | Enrollment change | | |
		Increased	Decreased	Total
Board Increased Involvement	Strongly Agree/Agree	0	8	8
	Neutral	1	6	7
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	2	12	14
Total		3	26	29
p value .529				
Cramer's V .210				

Table 5

Board Increased Involvement * Budgetary Shortfalls

		Budgetary Shortfalls		Total
		Yes	No	
Board Increased Involvement	Strongly Agree/Agree	7	1	8
	Neutral	7	0	7
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	12	2	14
Total		26	3	29
p value .582				
Cramer's V .193				

Table 6

Board Increased Involvement * Superintendent Longevity

		Superintendent Longevity			Total
		1 – 5 Years	6 – 10 Years	More than 10 Years	
Board Increased Involvement	Strongly Agree/Agree	2	4	2	8
	Neutral	5	1	1	7
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	2	11	1	14
Total		9	16	4	29
p value .045					
Cramer's V .410					

Table 7

Negative Impact on Relationship * Enrollment change

		Enrollment Change		
		Increased	Decreased	Total
Negative Impact on Relationship	Strongly Agree/Agree	0	3	3
	Neutral	1	6	7
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	2	17	19
	Total	3	26	29
p value .793				
Cramer's V .126				

Table 8

Negative Impact on Relationship * Budgetary Shortfalls

		Budgetary Shortfalls		
		Yes	No	Total
Negative Impact on Relationship	Strongly Agree/Agree	2	1	3
	Neutral	7	0	7
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	17	2	19
	Total	26	3	29
p value .284				
Cramer's V .295				

Table 9

Negative Impact on Relationship * Superintendent Longevity

		Superintendent Longevity			
		1 - 5 Years	6 - 10 Years	More than 10 Years	Total
Negative Impact on Relationship	Strongly Agree/Agree	0	1	2	3
	Neutral	2	4	1	7
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	7	11	1	19
Total		9	16	4	29
pvalue .074					
Cramer's V .383					

Table 10

Negative Impact on Longevity * Enrollment change

		Enrollment Change		
		Increased	Decreased	Total
Negative Impact on Longevity	Strongly Agree/Agree	0	9	9
	Neutral	0	4	4
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	3	13	16
Total		3	26	29
p value .257				
Cramer's V .306				

Table 11

Negative Impact on Longevity * Budgetary Shortfalls

| | | Budgetary Shortfalls | | |
		Yes	No	Total
Negative Impact on Longevity	Strongly Agree/Agree	8	1	9
	Neutral	4	0	4
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	14	2	16
	Total	26	3	29
p value .761				
Cramer's V .137				

Table 12

Negative Impact on Longevity * Superintendent Longevity

| | | Superintendent Longevity | | | |
		1 - 5 Years	6 - 10 Years	More than 10 Years	Total
Negative Impact on Longevity	Strongly Agree/Agree	4	4	1	9
	Neutral	1	3	0	4
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	4	9	3	16
	Total	9	16	4	29
p value .714					
Cramer's V .191					

Table 13

Negative Impact on Effectiveness * Enrollment Change

| | | Enrollment Change | | |
		Increased	Decreased	Total
Negative Impact on Effectiveness	Strongly Agree/Agree	1	14	15
	Neutral	0	3	3
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	2	9	11
	Total	3	26	29
p value .524				
Cramer's V .211				

Table 14

Negative Impact on Longevity * Budgetary Shortfalls

| | | Budgetary Shortfalls | | |
		Yes	No	Total
Negative Impact on Longevity	Strongly Agree/Agree	8	1	9
	Neutral	4	0	4
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	14	2	16
	Total	26	3	29
p value .775				
Cramer's V .133				

Table 15

Negative Impact on Effectiveness * Superintendent Longevity

		Superintendent Longevity			
		1 - 5 Years	6 - 10 Years	More than 10 Years	Total
Negative Impact on Effectiveness	Strongly Agree/Agree	5	7	3	15
	Neutral	1	2	0	3
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	3	7	1	11
Total		9	16	4	29
p value .826					
Cramer's V .161					

Table 16

Collaborative Relationship * Enrollment Change

		Enrollment Change		
		Increased	Decreased	Total
Collaborative Relationship	Strongly Agree/Agree	3	23	26
	Neutral	0	2	2
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	0	1	1
Total		3	26	29
p value .824				
Cramer's V .115				

Table 17

Collaborative Relationship * Budgetary Shortfalls

		Budgetary Shortfalls		
		Yes	No	Total
Collaborative Relationship	Strongly Agree/Agree	24	2	26
	Neutral	2	0	2
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	0	1	1
Total		26	3	29
p value .011				
Cramer's V .560				

Table 18

Collaborative Relationship * Superintendent Longevity

		Superintendent Longevity			
		1 - 5 Years	6 - 10 Years	More than 10 Years	Total
Collaborative Relationship	Strongly Agree/Agree	9	15	2	26
	Neutral	0	0	2	2
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	0	1	0	1
Total		9	16	4	29
p value .007					
Cramer's V .494					

Table 19

Satisfied with Relationship * Enrollment Change

		Enrollment Change		
		Increased	Decreased	Total
Satisfied with Relationship	Strongly Agree/Agree	3	22	25
	Neutral	0	2	2
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	0	2	2
Total		3	26	29
p value .765				
Cramer's V .136				

Table 20

Satisfied with Relationship * Budgetary Shortfalls

		Budgetary Shortfalls		
		Yes	No	Total
Satisfied with Relationship	Strongly Agree/Agree	23	2	25
	Neutral	2	0	2
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	1	1	2
Total		26	3	29
p value .152				
Cramer's V .361				

Table 21

Satisfied with Relationship * Superintendent Longevity

		Superintendent Longevity			
		1 - 5 Years	6 - 10 Years	More than 10 Years	Total
Satisfied with Relationship	Strongly Agree/Agree	9	14	2	25
	Neutral	0	1	1	2
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	0	1	1	2
Total		9	16	4	29
p value .209					
Cramer's V .318					

Appendix D

Superintendents' Comments

Question 27. During the past five years, the quality of my district's educational program

has greatly diminished due to budgetary shortfalls and declining enrollments.

1. We have done everything possible to keep our educational program intact. We have

reduced some staff but that has not had an adverse affect on our core curriculum offerings

nor our class sizes.

2. We have been forced to cut sections of classes and even total courses such as foreign

languages, advanced science and elective offerings.

3. Our district has been spending from fund balance to keep programming intact, hoping

to outlast the poor economy, inadequate funding from the state and to outlast our

neighbors who have cut programming to survive. Our only hope to continue our current

programming is to get a substantial increase in State aid (not going to happen) or to see

an increase in enrollment.

4. Astonishingly, the quality of our educational programs has remained high and our test

results attest to that.

5. We did not have declining enrollment. We reduced a staff member because of a

retirement, not program reduction. Our educational programming has been maintained

because we did not have declining enrollment resulting in reduced revenue. We are one

of the very few who are fortunate to say that.

6. It hasn't diminished, but meeting the ever-increasing demands is the main challenge.

7. We have reduced staff by 20% - resulting in larger class sizes and fewer program

offerings.

8. We have avoided cutting academic programs, but have increased class sizes in the secondary classrooms.

9. One of the problems in fighting for more funding is that we continually do more with less. The problem is not that we need to maintain the quality of programming; in light of new requirements we need to INCREASE the quality of the program. We also need to contain costs and have equitable funding before we see a general increase in funding.

10. The district moved from a full time Title I teacher to para pros and dropped the 1/10 music teacher.

11. Declining enrollment wouldn't be as much of a problem if it didn't directly impact our budget, but it does.

12. Not the case here. We have cut teachers and other staff significantly. We have limited raises and benefits. We have also worked hard at professional development and continue to improve.

13. The quality of the programs has not decreased, but our availability of program offerings has decreased.

14. What can be said? Quality less-senior teachers have been dropped to pay for increases in health care, increments and small teacher wage increases at steps. Everyone has suffered with more to do and less financial services to cover the tab. Times are tough and getting tougher. New ideas are needed.

Question 29. The board and I have a clear understanding of our respective roles and responsibilities.

1. The Board sets our policy and the administration operates the district within these policies. As finances have become tight, I have involved the Board more in the decision-making process as we look to reduce expenditures across the entire budget.

2. I am fortunate that I work with a Board that allows me to lead the district. They recognize my years of experience in education and value my knowledge to make decisions based upon what's best for kids.

3. As board members leave and new ones begin, I see a definite lack of understanding of roles and responsibilities and an increase in efforts to micromanage.

4. I get their opinions when I am getting a feel for a matter. However, it is made clear they are policy makers and I run the school. We have a good understanding, with good results.

5. Anytime you have turnover, there is a learning curve.

6. Recent board training has helped to clarify roles. The board is less prone to micromanage.

7. Our board has been policy oriented – they haven't gotten involved in micromanagement. The biggest temptation to do so is when athletics is involved. They are clearly uncomfortable with the concept of reducing opportunities for students, but know that less revenue means that ultimately happens. We have been fortunate that most of the reductions have occurred by not replacing staff when they leave. They really struggle with layoffs.

8. We routinely discuss roles and have agreed to a document outlining roles and expectations.

9. I have a very good relationship with the Board, and they have responded positively to most of my recommendations.

10. Some members talk too much to those outside the inner circle and try to exercise powers they really do not have – that should be administrative.

11. The Board could use more training.

12. Some board members are TOO active in their roles, attempting to micromanage the district. Defining the role of the board is one thing; getting them to agree to that role and adhere to it is another.

Q31. Due to budgetary shortfalls and declining enrollments, the Board of Education has increased its involvement in the day-to-day operations of the district.

1. The Board does not involve itself in our day-to-day operations.

2. 1-2 board members feel the need to increase their involvement in the day-to-day operations.

3. This has increased slightly due to negotiating our teacher contract (not settled) and as we begin our renovation project (our bond proposal passed this fall).

4. I don't know if the Board's involvement has increased due to budgetary shortfalls or because there are members who do not understand what their roles are.

5. They have tried; this must be deflected.

6. When I took over, I assumed a significant fund deficit. It was gross mismanagement, not declining enrollment. In one year we went from a negative fund balance to positive. They trust me. Micromanagement would not be successful.

7. Our board does not micromanage.

8. Prior to my arrival the board was involved to a great extent, but not since I have been here.

9. Public pressure has been applied to individual board members due to proposals to cut programs and buildings.

10. The board is split – some like to be very involved in the day-to-day, others prefer to leave that to me and spend their time/efforts focusing on improving student achievement.

11. The board wants to be more informed because of our decreasing fund equity and they want to know of other cost-cutting measures we can take.

Question 33. My relationship with the Board of Education has been negatively impacted as a result of budgetary shortfalls and declining enrollments.

1. Tough times make people crabby. It is difficult when the Board must say "no" to requests for materials, programming, etc. etc. for kids. It's easy to lead in time when there is adequate or better than adequate money.

2. As we look at severe financial cuts, some board members look directly at the need for administration and think that the school can operate without a full-time superintendent or with a combination superintendent/principal.

3. It has actually been enhanced as I laid a plan on how we could remove the deficit and become solvent. As the plan came together, the trust grew.

4. At this point no – I can foresee that at some point if we continue to be forced into reducing programs the possibility exists.

5. If anything, it has been strengthened since we work together more.

6. I do not believe this relationship has been because of the fact that we have a strong board and superintendent relationship, but I could see with a different mix of individuals how it could.

7. Good news or bad news should not impact the relationship, what matters is open, honest, accurate information. Don't shoot the messenger!

8. The budget has been declining since just before I started. This is the only budgetary environment I have experienced as a superintendent.

9. It is easy to keep the folks happy when there is enough money for all.

10. I have a very good relationship with my board members.

Question 35. I feel that my longevity with the district will be negatively impacted as a result of continuing budgetary shortfalls and declining enrollments.

1. Being a superintendent was never a career goal of mine. I will continue to work hard for the district, but if a negative faction in our community continues to put added stress on an already stressful job, then I will seriously consider either moving to a different superintendency in a larger, urban area (much more money) or leaving K-12 to work in higher ed.

2. I'm fairly certain that this district will be looking to cut administrative costs and I will be one of the first to bite the dust.

3. I do not agree. Budget shortfalls are an excuse for a lack of vision and mismanagement. Put a plan in place and react before the problem is upon you.

4. Yes – if we were holding even or building programs I would likely stay on with the district longer. Constantly reducing programs, making larger classes and finding ways to reduce benefits for staff isn't my idea of a rewarding way to spend my time. Public

education is bashed to the point where it isn't valued by anyone except the parents – and they only account for ¼ or our society. The perception in the news is that we are just feeding off the public trough and don't really care about kids.

5. The Board gets that the money situation is not my fault.

6. When money is short, trouble follows! We have overspent for a period of five years and there is no end in sight. I don't anticipate increasing enrollment. Neighboring districts are recruiting and threatening to send in buses to pick up kids. Labor agreements are harder to negotiate. We cut to the bone several years ago, limbs are next.

7. If all agree the district is financially short of money, the decisions are a lot easier than if the board, administration, staff or community do not agree. When I came, they all agreed that the district was in a crisis so cuts were laid out, necessary and done even though they were major. All had information so what was done was necessary to keep the district viable. The result was a fund balance that increased significantly over four years.

8. I don't feel that way currently. I'm sure things would have been much more positive had we not been reducing these past five years.

9. Superintendents are measured sometimes by the mighty dollar. We can only cut so far before we have to use some of our fund equity, but that gets held against us.

Question 37. I believe that budgetary shortfalls and declining enrollments have impacted, or will impact, my ability to be an effective superintendent.

1. While leading in these tough financial times is not as rewarding as during the good times, we continue to strive to provide a quality education for all of our students. We have tough choices to make and many battles to fight with Lansing, but we always need to remember why we are in this profession. Educating students. If we make our decisions

based on this idea, we will be effective in what we do. Not always happy in what we have to do, but doing the job that must be done to protect the educational process.

2. The more cuts made will diminish my effectiveness.

3. There is only so much a person can do without financial and other resources to move a district forward.

3. As superintendent, I would like to focus on teaching and learning, on being the lead learner for the district. But my focus has to be on money and it's hard to convince people to do more with less.

4. The Board has been supportive but it is time to leave.

5. Budget cuts limit the amount of curricula, staff, and programming we can provide to better meet state and federal expectations. This affects my ability to function as an instructional leader.

6. The ability to improve programming, monitor students and staff, effect school improvement plans is greatly impacted by budget shortfalls.

7. If you measure effectiveness in terms of student programming. I believe we still need to be as effective as possible and not use money as an excuse to not do the right thing. The kids don't care if money is short – they want an education.

8. I foresee many of the programs that I helped initiate being cut or reduced, due to lack of resources.

9. Agree only because one never knows when the elephant in the room will move and crush you. Special education, the new Michigan Business Tax, potential non-homestead tax receipts, tax appeals forcing paybacks to business are all issues that could turn a

positive fund balance to negative in one year. The legislature has passed laws that they do not even know the impact of on schools.

10. The difficult fiscal situation has made it necessary to cut valuable educational programs. I feel that student achievement would be higher with the resources to have smaller class sizes and additional programs to help students and parents be more effective. We would also be able to provide more current technology, textbooks, and teaching equipment with additional resources. Also, staff morale suffers when they are not provided wage increases and the district continues in a cut mode, ultimately impacting the energy they put into teaching and learning.

11. I can still be an effective superintendent with less money, but it will be a lot tougher.

12. My job is made more difficult because I have to say "no" more often, and as a result, people often do not feel appreciated enough. Less money makes things difficult.

Question 39. My Board of Education and I have a collaborative working relationship.

1. I respect my Board in what they have to do and they allow me to operate this school district.

2. I am lucky to have a positive working relationship with my Board. That being said, I also know that I am only three Board members away from a very negative relationship.

3. There are board members with an agenda, one item is to get rid of me, so our collaborative efforts often run up against that wall.

4. We work well together and share a similar vision for the future.

5. Board training has assisted in developing/maintaining a stronger collaborative relationship. There are still bumps but things run more smoothly.

6. I have been fortunate, by board doesn't have any individuals on it at this time that have personal agendas. I make a large effort to keep good communication with them all.

7. We work well together.

8. We sit in committee, we talk on the phone, and we communicate constantly via e-mail. We work together solving problems. We are invested each in the other.

9. The Board understands that budgetary issues will affect programs more in the near future and we are working through that together. We understand that we need to be on the same page.

10. I have a very good board and feel fortunate. In my previous district, budget shortfalls and cuts affected my relationship with the board, as well as my effectiveness.

11. We work together as a team during our meetings.

12. There is mutual respect here. We formulate goals and try to achieve them.

Question 41. I am satisfied with the working relationship I have with the Board of Education.

1. I feel supported, valued, and recognized as the educational leader of the district.

2. I know that there is more I can do to have a more successful working relationship with my board. I also know that there is more they can do. Whether or not we have the stamina to find the middle ground is questionable.

3. Board relations are built on trust and obtaining results.

4. Overall we function well together. I'd give it a B+.

5. We are open and honest with each other, which keeps us discussing our actions. If there is a strain in the relationship, we resolve it early, before it affects decisions.

6. I always see room for improvement.

7. I am greatly frustrated with the situation.

8. All is well.

Question 42. Please add any comments you may wish regarding your relationship with the Board of Education.

1. I would not be able to work in a hostile environment with a Board that tried to undermine my vision for the district. I would also not be able to be a "rubber stamp."

2. Relationships with them have always been based on truth…like it or not.

3. Keep communications open and provide weekly updates on what is happening. Do not let them get blindsided by an ugly issue.

4. It all revolves around trust. When there is turnover on the board, it sometimes takes a bit to establish trust, and to gain understanding of one's role on the board. Generally, it has gone okay and is certainly helped by the leadership of the more experienced board members being willing to provide guidance to the new board members.

5. Board training has proved effective at redefining our relationship and my professional interactions with the board have generally become more positive.

6. It is unfortunate that due to budget shortfalls, we now make decisions daily, weekly monthly that are not in the best interest of kids when in fact all decisions should be made with the kids' best interests in mind.

7. If you lead the board will follow and do the policy work they should do. If you do not lead they will fill the gap. A vacuum is always filled by someone or something.

8. For the most part, our board members are dedicated to the improvement of education, but have had to weather the financial storm and all that comes with that. This era of

budget shortfalls has distracted us all from our mission. I believe we are all working to

provide the best possible education within the limitations of our resources.

9. I wish the Board of Education members were more involved, educated and competent

with their roles and understanding of budgets and other administrative duties.

10. My board has always set high goals and standards of both program and administrative

leadership. They have been fair as well as diligent.