

SUPERINTENDENT AND PRINCIPAL PERCEPTIONS  
OF SUPERINTENDENT INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICES  
IN IMPROVING SCHOOL DISTRICTS

by

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the instructional leadership practices of a statewide sample of Arizona school superintendents. Superintendents' practices in 12 areas were analyzed in relation to the degree of district academic improvement over a three-year period, the relative size of the district, and the gender of the superintendent. Differences in principal-superintendent perceptions were also analyzed to determine the extent of these differences, and their correspondence to the level of academic improvement achieved by districts.

Among superintendents that had served in the current district for at least three years, there were significant differences in their reported involvement in 2 of 12 areas. Superintendents in higher-performing districts reported being more involved in planning for instruction and developing principals as instructional leaders.

While male and female superintendents reported similar instructional leadership practices, female superintendents reported being more involved in reviewing research and developing instructional policies. Male superintendents reported being more involved in developing principals as instructional leaders.

Superintendents in districts of different sizes responded similarly to the survey. The one exception was in the area of supervising instruction, in which superintendents in medium-sized districts reported being less involved.

There were significant differences in the views of superintendents' instructional leadership held by principals and superintendents. On the whole, principals perceived superintendents as being less involved in instructional leadership than did superintendents themselves.

There were significant differences between the responses of the subjects of this study and Watts' 1992 study. Superintendents in the present study reported being significantly more involved in seven instructional leadership tasks than their 1992 counterparts.

The findings from this study may be of use to superintendents as they consider the many responsibilities they face in providing leadership for their districts. These findings may also be of interest to researchers who are concerned with better understanding the instructional leadership role of the school superintendent.

## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

This dissertation involves a study of instructional leadership practices of the school superintendent. The study explores the self-perceptions of Arizona superintendents, along with the perceptions of their leadership by principals. These perceptions were studied to determine if superintendents' practices vary in relationship with school district academic performance, superintendent gender, and district size, and to determine if there are differences in the manner in which principals and superintendents view superintendents' instructional leadership practices.

The leadership practices that were studied originally emerged in the work of Watts (1992). These practices include (1) Collaboratively developing goals; (2) Evaluating instructional effectiveness; (3) Facilitating instruction through budget; (4) Planning for instruction; (5) Supervising instruction; (6) Monitoring instructional programs; (7) Developing principals as instructional leaders; (8) Developing instructional policies; (9) Reviewing research; (10) Selecting personnel; (11)

Facilitating staff development; and (12) Communicating district expectations.

Chapter 1 will include the background to the study, the problem statement, the purpose of the study, the professional significance of the study, the research questions and hypotheses, assumptions and limitations of the study, definitions of key terms, and information concerning the organization of the study.

#### Background to the Study

Over the last two decades, standards-based reform has had a significant effect on classroom practice (Blum, 2000; Cornbleth, 2000; Fusarelli, 2002; Mazzeo, 2001; Vinson, 1999). Ideological shifts have resulted in an expectation on the part of policy makers and others that all students will demonstrate achievement of high academic standards on state-developed tests (Leithwood & Earl, 2000). The No Child Left behind Act (*Reauthorization of the ESEA*, 2002) stipulates a host of requirements that schools and school districts must meet, from qualifications for teachers and teaching assistants, to benchmarks for annual student academic performance gains. Schools that fail to make adequate progress in increasing the percentage of students performing proficiently on annual tests in reading and

mathematics are subject to a host of sanctions, including public notification of schools' perceived inadequacies, forced school choice for parents that prefer not to have their children attend schools designated as underperforming, and possible dissolution and takeover of schools by the state. While many states also require that students pass such tests at the conclusion of their public schooling in order to receive a high school diploma, most of the responsibility for ensuring that more students demonstrate proficiency each passing year falls on the shoulders of teachers and school administrators (Ananda & Rabinowitz, 2001). Although the public continues to be moderately supportive of the concept of school accountability measures in general (Schroeder, 2004), the long-term consequences of these measures for public schooling and for American society are as yet unknown (Anderson, 2001; Kober, 2001; Linn, 2000; Parker, 2001; Saucedo, 2000; Valencia, 2000; Valencia, Valenzuela, Sloan, & Foley, 2001; Valenzuela, 2000).

Within this high-stakes context, administrators at both the school and district levels are called upon to align their practices with the measurable outcomes on which they and schools will be judged. They must assimilate

understanding not only of a wide range of reporting and performance requirements associated with state and federal standards and accountability policy, but they must also acquire fluency in existing and emerging knowledge relating to topics such as learning styles, personnel policies, brain research, instructional practices, child and adolescent development, air quality in buildings, behavioral and physiological disorders, risk exposure, parents' custodial disputes, and differentiated instruction (Bell & Johnson, 2003). The stakes are high, and school and district leaders are challenged to provide the guidance and support needed in order for the schools under their leadership to thrive. Yet, within this complex and demanding environment, many school districts manage to demonstrate a record of continuous improvement in measurable student achievement (Morgan, 2000; Morgan & Petersen, 2002; Murphy & Hallinger, 1988; Petersen, 1999; Peterson, Murphy, & Hallinger, 1987; Scheurich & Skrla, 2003; Skrla & Scheurich, 2001; Skrla, Scheurich, & Johnson, 2000; Togneri, 2003). This study was an attempt to understand the role that instructional leadership by the school district superintendent might play in influencing school district performance.

### Statement of the Problem

As outlined above, the current context of school leadership is one in which leaders at all administrative levels are expected to provide for continuous and marked gains in measurable academic achievement for nearly all students. Though not directly involved in work at the classroom level, superintendents are increasingly held accountable for guiding and shaping the organizational vision, and, ultimately, the organizational culture, to the degree that the norms of the organization reflect an ongoing commitment to constant improvements in the academic performance of all students (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Fusarelli, Cooper, & Carella, 2002). The federally-mandated reporting requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act (*Reauthorization of the ESEA*, 2002) call upon public school administrators to lead schools and school districts to educate all students to high standards. Administrators at all organizational levels are confronted with a staggering variety of competing interests and demands on their time, and the challenge that has been issued to close achievement gaps that have persisted for decades is a significant one indeed (Kober, 2001; Rothstein, 2004).

In an environment in which the results of schools and districts are closely scrutinized by policy makers, elected officials, the news media, and parents, it is evident that some school districts have produced continuous gains in student learning that are above norms for the state or the nation at large (Scheurich & Skrla, 2003). While many factors would be expected to influence such gains, the instructional leadership role of the school superintendent is an area that has received limited attention (Bjork, 1993; Bredeson, 1996; Petersen, 1999).

Managerial and administrative responsibilities frequently draw the attention of superintendents away from matters relating to instruction, but studies (Bredeson, 1996; Herman, 1990; LaRocque & Coleman, 1989, 1991; Morgan & Petersen, 2002; Murphy & Hallinger, 1986, 1988; Petersen, 1999; Peterson et al., 1987; Watts, 1992) demonstrate differences in the manner in which some superintendents are reported to allocate their individual time, energy, and attention, the choices they make with respect to the selection and promotion of school- and district-level leaders, the way in which they establish a vision for the district, and how expectations relating to curriculum and instruction are communicated to staff and the community.

The fundamental problem that this study sought to address was whether superintendents' practices and self-perceptions vary in relation to the academic performance of school districts.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the instructional leadership practices of school superintendents. In an initial phase of the study, the self-reported practices of Arizona's elementary and unified school district superintendents were examined. An analysis of how such self-reported practices vary in relation to school district academic improvement over a three-year period was also conducted. These practices were also evaluated in terms of variations in district size and the gender of the superintendent.

In the second phase of the study, self-perceptions and principals' perceptions of the instructional leadership practices of superintendents in medium-sized Arizona school districts were investigated. Such perceptions were also analyzed in light of superintendents' degree of self awareness and the level of continuous academic improvement demonstrated by each school district.

This study was undertaken in order to contribute to the limited body of research on the relationship between the instructional leadership practices of superintendents and measurable student outcomes, and on the differing perceptions of those practices held by superintendents and principals. Conclusions reached by this study may provide findings of use in developing and refining programs designed to prepare candidates for the superintendency and those designed to support and guide practicing superintendents.

#### Professional Significance of the Study

Despite an increased focus on school accountability over the last two decades, a limited amount of research has been conducted on superintendents' instructional leadership practices or the relationship between superintendents' instructional leadership practices and school district effectiveness, particularly as effectiveness relates to academic achievement (Bjork, 1993; Bredeson, 1996; Herman, 1990; Morgan, 2000; Morgan & Petersen, 2002; Murphy & Hallinger, 1986, 1988; Petersen, 1999, 2002; Peterson et al., 1987; Watts, 1992). School effectiveness research (Edmonds, 1979; Lezotte, 1989) initiated in the 1970s has, over time, brought significant research attention to the

instructional leadership role of the school principal (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Sergiovanni, 1984). In comparison, the instructional leadership role of the superintendent has received little attention in empirical studies (Morgan & Petersen, 2002). This is to be expected, given the superintendent's remoteness from the classroom and the wide range of responsibilities commonly associated with the school superintendent. However, expectations for dramatic increases in student learning have never been higher. Moreover, tighter organizational coupling in school organizations, brought on in part by standards-based reform, along with evidence that entire school systems have, in fact, demonstrated significant gains for students of all socioeconomic strata, have increased both the expectation that superintendents can effect profound change in student achievement and the level of scrutiny of the quality of leadership provided by superintendents (Fusarelli, 2002; Fusarelli et al., 2002).

Though the instructional leadership practices of superintendents are understandably expected to influence instructional practices and outcomes in a more remote and indirect manner than the leadership provided by curriculum

administrators, staff developers, or school principals, the many small actions of superintendents or the degree to which they draw attention and resources to instructional problems may have significant consequences for schools and school districts (Leithwood & Musella, 1991a).

There are a number of ways in which this study can contribute to research focused on instructional leadership provided by the superintendent. First, this research can extend previous research (Herman, 1990; Morgan, 2000; Morgan & Petersen, 2002; Murphy & Hallinger, 1986, 1988; Petersen, 1999, 2002; Peterson et al., 1987) into the instructional role of the superintendent, and further test the theory that instructional leadership by superintendents varies in relation to school district effectiveness. Second, the qualitative perspective has been the primary approach taken in the small amount of published research in this area over the last eighteen years (Morgan & Petersen, 2002; Murphy & Hallinger, 1986, 1988; Petersen, 1999, 2002; Peterson et al., 1987). The quantitative approach of this study contributes additional findings to this body of research. Third, this research has extended the potential use of the research instrument. Finally, this research study provides a fresh perspective on the relationship

between superintendents' perceptions of their own instructional leadership practices and the perceptions of other administrators within the organization. This perspective may be of use not only to researchers but to practitioners as well.

#### Research Questions

The study was guided by the following questions. These questions were tested using the Superintendents as Instructional Leaders (SILS) survey instrument.

1. Are there differences among Arizona high, moderate, and low Continuous Academic Improvement (CAI) school districts in the self-reported instructional leadership practices of superintendents?
2. Are there differences among select medium-sized Arizona high, moderate, and low Continuous Academic Improvement (CAI) school districts in the self-reported instructional leadership practices of superintendents?
3. Are there differences between the self-reported instructional leadership practices of male and female superintendents?

4. Are there differences among the self-reported instructional leadership practices of superintendents in large, medium, and small school districts?
5. Are there differences among high, moderate, and low CAI school districts in principals' perceptions of the instructional leadership practices of superintendents?
6. Is there a difference between superintendents' self-perceptions of their instructional leadership practices and the ratings of such practices by principals?
7. Are there differences among high, moderate, and low CAI school districts in superintendents' self-awareness of their instructional leadership practices?

#### Research Hypotheses

- Ho<sub>1</sub> There are no statistically significant differences among Arizona high, moderate, and low CAI school districts in the self-reported instructional leadership practices of superintendents.
- Ho<sub>2</sub> There are no statistically significant

differences among select medium-sized Arizona high, moderate, and low CAI school districts in the self-reported instructional leadership practices of superintendents.

- Ho<sub>3</sub> There are no statistically significant differences between the self-reported instructional leadership practices of male and female superintendents.
- Ho<sub>4</sub> There are no statistically significant differences among the self-reported instructional leadership practices of superintendents in Arizona large, medium, and small school districts.
- Ho<sub>5</sub> There are no statistically significant differences among high, moderate, and low CAI school districts in principals' perceptions of the instructional leadership practices of superintendents.
- Ho<sub>6</sub> There is no statistically significant difference between superintendents' self-perceptions of their instructional leadership practices and the ratings of such practices by principals.

Ho<sub>7</sub> There are no statistically significant differences among high, moderate, and low CAI school districts in superintendents' self-awareness of their instructional leadership practices.

#### Assumptions of the Study

The following assumptions were made in carrying out this study:

1. The Superintendents as Instructional Leaders (SILS) survey instrument was completed honestly and thoughtfully.
2. The SILS survey produced actual perceptions held by superintendents and principals concerning superintendents' instructional leadership practices.
3. The norm-referenced standardized test data available through the Arizona Department of Education is accurate.

#### Definition Of Key Terms

Superintendents as Instructional Leaders (SILS) Survey Instrument. The SILS was developed and utilized in a study conducted in 1992 by Watts (1992). It was subsequently

utilized in studies completed by Morgan (2000) and Morgan and Petersen (2002).

Collaboratively developing goals. A category of the SILS (Watts, 1992) characterized by behavior that promotes cooperation and collaboration in the development of system-wide learning goals.

Evaluating instructional effectiveness. A category of the SILS (Watts, 1992) suggesting continuous attention to student achievement data that is indicative of the performance of schools and students.

Facilitating instruction through budget. A category of the SILS (Watts, 1992) characterized by securing and directing resources toward supporting effective classroom instruction.

Planning for instruction. A category of the SILS (Watts, 1992) characterized not only by indirect and facilitative behaviors, but by primary involvement in system-wide instructional planning.

Supervising instruction. A category of the SILS (Watts, 1992) involving frequent visits to schools and classrooms and communication with principals about curriculum and instruction.

Monitoring instructional programs. A category of the SILS (Watts, 1992) characterized by frequent visits to schools and classrooms to monitor progress toward district goals.

Developing principals as instructional leaders. A category of the SILS (Watts, 1992) characterized by modeling behaviors, in which the superintendent demonstrates interest in and attention to instructional matters, and fosters principal translation of system goals into specific school objectives and strategies.

Developing instructional policies. A category of the SILS (Watts, 1992) characterized by system-wide decisions that guide faculty and staff toward fulfillment of the district's mission.

Reviewing research. A category of the SILS (Watts, 1992) characterized by frequent searches and references to relevant research and by efforts to seek out exemplars of cogent theory and effective practice.

Selecting personnel. A category of the SILS (Watts, 1992) characterized by selection practices that place a high priority on the instructional knowledge of individuals.

Facilitating staff development. A category of the SILS (Watts, 1992) characterized by direct involvement in decision-making related to professional development as well as personal participation by superintendents.

Communicating district expectations. A category of the SILS (Watts, 1992) involving internal and external communications concerning the district mission, goals, objectives, needs, and strategies.

Continuous Academic Improvement (CAI). Using district normal curve equivalent (NCE) scores for 2001, 2002, 2003, and 2004, an analysis of the performance of cohorts of students in reading and mathematics achievement over a three-year period on the Stanford Achievement Test (9<sup>th</sup> edition) was completed. In this study, districts were categorized as high CAI, moderate CAI, and low CAI school districts on the basis of the extent of each district's NCE gains in comparison to other districts. The determination of high, moderate, and low CAI status is described in greater detail in Chapter 3.

#### Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 includes an overview of the study. Also provided are the background to the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the significance of

the study, the research questions and hypotheses, assumptions of the study, and definitions of key terms. Chapter 2 includes a review of the literature on instructional and transformational leadership, the historical role of the superintendency, and contextual factors affecting educational leaders. This chapter concludes with observations about the implications of this collective body of literature with respect to the study and practice of school district leadership, a summary of research on the instructional leadership practices of superintendents, and a review of literature on self-other perceptions. Chapter 3 addresses the research design and methodology, and includes a description of the population and sample, data collection and analysis methods, and the statistical analyses employed. Chapter 4 reviews the results and presents the statistical analyses. Chapter 5 summarizes the findings and conclusions, provides implications for practitioners, and offers recommendations for further study.

## Chapter 2

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A number of variables conspire against effective instructional leadership on the part of the school district superintendent. Superintendents are commonly held responsible for the efficient management of a wide range of school district functions, including personnel administration, business and finance matters, technology oversight, and facilities management. Increasingly, they are called on to manage conflicts both within and external to the organization, represent school district interests in communications with lawmakers and policymakers, and perform civic duties on various boards and committees (Fusarelli et al., 2002). Yet, superintendents are held to progressively more stringent standards for consistent, significant, and measurable improvements in student academic achievement. Although extensive research has been conducted relative to the instructional leadership role of the school principal (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Blase & Blase, 1999b, 2000; Goddard, Sweetland, & Hoy, 2000; Hallinger, Bickman, & Davis, 1996; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999a; Marks & Louis, 1999; Quinn, 2002) the instructional

leadership influence of the superintendent has been studied to a much lesser extent.

This review will begin with a summary of issues related to the current social and political context of educational leadership. Next, perspectives on both instructional and transformational leadership will be reviewed. A history of the school superintendency, a summary of issues related to researching the superintendency, an analysis of research literature relevant to the instructional leadership practices measured via the instrument used in this study, and a review of studies specific to instructional leadership practices of the school superintendent will be provided. Lastly, studies of self-other ratings in leadership research will be reviewed. Implications for the study of superintendents' instructional leadership will also be discussed.

#### Educational Leadership in Context

##### *Standards, Testing, and Accountability*

Beginning in the post-World War II years, education reformers were harshly critical of schools for poorly preparing students to keep step with scientific and military developments in the Soviet Union. The 1957 launch of the Sputnik by the Soviet Union was a defining moment

(Mazzeo, 2001). The ensuing years saw an increase in academic standards in schools, with a particular focus on mathematics and science courses. Also, by the mid-1950s, *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Civil Rights movement, and, later, President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty shifted attention not only to competition with the Soviet Union, but also to concern for equality of opportunity in schools. Funding for education dramatically increased in the 1970s, as ambitious and costly federal programs were initiated in an effort to respond to concerns for civil rights and to combat the effects of poverty (Mazzeo, 2001). Frustration mounted in the late 1970s, however, as a chorus of critics began to call attention to the perceived shortcomings of these federal programs. Such critics came to blame the schools for contributing to a poorly-prepared workforce and for the loss of market share to nations such as Japan and Germany (Cuban, 2001).

By the early 1980s, blaming public education for the nation's economic ills became commonplace. National commission reports of the early 1980s included those produced by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (*A Nation at Risk: The imperative for educational reform*, 1983) and the Twentieth Century Task Force on

Federal Educational Policy (*Making the Grade*, 1983). These and other reports called for significant reforms in public education, primarily in the form of increased accountability and higher student achievement. They initiated the first of three "waves" of reform that were visited upon schools during the 1980s and early 1990s. These waves of reform had a major influence on educational leadership, and those in leadership positions found themselves contending with often contradictory expectations. Note Tyack and Cuban (1995),

The feeling of *déjà vu* in school reform is so common - and so annoying to many school veterans and frustrating to disillusioned innovators - that it should not be dismissed as illusory. (p. 58)

Public education in general, and educational administrators in particular, have come to experience ever greater levels of scrutiny. School leaders at both the school and district level feel the burden of responsibility to bring about significant improvements in teaching and learning (Ananda & Rabinowitz, 2001; Carter & Cunningham, 1997). The vulnerability and responsibility experienced by superintendents is described by Cuban (2001) as follows:

Amid the rush toward accountability-driven reforms, the refrain has swelled into a loud chorus demanding every superintendent to manage bureaucracies effectively, lead principals and teachers in instructional matters, and mobilize political coalitions of teachers, parents, and students to move schools from being inadequate and just good-enough to ones that are excellent. (p. 5)

The national commission reports and the resulting systemic reforms of the last two decades have set the stage for the high degree of exposure and accountability that superintendents currently face (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Notes Petersen (2002),

Strongly voiced arguments for issues such as site-based management, teacher empowerment, parental choice coupled with reforms aimed at school curriculum, graduation requirements, the testing of teachers and students and a growing disenchantment with bureaucratic forms of school management have brought significant challenges to the superintendent's authority and leadership. (p. 167)

Common features of the calls for restructuring of schools reflect reformers' views that (a) the shortcomings of

public education are attributable to a failed system of schooling rather than the failures of individual teachers, (b) empowering teachers and parents would be more effective than programmatic or prescriptive strategies, and (c) school-based approaches would produce better results than mandated, top-down strategies (Murphy, 1995). Some of those calling for restructuring argue that, rather than being part of the solution, superintendents are part of the problem. Superintendents that manage to survive through competing reforms have done so because they have acquired the skills needed to maneuver among the conflicting purposes of schooling and ongoing calls for radical reform (Cuban, 1998).

Assessment policies have, through a long period of time, served to set standards, determine admissions to advanced education, guide the placement of students in special programs, provide information to policy makers, and inform concerned parties that wish to improve schools. Statewide student assessment grew from four states in 1967 to thirty-three states in 1973 (Mazzeo, 2001). The emergence of educational testing for the purposes of accountability in the 1970s, now fueled by two decades of reform efforts, has evolved into various federal and state

accountability statutes and policies. The 1990's saw the rise of not only high stakes testing as a means of holding schools accountable, but also a number of alternative accountability approaches, generally focused around competition for students. School choice and school privatization plans can be viewed as the outgrowth of the belief that schools will not change unless market forces compel them to be more responsive and accountable to their clientele (Leithwood & Earl, 2000).

As suggested by calls for school reform dating back to the launch of the Sputnik, the current interest in accountability and testing in the United States and elsewhere is not a recent phenomenon (Mazzeo, 2001). In recent years, however, public officials have intensified their efforts to assure voters and taxpayers that the government is actively compelling and monitoring school efforts to address educational and social problems. Elected and appointed policy makers have come to see testing as a powerful symbol of action to address social problems, as a vehicle to change what educators do, and as a means to link intended policy outcomes to educators (Leithwood & Earl, 2000). Not only a political, but also an ideological shift

has taken place, one which reflects a view that schools must teach all students to high standards (Cuban, 2001).

The most significant recent example of testing for accountability purposes arrived with the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, known as No Child Left Behind (*Reauthorization of the ESEA*, 2002), signed into law by President George W. Bush in 2002. The Act mandates that, by the 2005-06 school year, all states must administer statewide assessments in reading and mathematics in grades three through eight to all students, save those with significant cognitive impairments. The consequences for schools that fail to make measurable improvements in learning for students of all ethnicities, all levels of English language proficiency, and all socioeconomic strata include forced school choice, published notices of schools' perceived shortcomings, and loss of federal funding. This Act has been viewed by some as an effort to nationalize the accountability-driven, standards-based school reforms championed in Texas by then-Governor George W. Bush (Cuban, 2001).

#### *Equity and Social Justice*

While some subscribe to the view that school accountability policies are one piece of a somewhat cynical

action agenda for political conservatives (Anderson, 2001; Apple, 2003), others argue that accountability systems are necessary in order to force educational leaders and policymakers to acknowledge and attend to the schools' failure to educate all children. Taylor (2000) argues passionately on behalf of accountability for the latter purpose:

Past attempts at improving the quality of education have failed because, in the absence of standards and accountability, prejudice and low expectations could invisibly undermine minority achievement. For too many years, minority students have been quietly tracked out of high-level and college-preparatory courses, while the academic rigor of the courses they do attend has been watered down.... Standards and accountability expose the sham that passes for education in many heavily minority schools and provide measurements and pressure to prod schools to target resources where they are needed most. (pp. 56, 41)

Low academic achievement for students of color and socioeconomically disadvantaged students in the United States, as measured by standardized tests, has been well-documented for decades. In fact, results of the National

Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) indicate no appreciable gains in eliminating the gap in achievement since the early 1970s (Kober, 2001). Some observers of this phenomenon have concluded that such unequal performance reflects cultural bias inherent in standardized tests, along with inequitable resources, expectations, and opportunities for white vs. minority students. Various authors (Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Edmonds, 1979; Kozol, 1991) have pointed to the apparently pervasive and harsh inequities in public schools. Many researchers (Carnoy, Loeb, & Smith, 2001; Haney, 2000; Valencia, 2000; Valencia et al., 2001) argue that the school failure that is associated with students of color is the result of long-standing inequalities and differential opportunities to learn, and will not be overcome with high-stakes testing, accountability policies, and related sanctions. Such authors conclude that there is a direct association between racial segregation in schools, lower achievement, and increased dropout rates.

A recent *Education Week* article (Sack, 2004) summarized three major areas of concern that emerged at a conference of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, held May 13-16, 2004 in Topeka, Kansas,

to commemorate the 50th anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education*. The areas of concern cited at the conference were a lack of equal resources among school districts, disparities in test scores between white and most minority students, and the quality of teachers in districts with large minority enrollments. Although accountability systems have flourished at the state and federal levels in recent years, purportedly to attend to such inequities as these, questions continue to be raised about the impact of high-stakes tests on socioeconomically disadvantaged students and students of color (Anderson, 2001; Kober, 2001; Parker, 2001; Valencia, 2000; Valencia et al., 2001; Valenzuela, 2000).

Both researchers and practitioners remain deeply divided on the question of whether high-stakes accountability systems benefit such students (Ananda & Rabinowitz, 2001; Haney, 2000; Linn, 2000; Neill, 2003; Parker, 2001; Popham, 2003; Saucedo, 2000; Talbert-Johnson, 2000; Valencia, 2000; Valencia et al., 2001; Valenzuela, 2000). Some school districts have gone so far as to seek legal action to challenge the federal government's authority in this arena (Dillon, 2004). Yet, the hope that schools can indeed succeed in making a difference in the

lives of students remains a fundamental goal of public education in America.

The increased focus on testing and accountability, with equitable outcomes for all students, places considerable and, some would argue, unrealistic demands on school leaders. Evidence presented by various researchers has demonstrated that, when school leaders are successful in building a shared vision that includes concern for equity and a vision of high expectations for all students (Koschoreck, 2001; Scheurich & Skrla, 2003; Skrla & Scheurich, 2001; Skrla et al., 2000; Togneri, 2003; Wagner, 2001), this can lead to system-wide effects that are favorable to student achievement generally and to reductions in the achievement gap between white children and children of color. Research presented later in this review will address the evidence and potential implications of leadership capable of producing district-wide gains in student achievement.

#### *Shifts in Organizational Coupling*

Teacher beliefs and attitudes are central to school quality (Little, 1982). It is widely believed that such attitudes and beliefs are shaped by both the workplace (Rosenholtz, 1989) and by school leaders (Blase, 2001;

Blase & Blase, 1999a, 1999b; Bogler, 2001). Despite increasing interest in creating the conditions for collaboration in curriculum and instruction, however, norms for teacher interaction in schools have traditionally emphasized autonomy (Darling-Hammond, 1996; Youngs, 2001). Little (1990) notes that

schoolteaching has endured largely as an assemblage of entrepreneurial individuals whose autonomy is grounded in norms of privacy and noninterference and is sustained by the very organization of teaching work.

(p. 537)

Crafting, asserting, and achieving shared school district goals and objectives in the face of a culture which traditionally has valued teacher autonomy, and one in which leadership efforts of the superintendent are periodically "constrained, diluted, even sabotaged, by school principals" (LaRocque & Coleman, 1991, p. 102) can be daunting for all but the most effective of superintendents.

Schools in the United States have been viewed as loosely coupled organizations (Crowson, 1987; Deal & Celotti, 1980; Elmore, 1997; Lawton, Scane, & Wang, 1995; Leithwood, 1995c; Weick, 1982), with little control over teachers' actions by the formal school hierarchy. Past

efforts to decentralize power and authority and to protect teacher autonomy reflected the theory that teachers know the most about their individual classrooms and their students, and were in the best position to make adjustments to meet classroom and individual needs. Floden and colleagues (Floden et al., 1988) point out, however, that equipping teachers with the skills and knowledge to operate both autonomously and effectively would require a level of district commitment to in-service education that is not attainable for many school districts. Consequently, in the absence of adequate knowledge on the part of teachers, curriculum and instruction choices become "arbitrary, not autonomous" (Floden et al., 1988, p. 100). A contrasting view has been that viewing schools as loosely coupled organizations fails to equip educational leaders and policymakers with the constructs needed to build sound and coherent education policy (Floden et al., 1988; Fusarelli, 2002). While there is no simple and clear connection between districts' policy decisions and teachers' practices, the standards and accountability movement can be seen as an effort to bring about organizations that are more closely aligned around learning outcomes. The central tenet, in fact, of standards-based instructional

improvement is that entire school systems can move collectively and uniformly to produce improved teaching and learning (Elmore & Burney, 1997). Murphy and Hallinger (1986) have asserted that,

While schools may have traditionally functioned as loosely coupled systems, accumulating evidence has begun to suggest that instructional effectiveness at the school and district levels may be enhanced by strengthening organizational coupling in the areas of curriculum and instruction. (p. 229)

The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 2002, described earlier in this review, points to a move away from a more fragmented control system toward closer coordination of instruction and assessment. This implies a different role for the school superintendent in negotiating the autonomy-control dichotomy described above. The superintendent's influence on student learning has traditionally been viewed by researchers and practitioners as indirect and remote, yet there are indications that greater authority and influence in this area may be exercised (Floden et al., 1988). Some school systems have experienced success in responding to such reforms by fashioning more tightly-coupled organizations

(Wills & Peterson, 1995). Examples of research in this area follow.

Scheurich and Skrla (Scheurich & Skrla, 2003; Skrla & Scheurich, 2001) conducted research in which they attempted to answer questions about the variables that enabled certain districts to make significant gains in overall achievement and in reducing the achievement gap. Citing Valencia (2000), they argue that deficit thinking has been the prevailing approach used by educators to explain the academic failure of low-socioeconomic children and children of color. This view attributes low achievement to internal deficiencies such as low motivation or to social reasons such as poor family life. Scheurich and Skrla argue that deficit thinking is pervasive in education, leading to academic tracking, overrepresentation of students of color in special education and compensatory programs, more frequent and severe disciplinary action directed at such children, and high dropout rates. They further argue that superintendents from school districts serving high percentages of economically-disadvantaged children are often influenced by deficit thinking, causing low expectations to prevail throughout the schools under their direction.

These and other researchers (Fuller & Johnson, 2001; Johnson, Treisman, & Fuller, 2000; Koschoreck, 2001; Sclafani, 2001; Skrla et al., 2000; Skrla, Scheurich, Johnson, & Koschoreck, 2001) identified ways in which states' comprehensive reform initiatives and school districts' responses to these initiatives served to displace deficit thinking:

1. Data disaggregated by ethnicity and socioeconomic status brought to light the disparity in student performance that had previously been masked by the reporting of average scores.
2. The political risk of taking on educational inequity shifted from the local to the state level.
3. The high level of accountability forced superintendents to move from tending to more traditional functions such as cultural, political, financial, and logistical considerations of the districts to finding exemplars of highly-successful classrooms and teachers.
4. Accountability forced these superintendents to come to grips with their own deficit thinking and

to articulate a new vision of high levels of success for all children.

5. Focus on the state tests evolved into a broader focus on not just the improvement of test scores but on other areas in the which performance of all children could be improved.

The Aldine Independent School District is an example of one school district that succeeded in significantly improving the overall performance of all students and to close the gap in achievement between white students and students of color (Koschoreck, 2001; Togneri, 2003). The Aldine Independent School District is a Texas school district with more than 50,000 students, over 70% of which are socioeconomically disadvantaged and over 86% of which are children of color. Researchers (Koschoreck, 2001; Togneri, 2003) describe a shift that occurred in the mid-1990s. At that time, the superintendent, who had been at the helm of the district for several years already, succeeded in articulating a shared vision of high expectations for all children. Despite previously low levels of performance, particularly among groups that traditionally score poorly on state tests, the district came to achieve "recognized" status for four years in a row

in the Texas accountability system for elevating the performance of poor and minority children at all schools to at least an 80% pass rate on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS). The combination of the state accountability system, an unmistakable commitment by the district's Board and administration, and alignment of the organization's practices and goals were the key factors in producing the student achievement gains that were attained.

Fusarelli (2002) maintains that aligned standards, curriculum, and assessment tools are essential to creating high-performing schools. As noted above, Murphy and Hallinger asserted in 1986, prior to much research into transformational forms of leadership, that "symbolic leadership and collaborative processes in and of themselves will provide inadequate mechanisms for achieving and maintaining the district mission" (p. 230), and that, to be effective, school districts should promote "clear goals, accepted approaches to technology, inspection of processes and outcomes, and accountability mechanisms" (p. 230). While current conceptions of schools may be inconsistent with the degree of district control and standardization which emerged in the work of Murphy and Hallinger, implicit in examinations of the influence of the superintendent as

an instructional leader is the assumption that school systems may become more tightly coupled around curriculum and instruction outcomes than has been traditionally believed or pursued. It has been asserted that abdicating the district's responsibility for closely aligning classroom practices with intended learning outcomes means leaving important decisions about learning to the whims of individuals (Floden et al., 1988).

#### Instructional and Transformational Leadership

Extensive research has been conducted relative to the instructional leadership role of the school principal. For example, researchers have demonstrated that principals can affect student academic achievement (Andrews & Soder, 1987; DeMoss, 2002; Hallinger et al., 1996; Hallinger & Heck, 1996), teacher empowerment, (Blase & Blase, 1999a; Davis & Wilson, 2000; Goddard et al., 2000; Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999b; Marks & Louis, 1999), school climate and health (Sweetland & Hoy, 2000), instructional practice (Blase & Blase, 2000; Quinn, 2002), teacher collaboration (à Campo, 1993; Achinstein, 2002; Blase & Blase, 1999b, 2000; Kardos, Johnson, Peske, Kauffman, & Liu, 2001; Little, 1982, 1990; Saphier & King, 1985; Stevenson, 2001; Supovitz, 2002), teacher motivation to implement

accountability policies (Leithwood, Steinbach, & Jantzi, 2002; Leonard & Leonard, 1999), teacher satisfaction (Bogler, 2001), student engagement (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999a; Quinn, 2002), and instructional time (Smith, 2000).

The effective schools research which began in the late 1970s tended to point to the individual school as the organizational unit with the greatest capacity for improvement, with the principal's leadership as central to efforts to improve schools (Edmonds, 1979; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Lezotte, 1989). Subsequently, many of the reform efforts of the 1980s and early 1990s sought to capitalize on the perceived influence of the principal. The instructional leadership role of the superintendent, and the superintendent's capacity to influence improvement efforts, however, has been studied to a much lesser extent (Bridges, 1982; Crowson, 1987; Wimpelberg, 1997). Cuban (1984) asserts, however, that neglecting to understand this influence

ignores the pivotal role that school boards and superintendents play in mobilizing limited resources, giving legitimacy to a reform effort and the crucial interplay between central office and school site that

can spell the difference between implementation success and failure. (p. 132)

Research on effective schools, as described above, lead to conceptions of school leadership that implied a strong and authoritative approach centered on curriculum and instruction (Hallinger & Heck, 1996). The instructional leadership models that emerged from such research drew primarily from studies of elementary school principals in impoverished urban settings (Edmonds, 1979; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982; Lezotte, 1989). These conceptualizations of instructional leadership focused on the principal's role in providing unambiguous, directive, change-oriented leadership capable of coordinating, controlling, supervising, and developing curriculum and instruction in the school (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Blase & Blase, 2000; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Murphy, Hallinger, & Peterson, 1985). In a retrospective review of instructional leadership models, Hallinger (2003) described three primary dimensions of the instructional leadership construct: "defining the school's mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive school-learning climate" (p. 332).

Though the instructional leadership model has been influential, it has not been free of criticism (Barth, 1986; Cuban, 1988). Hallinger (2003) notes that skeptics have questioned whether most school administrators possess the high levels of drive, knowledge, and ability needed to increase school effectiveness and student achievement through instructional leadership. He suggests that models of "shared leadership, teacher leadership, distributed leadership, and transformational leadership" (2003, p. 330) emerged in response to dissatisfaction and disillusionment with the instructional leadership model, which was seen by many as an approach that was excessively "top-down" in nature, and pointed too exclusively to a single strong and assertive leader (Barth, 1990).

Transformational leadership was first described by theorists including Burns (1978), who sought explanations for leadership that included dimensions beyond the prevailing theories of the time that offered "one best way" (Bolman & Deal, 1997, p. 297) to approach leadership through, for instance, balancing concern for tasks with concern for people. Burns argued for a view of leadership where leaders "induce followers to act for certain goals

that represent the values and the motivations" (p. 19) of both leaders and followers.

Leithwood and colleagues (Leithwood, 1992a, 1992b, 1994, 1995a; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999a, 1999b; Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999a; Leithwood & Musella, 1991b; Leithwood et al., 2002) have conducted the most substantial research on transformational leadership in educational settings. Leithwood and Jantzi (1999b) describe transformational leadership along six leadership and four management dimensions. This work points to the importance of the development of individual and organizational capacity, school cultures marked by shared vision and collaboration, as well as administrative and organizational support.

Hallinger (2003) notes that, as the control-and-coordination efforts to reform schools in the 1980s gave way to school restructuring in the 1990s, transformational leadership "overtook instructional leadership as the model of choice" (p. 342). In his view, although transformational leadership gained favor through the 1990s, increased attention in recent years on the improvement of student achievement has once again brought greater focus to instructional leadership. Hallinger proposes a view of

leadership that integrates both the instructional and transformational models:

When the principal elicits high levels of commitment and professionalism from teachers and works interactively with teachers in a shared instructional leadership capacity, schools have the benefit of integrated leadership; they are organizations that learn and perform at high levels. (p. 345)

Although principals have been the primary focus of studies of transformational and instructional leadership in educational settings, findings relevant to leadership by the superintendent suggest the need for further research on models of leadership at the district level (Bjork, 1993; Bredeson, 1996; Petersen, 1999, 2002). The current context of schooling, shifts toward tighter coupling in school districts, and evidence that some school districts are able to achieve significant improvements in student learning over long periods accentuate the need for greater understanding of different approaches to instructional leadership taken by superintendents.

## The Superintendency

### *A History*

As common schools spread across the United States early in the nation's history, boards of education assumed responsibility for administering school systems under their control. These systems grew, and, by the 1830s, the first superintendents began to be appointed in eastern cities and in the Ohio Valley (Cuban, 1988). Griffiths (1966) described this first era in the development of the superintendency as taking place from roughly 1837 to 1910, a period during which the position transitioned from one that was primarily instructional to that of chief executive of the school board. According to Cuban (1988), these first superintendents were hired primarily for the purpose of inspecting and improving schooling on behalf of part-time boards of education. In addition to their oversight responsibilities, however, most also held at least some teaching responsibilities. Through the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the superintendent was considered to be the instructional leader and teacher of teachers (Bjork, 1993; Bredeson, 1996). In 1984, Cuban reflected on the evolution of the superintendency as follows:

A century ago, superintendents had to teach teachers what to do in classrooms, they inspected what was taught, listened to children recite, taught classes, and, in general, were unmistakably visible in the school program. That model of superintendent as instructional leader gave way to a managerial approach that has dominated the superintendency for the last three generations. (p. 145-146)

Soon after the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the role of the superintendent came to reflect the organizational shifts underway at the time both in school systems and in other organizations. Such shifts included increasing efforts to bring greater efficiency and bureaucratic structure through the application of scientific management principals to school systems. Edward Cubberley, an influential Stanford professor and leader in school administration during the first quarter of the 20th century, argued that the rapid influx of immigrants at this time posed a serious threat to the American way of life (T. Kowalski, 1995), leading to policies of strict standardization and bureaucratization. Education during this era was seen as "an agency of control rather than a catalyst for social change" (T. Kowalski, 1995, p. 17).

Cubberley viewed schools as "factories in which the raw material (children) are to be shaped and fashioned into products to meet the various demands of life" (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p. 114). Many urban school systems during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century transitioned from school boards dominated by urban political machines that were rife with patronage and bribery (Cuban, 2001) to boards employing university-educated superintendents to manage the schools. Reflecting on this relationship, Cuban notes,

the superintendent was the child of the school board and not the classroom. Over decades the superintendency would mature, struggle with its parent endlessly, but never escape its ancestry. (1988, p. 112)

Within recent decades, various authors have asserted that, given a variety of social, political, and economic factors, the superintendency has become more complex and its challenges more daunting (Brunner, 2002; Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Cuban, 1984, 1985, 1998, 2001; Furin, 2004; Fusarelli et al., 2002; Glasman & Fuller, 2002; Glass, 1992; Keedy & Björk, 2002; T. Kowalski, 1999; T. Kowalski & Glass, 2002; Leithwood & Musella, 1991a; Riley, Conley, & Glasman, 2002; Short & Petersen, 2001; Tyack &

Hansot, 1982; Westerhaus, 2004; Young, Petersen, & Short, 2002). By the 1960s and 1970s, superintendents were expected to perform capably in the roles of manager, politician, and instructional leader. Cuban (1988; 1998) asserts that superintendents in this period attempted to function in multiple roles, needing at times to demonstrate instructional expertise as a *teacher-scholar*, organizational efficiency as an *administrative chief*, and the ability to build consensus and calm rebellion as a *negotiator-statesman*, all the while accounting for, shaping, and responding to local organizational or community conditions.

A significant role for superintendents in recent decades also involves managing the reduction of conflict between various stakeholder groups (Leithwood, 1995b). Cuban wrote in 1985 that, "Conflict is the DNA of the superintendency" (p. 28), and there are few indications that superintendents experience less conflict currently than they did in 1985. Negotiating the conflicts and opposing forces requires constant attention to the many influences and demands of employees, taxpayers, parents, state departments of education, and lawmakers. "Multiplying demands and points of crises" (Wills & Peterson, 1995, p.

90) are phrases that aptly reflect the typical day-to-day life of school superintendents.

The public demand for reform of the schools has intensified scrutiny and criticism of the position. The press for standards and accountability, while not necessarily a new phenomenon (Mazzeo, 2001), has increased superintendents' level of vulnerability. The use of achievement testing as an instrument of accountability, fueled by factors that are economic, political, and social in origin (Leithwood & Earl, 2000), has lead today's superintendency to be described as "immersed in a vague and uneasy harmony of opposing forces" (Carter & Cunningham, 1997). Recent literature on the superintendency, cited above, is replete with images of superintendents overwhelmed with seemingly innumerable political and managerial responsibilities. Some express the sense that the superintendent's greatest potential influence lies in the political domain (T. Kowalski, 1995; Leithwood, 1995c). Yet, current accountability policies make clear that the consequences of failing to improve student achievement are ignored at one's peril.

*Instructional Leadership In School Districts*

Although demonstrable evidence of increased student learning is at the heart of the No Child Left Behind Act, a number of factors diminish the instructional leadership role of the school district superintendent. Morgan and Petersen (2002) note that superintendents are not typically seen in the role of instructional leader, as the superintendency has traditionally been associated with "maintaining the school budget, managing school personnel, and serving as a public relations director" (p. 176). Yet, as noted above, superintendents are increasingly held accountable for improvements in student academic achievement. Summarizing the disparate demands, Fusarelli and colleagues ask,

How can any one professional handle all the competing expectations: the need to be an ace administrator, competent manager, and somehow an instructional leader; to carry the torch for children and their teachers, while playing politics before the school board and community; to reassure staff inside the system while being spokesperson for public education outside in the community and state; and to respond to

the demand for change while championing traditional educational values? (Fusarelli et al., 2002, p. 5-6)

What was known about the instructional leadership practices of the superintendency by the mid-1980s did not amount to a great deal. Murphy and Hallinger noted in 1986 that "research on the superintendency is remarkably thin, while research on the leadership role of superintendents is sparser still" (Murphy & Hallinger, 1986, p. 214). Henry and Murphy (1993) analyzed doctoral research from 1980-1990, and found that, of the 14,565 dissertations completed in educational administration during that period, 5.5% focused on the superintendency, and only a handful of these related to the instructional leadership of the superintendent. Some researchers that have conducted extensive studies of the superintendent's role (T. Kowalski, 1995; Leithwood, 1995c) have simply concluded that the work lives of superintendents are far more political than pedagogical.

As noted above, increasing demands for student achievement have caused a shift in expectations for this role. Bredeson (1996) states that, "Despite the managerial activity trap that ensnares all but the most savvy of administrators, superintendents are still looked to for

leadership in curriculum and instruction" (p. 245-246). Researchers (Cuban, 1984; Murphy, 1995) have asserted that significant school improvement will not result unless there is a high level of involvement in curriculum and instruction activities on the part of the school superintendent.

Studying superintendents' instructional leadership presents some challenges to the researcher. Bridges (1982), summarizing thirteen years' worth of research on the superintendency, identified four methods typically used to gather data: administering questionnaires, holding interviews, observing subjects directly, and examining records, with interviews and surveys being the predominant means of data collection. Some have questioned the value of data gathered in superintendent interviews and surveys (Atwater & Yammarino, 1997; T. Kowalski, 1995; Peterson et al., 1987). Kowalski (1995), for instance, noted that the urban superintendents he studied tended to speak of their ideal roles, such as those involving instructional leadership, rather than the actual political and managerial roles that presumably dominate their time and attention. Others have supported this notion, pointing out that, superintendents, holding such publicly visible and

vulnerable positions, may be more likely to provide politically safe answers to sensitive questions, rather than those which would reveal the actual nature of their work (Peterson et al., 1987). As will be discussed later in this review, responses to questionnaires by those in leadership positions may also yield inflated and inaccurate self-perceptions (Atwater & Yammarino, 1992, 1997; Yammarino & Atwater, 1997). In this vein, studies by Bredeson (1996) and Boone (1998) yielded evidence of gaps between superintendents' perceptions of the importance of issues of curriculum and instruction and their actual involvement in such work.

Aside from the challenges of gathering data relative to the superintendent's influence in the area of instructional leadership, superintendent tenure is also an issue in such research. Kowalski (1995) observes that,

because most superintendents are in office for such a brief time, it is virtually impossible to accurately determine the value of their contributions. They often are bombarded with emergencies and distracted from pursuing long-range goals. They learn from experience that they will be held more accountable for managing

resources and settling disputes than for attempting long-term educational initiatives. (p. 64-65)

Duignan (1980) noted that just answering the question as to what superintendents actually do on the job is a challenge in itself. Superintendents in the sample he studied averaged thirty-eight different activities each day, with sixty-five percent of these activities lasting less than ten minutes each, seventy percent of them constituting verbal contacts. This is consistent with a study by Pitner and Ogawa (1981), in which they found that superintendents' behavior is primarily verbal and typically occurs in small groups. These verbal interactions were characterized by brevity, variety, and fragmentation, and "did not approach the lofty ideal of 'leadership'" (Pitner & Ogawa, 1981, p. 54).

In Duignan's study, half of superintendents' average daily work time was spent in scheduled and unscheduled meetings. The fact that seventy percent of the verbal contacts of the superintendents in Duignan's study were with policy makers and system administrators, as opposed to only nine percent with teachers and pupils, led Duignan to conclude that the superintendent functions largely in administrative and managerial roles, with little

involvement in instructional matters. This conclusion was supported by his finding that approximately three-fourths of the topics superintendents discussed were executive in nature, and one-fourth educational.

*Contemporary Studies of Superintendents'  
Instructional Leadership Practices*

The following section summarizes eight studies of superintendents' instructional leadership practices carried out over the past eighteen years. These studies have comprised the research that has been conducted on the relationship between superintendents' instructional leadership practices and school district effectiveness.

*Murphy and Hallinger (1986, 1988)*

Using a framework of six major functions, researchers (Murphy & Hallinger, 1986, 1988; Murphy et al., 1985) examined the instructional leadership role of superintendents in 12 effective school districts in California. The definition of district effectiveness relied upon for this study pointed to districts with higher-than-expected achievement based upon students' socioeconomic background. Their descriptions of superintendents' instructional leadership practices in each of these areas is summarized below:

1. Setting goals and establishing expectations and standards. Goals in these districts tended to focus on curriculum and instruction, and there was a strong belief that the district goals and the behavior of its leaders could influence district and school activities.
2. Selecting staff. Superintendents in these districts were often involved in the selection of new teachers and almost always involved in the selection of new administrators. Skills in managing curriculum and instruction, followed by human relations skills, were the most sought-after traits in new administrator candidates.
3. Supervising and evaluating staff. Most superintendents in the effective districts studied had primary responsibility for the supervision and evaluation of principals. Their use of the supervision and evaluation processes helped to link principal and school goals to district expectations for student achievement.
4. Establishing an instructional and curricular focus. These districts had both a greater degree of attention to instructional and curricular

activities and a greater degree of superintendent involvement in these activities.

5. Ensuring consistency in technical core operations. Internal consistency in the areas of curriculum and instruction was prevalent in these districts, and superintendents saw themselves as key agents for maintaining this consistency.

6. Monitoring curriculum and instruction. Superintendents in these districts made frequent visits to school campuses for the sake of evaluating instructional effectiveness, supervising instruction, modeling the importance of classroom observations, and developing principals as instructional leaders. In these districts, the use of test data was a common practice in evaluating school effectiveness in implementing adopted curricula.

In sum, through semi-structured interviews, they found that superintendents in effective school districts demonstrated more active involvement in (a) establishing district direction in curriculum and instruction, (b) ensuring coordination and consistency among technical core

operations, and (c) monitoring internal processes and inspecting outcomes.

*Peterson, Murphy, and Hallinger (1987)*

This qualitative study (Peterson et al., 1987) represented Peterson's reanalysis of the interviews of the 12 superintendents in school districts with higher-than-expected student achievement from the study completed in collaboration with Murphy and Hallinger. A content analysis of a wide variety of district-level documents was also conducted. These researchers sought to generate preliminary conceptualizations and hypotheses about districts' practices with respect to control, coordination, and assessment of curricula. In particular, they sought to gather information about bureaucratic and non-bureaucratic means of controlling the content of curricula. Some of their key findings were that superintendents in these districts attempted to increase their influence by:

1. Prescribing, structuring, standardizing, and monitoring curricula and instructional materials.
2. Implementing training, supervision, and evaluation approaches to standardize and direct the work of teachers and principals.

3. Adopting specific and frequent assessment approaches, and using these in the evaluation of students, teachers, and principals in an effort to increase student achievement.

Peterson, Murphy, and Hallinger found that these control mechanisms acted not only to structure the technical work of the districts but also as cultural signals to all members of the organization. The alignment of objectives at all organizational levels, in their view, increased the coordination of activities, planning, and allocation of resources in these districts, but also increased the sense of shared mission and commitment to district outcomes.

*Herman (1990)*

Forty-eight Texas superintendents, selected based on their reputations, formed the sample of this qualitative study of superintendents' instructional leadership behaviors. Herman's study closely examined superintendents' somewhat contradictory actions in both serving as an initiator for shared governance models while simultaneously exhibiting a preference for self-reliance and independence in their own decision-making. Herman's findings concerning the actions of superintendents perceived to be effective leaders included five components related to instructional

leadership skills and competencies: allocating instructional personnel, organizing the instructional process, supporting the instructional program, developing instructional personnel, and planning the instructional program.

*LaRocque and Coleman (1989, 1991)*

Superintendents in a qualitative study of nine school district superintendents conducted by LaRocque and Coleman (LaRocque & Coleman, 1989, 1991) were interviewed in order to develop a description and explanation of their leadership. Their research contrasted the practices of superintendents in effective and less-effective school systems. Effectiveness was determined by both higher-than-expected student achievement and lower-than-expected per-pupil costs. The effective superintendents reported being in frequent contact with other professionals in the district, where interactions centered on test data, accountability for student learning, school performance, instructional effectiveness, and program improvement. The nature of interactions with teachers and principals tended to be collaborative and collegial, with influence flowing both up and down the organizational hierarchy. LaRocque and Coleman found that these superintendents, in contrast with

their less-effective peers, were active rather than passive, behaving in every sense as though their actions could make a difference to students, teachers, and schools. In less-effective districts, school principals were "neither accountable nor consensual," (LaRocque & Coleman, 1991, p. 115), and there was scant evidence that norms and practices in less-effective districts were centered on a focused and constructive district ethos.

LaRocque and Coleman concluded that the superintendent's role is one of negotiating an unwritten contract between the members of the organization which frames the organization's culture, ethos, and self-image; this contract they term the "master contract" (LaRocque & Coleman, 1991, p. 97). Within effective school districts, they found that the typically autonomous levels within the organization find their freedom bounded by a *productive professional ethos* which embodies the norms and practices of the district. In their view, the creation and sustenance of a productive ethos at the district level is the most significant outcome and responsibility of the superintendent. This productive ethos at the district level "both constrains and facilitates" (p. 120), suggesting a degree of organizational coupling that reflects not so much

greater bureaucratization as a greater degree of vision-focused collaboration, consensus, support, and enforcement.

*Watts (1992)*

Utilizing a 12-item survey, Watts examined the instructional leadership of a statewide sample of Georgia school superintendents through their self-reported degree of personal involvement in 12 instructional tasks. These 12 tasks were:

1. Collaboratively developing goals
2. Evaluating instructional effectiveness
3. Facilitating instruction through budget
4. Planning for instruction
5. Supervising instruction
6. Monitoring instructional programs
7. Developing principals as instructional leaders
8. Developing instructional policies
9. Reviewing research
10. Selecting personnel
11. Facilitating staff development
12. Communicating system expectations.

Among Watts' research findings were conclusions of an inverse relationship between years of experience as a superintendent and instructional leadership behaviors as a

whole. These findings suggest that, with increasing experience, superintendents are less involved in behaviors indicative of instructional leadership. Negative correlations were found primarily in the areas of facilitating staff development, collaboratively developing goals, and communicating system expectations.

Watts also found no statistically-significant difference in the instructional leadership behaviors of male and female superintendents, with the exception that female superintendents did report greater involvement in instructional planning.

*Bredeson (1996)*

Survey research by Bredeson (1996) involving a statewide sample of Wisconsin school superintendents sought to determine how superintendents describe their work as educational leaders, what superintendents mean when they say they are involved in curriculum and instruction, if there are identifiable role types that emerge from superintendents' descriptions of their involvement in curriculum and instruction, and, if so, if there are differences in personal, professional, and work characteristics in these role types.

Noting differences between what superintendents say is important and how they actually spend their time, Bredeson found that, for example, in their responses to the survey, superintendents ranked Facilities Management as least important, but fourth in terms of the amount of time consumed. Legal/Political Issues ranked eighth in importance but fifth in amount of time consumed. Curriculum and Instruction Leadership was ranked fourth most important but fell to seventh in terms of time devoted to it by superintendents. Clearly, respondents struggled to focus their energy on that which they felt was most important. Bredeson's analysis of participants' responses led him to identify four instructional role types based on their work preferences. Listed in order of frequency, they are: *instructional supporter* (36.1%), *instructional delegator* (26.0%), *instructional collaborator* (25.4%), and *instructional visionary* (12.5%) (p. 252). These findings are consistent with other studies that cite the time constraints and the volume of responsibilities borne by superintendents that may limit their direct involvement in curriculum and instruction work. Despite the fact that superintendents in Bredeson's study described their role in areas of curriculum and instruction as generally indirect,

and involving facilitation, support, and delegation, he noted that they are capable of influencing the views of school board members, other administrators, and teachers by demonstrating interest in teaching and learning as important administrative responsibilities. The superintendents he described as *instructional visionaries* were those who managed to keep the focus and purpose of their work and the work of others on learning outcomes. *Petersen (1999)*

Petersen (1999) conducted a qualitative study of the instructional leadership characteristics of five school superintendents in California. Participants for this study were selected based on perceived leadership, school district demographics, and improvements in student achievement. Interviews were conducted with the superintendents, along with select principals and school board members in each district. A fifty-two item questionnaire was also constructed and sent to all principals and school board members in each district.

These superintendents were perceived to have a strong sense of moral purpose, and their leadership revolved around getting others to enthusiastically believe in

learning for all students. Petersen concluded that they did so through:

1. Articulating an instructionally-oriented vision of education;
2. Creating an organizational structure to achieve congruency and support for the vision;
3. Implementing assessment and evaluation techniques for both personnel and instructional programs; and
4. Organizational adaptation.

*Morgan and Petersen (2000, 2002)*

Utilizing the 12-item SILS survey previously developed by Watts (1992), Morgan and Petersen (Morgan, 2000; Morgan & Petersen, 2002) conducted a mixed-methods study examining the instructional leadership practices of five purposefully selected school superintendents that had been recognized as instructional leaders. The perceptions of superintendents held by principals and school board members in these districts and in five randomly selected districts were examined through participant interviews and through administration of the survey instrument. (For this study, Morgan and Petersen analyzed only questions 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, and 12 of Watts' instrument.) The superintendent's role was examined in the following instructional areas:

1. Providing vision for instruction by planning for instruction and collaboratively developing goals
2. Evaluating and monitoring instruction
3. Promoting instruction by developing instructional leaders
4. Communicating instructional expectations to staff and community

The results that emerged from the superintendent interview data reflected the notion that instructionally-focused superintendents see the need to place instruction at the center of the district's mission, they regularly communicate with others about instruction, they work with others to collaboratively set instructional goals and make instructional decisions, they work closely with building principals, they foster the development of other instructional leaders, and they make an effort to communicate goals and successes to the community at large.

The results of the administration of the SILS instrument revealed three statistically-significant findings. In comparison to a random group of superintendents, superintendents perceived to be effective instructional leaders were perceived by principals and school board members as more involved in providing a vision

for the district, evaluating and monitoring instructional programs, and communicating expectations to staff and community.

*The 12 Instructional Leadership Areas  
of the SILS Instrument*

Watts' (1992) review of research literature on the role of the superintendent in instructional leadership yielded 12 areas in which superintendents may directly or indirectly organize and facilitate instruction. These 12 areas provide the framework for the SILS instrument used in prior research (Morgan, 2000; Morgan & Petersen, 2002; Watts, 1992) and in the present study. These areas of instructional leadership are discussed below.

*Collaborative goal development*

The need for collaboration in the development of district goals in the areas of curriculum and instruction is cited frequently in research literature. LaRocque and Coleman (1991), for instance, assert that effective leadership in educational settings must be, in essence, shared leadership, in which "strong executive leadership is a necessary but not sufficient element" (LaRocque & Coleman, 1991, p. 101). Leithwood and colleagues (Leithwood, 1992a, 1992b), researching dimensions of

transformational leadership, found that leaders who were successful in transforming schools typically develop a collaborative school culture and facilitate effective group problem-solving. Effective leaders are believed to be those who "negotiate a shared ethos, a set of norms and practices, which reflects both these convictions and the influence of colleagues" (LaRocque & Coleman, 1991, p. 102). Such leadership on the part of the superintendent has been described by LaRocque and Coleman as negotiating an unwritten *master contract* between the members of the organization that frames the organization's goals, culture, ethos, and self-image (1991).

Based on research involving a number of school districts in Canada and the U.S., Fullan and colleagues (Fullan, Bertani, & Quinn, 2004) identified ten components that make systemic improvement possible, two of which relate to the collaborative development of a district's goals: (1) a compelling conceptualization, in which a coalition of many individuals representing various levels of the organization are involved in collaboratively developing, shaping, and communicating the school district's vision and learning goals, and (2) collective moral purpose, where "the goal of raising the bar and

closing the gap for all individuals and schools" (p. 43) is made explicit as a collective effort not just of the school, nor of the school system, but of public education in general.

*Evaluating instructional effectiveness*

Murphy and Hallinger (1986) found that instructionally effective school districts not only develop clearly-defined goals, but also accountability mechanisms for inspecting instructional processes and outcomes related to such goals. Their research demonstrated that instructionally effective school districts were those that were more tightly coupled around curriculum and instruction goals, and where classroom practices were effectively aligned with intended learning outcomes. In research on the actions of superintendents judged to be effective instructional leaders, Petersen (1999) found that, once a system-wide vision had been developed and communicated, instructionally-effective superintendents placed significant importance on monitoring and assessing the district's chosen direction. These superintendents made use of student achievement disaggregated at the individual and class level, along with schools' instructional improvement plans to evaluate the district's instructional

effectiveness. LaRocque and Coleman's (1989; 1991) study of effective superintendents found evidence of frequent contact by superintendents with other professionals in the district, where discussions focused on assessment data, accountability for student learning, school performance, instructional effectiveness, and program improvement.

*Facilitating instruction through budget*

Etzioni (1965) defines organizational control structure as the means used by an organization to elicit the performances it needs and to check whether the quantities and qualities of such performances are in accord with organizational specifications. (p. 650)

The use of the budget is one means used by organizations to control performance. Research by Myers and Murphy (1995) on the degree of budgetary control exercised by superintendents indicate that superintendents in their study maintained tight controls over monetary inputs, with principals from large and medium-sized districts being constrained more tightly than principals from small districts. Decisions about control and autonomy over budget have been found to be an effective means of establishing and communicating district priorities (Cuban, 1998; Goertz

& Hess, 1998; Myers & Murphy, 1995). Investing in teacher professional development is one area in which superintendents have been able to facilitate more effective instruction through budgetary decision-making (Daresh & Aplin, 2001; Hirsh, 2003). Another area in which superintendents have been found to be influential in facilitating instruction through the district's budget is in the manner in which performance-based pay or monetary incentives are structured (Hanushek, 1997; Odden & Kelley, 2002).

#### *Planning for instruction*

Just as principals' leadership is mediated through teachers, superintendents' leadership is mediated through others as well (Southworth, 2002). Superintendents judged to be effective in this regard, however, are found to demonstrate not only indirect and facilitative behaviors, but also primary involvement in system-wide instructional planning (Herman, 1990; Peterson et al., 1987). Morgan and Petersen (Morgan, 2000; Morgan & Petersen, 2002) found that instructionally-effective superintendents consistently work with others to collaboratively set instructional goals and make instructional decisions. Research by Petersen (1999; 2002) demonstrated the importance of the superintendent's

actions in modeling an academically-oriented vision of student academic achievement.

*Supervising instruction*

There are fairly obvious limitations to the amount of direct instructional supervision that superintendents can provide. Both organizational structures and the physical locations of district offices create real and perceived distance from the work that goes on in classrooms. LaRocque and Coleman (1989; 1991) found that more effective superintendents reported being in frequent communication with other professionals in the district, where interactions focused on matters such as test data, school performance, instructional practices, and program improvement. In Leithwood's view, supervision of instruction would involve actions intended to directly affect classroom instruction and would include, for example, supervision, coaching, staff development, and modeling (Leithwood, 1995b, 1995c). Through such actions, school principals typically demonstrate such leadership through their attention to the "behaviors of teachers as they engage in activities directly affecting the growth of students" (Leithwood et al., 1999a, p. 9). It has been found that superintendents in instructionally-effective

school districts engage in regular communication with principals about curriculum and instruction, and are directly involved in evaluating instructional effectiveness and supervising instruction by visiting schools and classrooms (Morgan, 2000; Morgan & Petersen, 2002; Murphy & Hallinger, 1986, 1988; Petersen, 1999, 2002).

*Monitoring instructional programs*

As noted above, studies have demonstrated that superintendents of school districts identified as more effective in an instructional sense are involved in frequent visits to schools and classrooms to monitor progress toward district goals (Morgan, 2000; Morgan & Petersen, 2002; Murphy & Hallinger, 1986, 1988; Murphy et al., 1985; Petersen, 1999, 2002; Peterson et al., 1987). Despite the fact that not only principals', but also superintendents' professional experiences tend to be in the teaching profession (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Glass, 1992), their knowledge of teaching and learning is often dated or indirect (Southworth, 2002). Consequently, visits to schools and classrooms often can serve the purpose of furthering organizational learning, as superintendents, in collaboration with principals, are able to identify and

disseminate information about exemplars of effective teaching (Koschoreck, 2001; Skrla et al., 2000).

*Developing principals as instructional leaders*

Murphy, Hallinger, and Peterson (Murphy & Hallinger, 1986, 1988; Murphy et al., 1985) found that superintendents in effective school districts were more involved in using evaluation processes to develop principals' instructional leadership. In comparison to less-effective districts, evaluation processes, described as "perfunctory activities in many districts" (Murphy et al., 1985, p. 82) were more focused in the effective school districts on matters of curriculum and instruction, and superintendents were nearly always directly responsible for the evaluation of principals. In such districts, superintendents acted as "key agents in linking schools and district offices" (Murphy et al., 1985, p. 82). Similarly, Morgan and Petersen (Morgan, 2000; Morgan & Petersen, 2002) found that superintendents judged to be more effective tended to work closely with building principals to foster their development as instructional leaders. Superintendents in these districts modeled the importance of classroom observations and attention to instructional matters.

*Developing instructional policies*

Previously-cited research on effective school districts points to the effects of system-wide control and coordination mechanisms that guide faculty and staff toward fulfillment of the district's mission and goals (Murphy & Hallinger, 1986, 1988; Murphy et al., 1985; Petersen, 1999, 2002; Peterson et al., 1987). More recent research by Murphy (2004) reinforces earlier findings concerning the value of leadership that produces system-wide coherence and articulation in state and district objectives, assessment practices, curricular materials, and instructional strategies. Allington (1991) notes that many low-achieving children attend schools where literacy instruction amounts to "planned fragmentation" (p. 15) with collections of loosely-coupled instructional approaches and materials. Superintendents are in a position to play a key role in developing district policies that are effective at "bringing into alignment the multitude of organizational systems that comprise the institution" (Murphy, 2004, p. 88).

*Reviewing research*

In their research on high-performing school districts, Scheurich and Skrla (2003) cite the importance of research

on effective teaching and leadership practices in school districts, noting that the most effective districts "have an ongoing program of professional development for all of their leadership, just as they do for the teachers and other staff" (p. 109). High-performing schools and districts are distinguished by their efforts to remain abreast of current research (Murphy, 2004) and to identify examples of effective practice within their own systems and elsewhere (Koschoreck, 2001; Skrla & Scheurich, 2001). The superintendent's influence can be substantial in signaling receptiveness to new ideas that emerge from research (Cuban, 1984).

### *Selecting personnel*

Research on effective districts and superintendents conducted by Murphy, Hallinger, and Peterson (Murphy & Hallinger, 1986, 1988; Peterson et al., 1987) found that superintendents were nearly always involved in the selection of administrative and teaching personnel. In these districts, selection practices reflected the importance of candidates' instructional knowledge. Southworth (2002) asserts that selection practices will mirror district priorities, and that districts that prioritize teaching and learning above other district

functions will seek to employ principals, curriculum administrators, and staff developers with high levels of knowledge of curricula, pedagogy, and student and adult learning.

*Facilitating staff development*

Through the effective use of educational research (Murphy, 2004; Scheurich & Skrla, 2003) and through budgetary decisions affecting staff development (Daresh & Aplin, 2001; Hirsh, 2003), superintendents have the capacity for direct involvement in decision-making related to professional development. Murphy and Hallinger (1986; 1988) found that superintendents in their study sample were personally and directly involved in planning and designing staff development programs. As noted above, districts judged to be the most effective provide an ongoing program of professional development for teachers, administrators, and other staff members (Scheurich & Skrla, 2003). Evidence suggests that the superintendent's influence in planning professional development and facilitating adequate budgetary support is significant (Cuban, 1984; Daresh & Aplin, 2001; Goertz & Hess, 1998).

*Communicating district expectations*

Researchers have found that effective leaders in this area of instructional leadership develop a collectively-shared vision for the system (Fullan et al., 2004). Moreover, they communicate with audiences internal and external to the system concerning the district mission, goals, objectives, needs, and strategies (Cuban, 1998; Fullan et al., 2004; Fusarelli et al., 2002; Petersen, 1999). Lastly, their communication efforts serve to foster systemic improvements that guide others toward fulfillment of the district's mission and goals (Murphy, 1990; Murphy & Hallinger, 1986, 1988; Murphy et al., 1985; Petersen, 1999, 2002; Peterson et al., 1987).

*Self-Other Perceptions of Leadership Qualities*

Two of the research questions posed in this study focus on the relationship between superintendents' self-perceptions of their instructional leadership practices and the ratings of such leadership by principals. In prior studies of self-appraisals in organizational management literature, three general conclusions have resulted from this work (Atwater & Yammarino, 1992). First, one's self-ratings tend to be over-inflated in comparison to ratings by others (Bass & Yammarino, 1991; Harris & Schaubroeck,

1988; Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). Second, peer, supervisor, and subordinate ratings are more closely related with one another than are self-ratings and ratings by others (Harris & Schaubroeck, 1988; Mabe & West, 1982). Third, those who tend to rate themselves inaccurately, i.e., rating themselves in ways that are inconsistent with others' ratings, tend to perform more poorly than their more accurate peers (Bass & Yammarino, 1991; Sosik & Megerian, 1999).

It would be reasonable to conclude, based on these findings, that, despite being nearly ubiquitous in research on organizational behavior or leadership (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986), self-ratings may not be the most reliable indicators of leadership behavior. More accurate observations might be available from sources such as peers or supervisors (Harris & Schaubroeck, 1988). Even though there tend to be inconsistencies between self-perceptions and perceptions by others, such ratings can, however, provide important insights on future behavior (Atwater & Yammarino, 1997). For instance, the manner in which individuals view themselves can reveal important information about one's emotional intelligence, one's self-improvement motivation, and one's predisposition to make

use of others' cues (Atwater & Yammarino, 1992; Sosik & Megerian, 1999). Individuals with highly favorable self-evaluations may see little cause for any change in their behavior or leadership style (Yammarino & Atwater, 1997). If one's self-perceptions are inconsistent with how one is seen by others, this may inhibit not only personal development, but performance within the organization as well (Sosik & Megerian, 1999).

In research on self-ratings and ratings by others, individuals have been categorized as one of three types (Atwater & Yammarino, 1992, 1997; Yammarino & Atwater, 1997). *Over-Estimators* are those who tend to rate themselves significantly higher than others do. In general, such individuals misdiagnose their strengths and weaknesses, fail to see the need for further training or personal development, and come in conflict with supervisors and co-workers on a more frequent basis (Atwater & Yammarino, 1997; Bass & Yammarino, 1991; Yammarino & Atwater, 1997). *Accurate self-raters* are those whose self-ratings are in agreement with others' ratings (Atwater & Yammarino, 1992). Individuals in this category can be divided into those who perform well and those who perform poorly (Atwater & Yammarino, 1997). *Good performers'* self-

ratings and ratings by others tend to be favorable and in agreement. Individuals in this category constructively use feedback from others to alter their behavior and tend to be the most effective leaders (Yammarino & Atwater, 1997). For instance, in a study of U.S. Naval Academy students, Atwater and Yammarino (1992) found that correlations between transformational leadership behavior and performance were highest for individuals in this category. In a study involving managers and subordinates of a U.S.-based information technology firm, Sosik and Megerian (1999) concluded that individuals in this category may enjoy more perceived control over interpersonal events and consequences, as a result of their greater self-awareness. In contrast, *poor performers'* self-ratings and ratings by others are unfavorable and in agreement (Yammarino & Atwater, 1997). Such individuals appear to be capable of accurately diagnosing their weaknesses, but fail to take the actions needed to significantly improve their performance (Atwater & Yammarino, 1997; Bass & Yammarino, 1991; Yammarino & Atwater, 1997). *Under-Estimators* are those who tend to rate themselves significantly lower than others do. Like over-estimators, they, too, misdiagnose their strengths and weaknesses (Yammarino & Atwater, 1997).

According to Atwater and Yammarino, such under-estimation "appears to reflect modesty and is not accompanied by lower performance" (1997, p. 163). From the perspective of subordinates, under-estimators may be seen as performing just as well as leaders with greater self-awareness and better than those who over-estimate their performance or capabilities (Sosik & Megerian, 1999).

Such findings imply a need for assessment of those in leadership positions using multiple sources (Yammarino & Atwater, 1997). They also suggest the need for training programs intended to develop leaders' self-awareness (Sosik & Megerian, 1999). Lastly, these findings suggest the need to carefully evaluate such attributes as personal efficacy, purpose-in-life, interpersonal control, and social self-confidence in prospective candidates for leadership positions (Sosik & Megerian, 1999). All of these findings have applicability to leadership in general and to school district leadership in particular. These findings suggest that effective school district leadership requires of the superintendent not only instructional leadership, but leadership that is tempered by knowledge of oneself.

## Conclusions

Managerial and administrative responsibilities often pull superintendents' attention away from matters relating to instruction. Prior research has shown that superintendents in districts with improving academic achievement tend to demonstrate greater attention and participation in decisions relating to teaching and learning (Petersen, 1999, 2002). These factors appear to contribute to the growth of school norms supporting a high degree of academic learning for all students.

Instructionally-effective superintendents' many small actions, "seemingly trivial when considered independently, may accumulate to have non-trivial consequences over an extended period of time" (Leithwood & Musella, 1991a, p. 11). In concert with instructional leadership practices, moral and transformational dimensions of superintendents' leadership behavior may ultimately shape, to some extent, the culture of the school district (LaRocque & Coleman, 1989, 1991). Leadership that is capable of transforming school systems appears to be demonstrated by superintendents that are able to develop a shared vision and goals, foster intellectual stimulation, provide support, be a symbol of professional practices and values,

communicate high performance expectations, and cultivate stakeholder participation in system-wide decisions (Leithwood, 1995c). LaRocque and Coleman note that, superintendents who are effective leaders create an organizational ethos based on two fundamental values: first, they value service to clients; second, they value mutual respect within the educational community (teacher, parents, and students) and in particular between educational professionals (LaRocque & Coleman, 1991, p. 96)

There is reason to believe that tighter organizational coupling in school districts may lead to more effective performance (Fusarelli, 2002). Leadership approaches that rely exclusively on greater control and bureaucratization may not be adequate, however. Instead, effective organizational coupling must be manifested in a shared vision and productive ethos resulting from leadership that simultaneously supports and restricts the work of principals, teachers, and others in the organization (LaRocque & Coleman, 1991). Superintendent leadership that is accepting, supportive, and constructive has been found to be perceived more favorably by teachers and principals than that which is demanding, distant, or directive (Lawton

et al., 1995). Such leadership can facilitate organizational renewal and restructuring (J. Kowalski & Oakes, 1993) and increased capacity to nurture and motivate adult learning (Saphier & King, 1985). In order to be effective, school districts require leadership that infuses a sense of meaning and purpose into the work of those within the organization.

While influenced by variables such as the political, social, and cultural contexts in which they work, superintendents must find an effective balance between their political, managerial, and instructional roles. The current context of school accountability demands significant and measurable instructional improvements, yet superintendents cannot ignore the political and managerial dimensions of their work. To be effective leaders, superintendents must adequately attend to functions in areas such as personnel, finance and budgeting, maintenance, transportation, food services, and facilities planning. In the words of a thirteen-year veteran superintendent of a large urban school district, "Your leadership isn't worth much of anything if you can't make the trains run on time" (Buchanan, 2004). Initiating a dialogue involving various stakeholders about a shared

vision of academic excellence will not go terribly far if the schools are perceived as poorly staffed, disorganized, overcrowded, lacking in basic supplies, or dirty. Leithwood argues for political leadership on the part of the superintendent that involves

proactively transforming the values, aspirations, and interests of the increasingly diverse constituents served by today's schools into a set of sophisticated educational services that address those values, aspirations, and interests. It is the exercise of facilitative power, transforming politics into education. (Leithwood, 1995b, p. 5)

Based on his experience as a superintendent and an academic, and not necessarily on the results of any particular research, Cuban makes four points about the role of the superintendent as instructional leader. First, no superintendent can "secretly improve a school district" (1984, p. 147). The basis of authority for a superintendent's direction is the school board, and superintendent initiatives require the public support of the school board. Second, the superintendent makes decisions about when to "open the gate to new ideas and when to close it" (p. 147), in other words, when to deny

permission and when to lend support. Third, the superintendent's influence shapes whether or not the school district's climate is supportive of instructional improvement. "Once the superintendent becomes identified with the mission of school improvement, even symbolic visibility in schools and classrooms carries weight" (p. 147), Cuban notes. Fourth, the superintendent's decisions about resource allocation and staffing, particularly at the highest levels of the organization, affect the advancement of the district's mission and efforts to monitor and assess the instructional program (Cuban, 1984).

Although the studies that have been conducted to date fall short of directly connecting superintendents' leadership practices and student achievement, they do highlight the influence that can be wielded by superintendents in fostering the collaboration needed to build a shared and compelling vision, in monitoring and evaluating instructional practices and curricular programs, and in drawing administrative attention to the importance of what takes place in classrooms. These findings suggest that some superintendents are able to reach beyond their administrative and managerial roles to a degree that their instructional leadership is perceived to be influential by

others in the organization who do have a more direct connection with learning.

Literature related to the study of differences in self-other perceptions demonstrates that the most effective leaders are likely to be those whose perceptions are most in agreement with subordinates and peers (Atwater & Yammarino, 1992, 1997; Bass & Yammarino, 1991; Sosik & Megerian, 1999; Yammarino & Atwater, 1997). School leaders must be conscious of the potential shortcomings of their own perceptions of their instructional leadership practices. Systems designed to both seek and accurately interpret stakeholders' perceptions in this regard could strengthen instructional and transformational leadership behaviors for leaders at all levels of the organization.

Both extant theoretical perspectives and research findings provide guidance concerning the practice of school system leadership and directions for additional research into superintendents' instructional leadership practices. Superintendents must be conscious of how they are perceived by others, and where they focus their time and energy. The tasks and responsibilities that draw superintendents away from issues related to teaching and learning are important in their own right, yet superintendents must be ever

vigilant about focusing dialogue among employees at all organizational levels and among members of the community on the core mission of learning for all students. To the extent feasible, this dialogue must be inclusive of the values and beliefs of principals, teachers, parents, and the community at large. Superintendents must also endeavor to develop the instructional leadership capacities of principals and others, and they must model problem solving and decision making processes in which teaching and learning are held to be of utmost importance.

Literature on superintendents' instructional leadership practices reveals that researchers must continue to develop approaches to gathering data on school district effectiveness that include not only measures of student achievement, but also other measures which can accurately detect factors contributing to organizational capacity for improvement. Case study research on school districts that have consistently demonstrated higher-than-expected achievement gains for all students and in all schools will contribute to an understanding of the leadership factors that distinguish effective districts from those that are less effective. Finally, studies which replicate recent research on the perceptions held by principals, school

board members, and superintendents themselves in school districts at varying levels of effectiveness will help to establish whether findings from prior studies are also in evidence in other settings.

## Chapter 3

### METHODOLOGY

The fact that superintendents are called on to perform a wide range of tasks in addition to those that are instructional in nature has been addressed in some detail in the previous chapter. Instructional responsibilities of the superintendent have, however, received increased attention in recent years as federal and state accountability policies have brought greater scrutiny to the academic performance of students on high-stakes tests.

This study involved an investigation of the instructional leadership practices of Arizona school superintendents. These instructional leadership practices are based on the work of Watts (1992) and are defined in more detail in the introduction to the study and in the review of literature. The present study explored the self-perceptions of Arizona superintendents, and the perceptions of their leadership by principals. Perceptions of the instructional practices of superintendents were examined to determine if these practices vary in relation to the district's status as a high, moderate, or low Continuous Academic Improvement (CAI) district. This chapter explains

the methodology used in carrying out the study, giving particular emphasis to the analysis of data.

#### Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions and hypotheses:

1. Are there differences among Arizona high, moderate, and low Continuous Academic Improvement (CAI) school districts in the self-reported instructional leadership practices of superintendents?
2. Are there differences among select medium-sized Arizona high, moderate, and low Continuous Academic Improvement (CAI) school districts in the self-reported instructional leadership practices of superintendents?
3. Are there differences between the self-reported instructional leadership practices of male and female superintendents?
4. Are there differences among the self-reported instructional leadership practices of superintendents in large, medium, and small school districts?

5. Are there differences among high, moderate, and low CAI school districts in principals' perceptions of the instructional leadership practices of superintendents?
6. Is there a difference between superintendents' self-perceptions of their instructional leadership practices and the ratings of such practices by principals?
7. Are there differences among high, moderate, and low CAI school districts in superintendents' self-awareness of their instructional leadership practices?

#### Research Hypotheses

- Ho<sub>1</sub> There are no statistically significant differences among Arizona high, moderate, and low CAI school districts in the self-reported instructional leadership practices of superintendents.
- Ho<sub>2</sub> There are no statistically significant differences among select medium-sized Arizona high, moderate, and low CAI school districts in the self-reported instructional leadership practices of superintendents.

- Ho<sub>3</sub> There are no statistically significant differences between the self-reported instructional leadership practices of male and female superintendents.
- Ho<sub>4</sub> There are no statistically significant differences among the self-reported instructional leadership practices of superintendents in Arizona large, medium, and small school districts.
- Ho<sub>5</sub> There are no statistically significant differences among high, moderate, and low CAI school districts in principals' perceptions of the instructional leadership practices of superintendents.
- Ho<sub>6</sub> There is no statistically significant difference between superintendents' self-perceptions of their instructional leadership practices and the ratings of such practices by principals.
- Ho<sub>7</sub> There are no statistically significant differences among high, moderate, and low CAI school districts in superintendents' self-awareness of their instructional leadership practices.

### Design of the Study

The research findings of earlier work (Morgan, 2000; Morgan & Petersen, 2002; Petersen, 1999; Watts, 1992) contributed to the conceptual framework for this study. The study was conducted from a quantitative perspective, and was comprised of two separate phases. In the first phase, superintendents of 140 Arizona elementary and unified school districts were asked to complete the SILS survey instrument. In the second phase, superintendents in 36 medium-sized school districts from the above sample were asked to authorize the researcher to administer the SILS instrument to principals. Once this authorization was received, principals were invited to complete the SILS instrument, rating the instructional leadership practices of their superintendents. The second phase included a review of the self-ratings of this select sample of superintendents, their principals, and the similarities and differences in these ratings.

Participants in the study were recruited from Arizona's traditional public school districts, and did not include individuals in leadership roles from Arizona's comparatively large population of charter schools, nor from Arizona's five accommodation school districts, nor from

Arizona's fourteen union high school districts. The survey data was collected from November, 2004 to February, 2005.

#### Population and Sample

A detailed analysis of the reading and mathematics NCE subtest scores from the statewide Stanford Achievement Test (9<sup>th</sup> edition) for the period from 2001 to 2004 was conducted for the districts that were included in this study. These data were obtained from the Arizona Department of Education. A preliminary analysis revealed that there were 212 elementary, union, and unified school districts with reported data for 2001, 2002, 2003, and 2004. Since the Arizona Department of Education did not report data for grades with fewer than five students, any districts with fewer than five student test scores at any grade level during this time frame were eliminated from the study. Consequently, fifty-six such districts were not included. Also, the district where the researcher for the present study is employed as superintendent was not included. Finally, one district was not included because the superintendent was not available to participate. Subtracting these districts left a total of 154 school districts available for analysis.

Prior studies utilizing standardized student achievement data as an independent variable have made use of cohort comparisons in order to determine relative school district performance (LaRocque & Coleman, 1989). A decision was made by the researcher to conduct cohort comparisons in this study for the purpose of categorizing districts as high, moderate, or low CAI districts. LaRocque and Coleman (1989) analyzed the merits of aggregating student achievement test data at the school district level, and concluded that the use of cohort comparisons employing standardized scores, and subsequent rank-ordering of districts on the basis of such scores is a methodologically sound approach.

Given the use of cohort comparisons to track student performance over a three-year period, a decision was made to eliminate Arizona's fourteen union high school districts from this study. During this time period, the Arizona Department of Education required that the Stanford Achievement Test be administered only to ninth grade students. With scores available only at the ninth grade level, student cohort performance at the high school level could not be tracked over a three-year period. Because of the inability to track cohorts of students in union high

school districts, these districts were not included in the study, bringing the total number of superintendents included in phase one to 140.

#### *Phase One*

Of the 140 superintendents who were asked to complete the survey, 81% (N=114) did so. The districts represented had a 2002-03 Average Daily Membership (the average daily student attendance over the first 100 days of school, with kindergarten children treated as 0.5 ADM) of 5,348. The ADM of the districts ranged from a low of 154 to a high of nearly 70,000. The combined total ADM for these districts exceeded 600,000 students. On average, subjects had served for a total of 8.29 years in the superintendency, and 5.11 years as superintendent in their current district. A total of 33 percent of the respondents were female (N=38) and 67% (N=76) were male.

These 114 districts were categorized as high CAI (N=19), moderate CAI (N=73), or low CAI (N=22) districts, utilizing a method developed by the researcher. The performance of students in grade two in 2001 was compared to their performance as fifth graders in 2004, the performance of students in grade three in 2001 was compared to their performance as sixth graders in 2004, the

performance of students in grade four in 2001 was compared to their performance as seventh graders in 2004, and the performance of students in grade five in 2001 was compared to their performance as eighth graders in 2004. Using this method, districts were categorized as high CAI if their NCE gains in both reading and mathematics were at least one-half standard deviation above the mean. Districts were ranked as low CAI if their NCE gains in both reading and mathematics were no greater than one-half standard deviation below the mean. Districts not meeting the criteria for either high CAI or low CAI were categorized as moderate CAI. The mean per-grade gain made by the three groups over the period from 2001-2004 is summarized in Table 1.

*Table 1. Mean NCE Grade Level Gains for Phase One Districts*

<u>CAI Status</u>	<u>Reading</u>	<u>Mathematics</u>
High (N=19)	6.08	9.11
Moderate (N=73)	1.18	3.31
Low (N=22)	-2.05	-1.37

*Phase Two*

Subjects for the second phase of the study included 36 medium-sized districts from the 140 districts invited to participate in phase one of the study. For the second phase, districts were recruited from the population of medium-sized districts with ADM in the 2002-03 school year ranging from 1,000 to 4,500 students, and with student populations in 2002-03 that were at least one third minority students (*Arizona Department of Education Data Management 2002 - 2003 Statistics, 2003*).

Superintendents from these districts were sent a letter describing the study (Appendix B), a Subject Disclaimer Form, an Authorization to Conduct Research form (Appendix I), and a self-addressed stamped envelope for returning the signed authorization form. Subsequent contacts were made via telephone and email to non-respondents. Authorization was received from 23 superintendents, representing 64% of the districts recruited. Once written authorization was received from the superintendent, principals in each district were sent a letter inviting their participation (Appendix C) and the Subject Disclaimer Form (Appendix H) via email. Subsequent contacts were made to non-respondents. As was the case with

superintendents, principals were informed that their participation was voluntary.

The mean ADM of the 23 districts represented was 2,137. The number of schools in each district ranged from two to seven. The districts were comprised of student populations that were predominantly children of color. On average, 72% of the students in these districts were minority students, and 67% qualified for the federal free- and reduced-price meals program (*Arizona Department of Education Data Management 2002 - 2003 Statistics*, 2003).

These districts were categorized as high CAI (N=5), moderate CAI (N=12), or low CAI (N=6) in the same manner as in phase one. The mean NCE gain made by the 23 districts in each grade level over the period from 2001-2004 is summarized in Table 2.

*Table 2. Mean NCE Grade Level Gains for Phase Two Districts*

<u>CAI Status</u>	<u>Reading</u>	<u>Mathematics</u>
High (N=5)	6.05	10.44
Moderate (N=12)	2.44	3.73
Low (N=6)	-2.07	-1.13

### *Superintendents*

On average, subjects had served for a total of 9.30 years in the superintendency, and 5.39 years as superintendent in their current district. A total of 30% of the respondents were female (N=7) and 70% (N=16) were male.

### *Principals*

There were 99 school principals in the 23 school districts invited to participate in phase two of the study. Responses were received from 66% (N=65) of the principals. High CAI districts were represented by 30.8% of the schools (N=20), moderate CAI districts were represented by 44.6% (N=29) of the schools, and low CAI districts were represented by 24.6% (N=16) of the schools. On average, subjects had served as a principal in the present school district for 5.14 years. A total of 54% of the respondents were female (N=35) and 46% (N=30) were male.

### Survey Instrument

Watts' (1992) Superintendents as Instructional Leaders (SILS) survey instrument was administered to Arizona superintendents (Appendix D) and principals (Appendix E) recruited for this study. This instrument was developed by Watts in 1992 based on role expectations and responsibilities associated with the superintendent, as

derived from research literature on the instructional leadership practices of superintendents.

The instrument includes a four-point Likert-type continuum labeled High and Low. Content validity was initially established by Watts through analyses involving two groups, one of graduate students in educational leadership, and one of practicing superintendents. This process helped to ascertain that the instrument would accurately measure the instructional leadership practices it was intended to measure. Test-retest reliability was subsequently calculated through repeated administrations of the instrument. Table 3 lists these correlations for each pair of responses. While correlations for three of the items were somewhat low (items 1, 2, and 12), and one of the items revealed a slight negative correlation (item 8), the total correlation of the instrument as a whole was found to be .8743.

Table 3. Test-Retest Reliability Correlations

Survey Item	r
1	.02
2	.24
3	.495
4	.49
5	.71
6	.596
7	.606
8	-.009
9	.684
10	.936
11	.8003
12	.44
Total Instrument	.8743

The reliability of the instrument as a whole was also computed in the present study by computing Cronbach's alpha. This statistic is a quantity defined in multivariate statistics used to measure the reliability of a psychometric instrument (Carmines & Zeller, 1979). Its estimate of reliability generally represents "the lower bound to the reliability of an unweighted scale of items" (Carmines & Zeller, 1979, p. 45). The SILS was found to have a Chronbach's alpha of .878, considering responses from all subjects.

## Data Analysis

### *Research Question 1*

Are there differences among Arizona high, moderate, and low Continuous Academic Improvement (CAI) school districts in the self-reported instructional leadership practices of superintendents?

The high, moderate, and low CAI school districts were compared on each of the 12 instructional leadership practices identified using superintendents' responses on the SILS: (1) Collaboratively developing goals; (2) Evaluating instructional effectiveness; (3) Facilitating instruction through budget; (4) Planning for instruction; (5) Supervising instruction; (6) Monitoring instructional programs; (7) Developing principals as instructional leaders; (8) Developing instructional policies; (9) Reviewing research; (10) Selecting personnel; (11) Facilitating staff development; and (12) Communicating district expectations.

A one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), which focuses on a comparison of the variability within groups and the variability between groups (Shavelson, 1988) was computed using SPSS (*SPSS 12.0 for Windows*, 2003) on each of these 12 variables to determine if statistical differences

existed between the high, moderate, and low CAI groups. In addition, a one-way ANOVA was conducted on the mean ratings for the survey results when taken as a whole. The ANOVA yielded a value of  $F_{\text{observed}}$  on each variable, and this was compared to  $F_{\text{critical}}$  using a level of significance of  $p < .05$ . Although the ANOVA can reveal when group means are statistically different, it cannot show which means are different. Therefore, Tukey post hoc tests were computed where statistically significant differences were found through the ANOVA to clarify the relationships between means.

#### *Research Question 2*

Are there differences among select medium-sized Arizona high, moderate, and low Continuous Academic Improvement (CAI) school districts in the self-reported instructional leadership practices of superintendents?

As in the case of Research Question 1, the select medium-sized high, moderate, and low CAI school districts were compared on each of the 12 instructional leadership practices identified using superintendents' responses on the SILS. A one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was computed on each of these 12 variables to determine if

statistical differences existed between the high, moderate, and low CAI groups. In addition, a one-way ANOVA was conducted on the mean ratings for the survey results when taken as a whole. The ANOVA yielded a value of  $F_{\text{observed}}$  on each variable, and this was compared to  $F_{\text{critical}}$  using a level of significance of  $p < .05$ . Tukey post hoc tests were computed where statistically significant differences were found through the ANOVA to clarify the relationships between means.

### *Research Question 3*

Are there differences between the self-reported instructional leadership practices of male and female superintendents?

Superintendents' responses were compared on each of the 12 instructional leadership practices identified on the SILS. A one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was computed on each of these 12 variables to determine if statistical differences existed between the male and female superintendents. In addition, a one-way ANOVA was conducted on the mean ratings for the survey results when taken as a whole. The ANOVA yielded a value of  $F_{\text{observed}}$  on each variable, and this was compared to  $F_{\text{critical}}$  using a level of significance of  $p < .05$ . In a two-sample ANOVA, the value of

$F$  is equal to the value of  $t$  in an independent-samples  $t$  test.

*Research Question 4*

Are there differences among the self-reported instructional leadership practices of superintendents in large, medium, and small school districts?

Superintendents' responses were compared on each of the 12 instructional leadership practices identified on the SILS. A one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was computed on each of these 12 variables to determine if statistical differences existed among large (>4,500 students), medium (1,000-4,499 students), and small (<1,000 students) districts. In addition, a one-way ANOVA was conducted on the mean ratings for the survey results when taken as a whole. The ANOVA yielded a value of  $F_{\text{observed}}$  on each variable, and this was compared to  $F_{\text{critical}}$  using a level of significance of  $p < .05$ . Tukey post hoc tests were computed where statistically significant differences were found through the ANOVA to clarify the relationships between means.

*Research Question 5*

Are there differences among high, moderate, and low CAI school districts in principals' perceptions of the instructional leadership practices of superintendents?

The high, moderate, and low CAI school districts were compared using principals' responses on each of the 12 practices measured on the SILS. A one-way ANOVA was computed on each of these 12 variables to determine if differences existed between the high, moderate, and low CAI groups. In addition, a one-way ANOVA was conducted on the mean ratings for the survey results when taken as a whole. The ANOVA yielded a value of  $F_{\text{observed}}$  on each variable, and this was compared to  $F_{\text{critical}}$  using a level of significance of  $p < .05$ .

*Research Question 6*

Is there a difference between superintendents' self-perceptions of their instructional leadership practices and the ratings of such practices by principals?

Principals' and superintendents' responses were compared on each of the 12 practices measured on the SILS. A one-way ANOVA was computed on each of these 12 variables to determine if differences existed between the means of

each. In addition, a one-way ANOVA was conducted on the mean ratings for the survey results when taken as a whole. The ANOVA yielded a value of  $F_{\text{observed}}$  on each variable, and this was compared to  $F_{\text{critical}}$  using a level of significance of  $p < .05$ . In a two-sample ANOVA, the value of  $F$  is equal to the value of  $t$  in an independent-samples  $t$  test.

#### *Research Question 7*

Are there differences among high, moderate, and low CAI school districts in superintendents' self-awareness of their instructional leadership practices?

The high, moderate, and low CAI school districts were compared using the difference scores derived by subtracting the mean principal ratings of each superintendent from superintendents' self-ratings on the SILS. A one-way ANOVA was computed on each of these 12 variables to determine if differences existed among the high, moderate, and low groups. In addition, a one-way ANOVA was conducted on the mean ratings for the survey results when taken as a whole. The ANOVA yielded a value of  $F_{\text{observed}}$  on each variable, and this was compared to  $F_{\text{critical}}$  using a level of significance of  $p < .05$ . An additional analysis of the differences in self-other ratings was completed utilizing the method developed by Atwater and Yammarino (1992; 1997) to

categorize individuals as *Over-Estimators*, *Accurate Self-Raters*, or *Under-Estimators* based upon the extent of differences between supervisors' and subordinates' ratings of supervisors.

## Chapter 4

### RESULTS

#### Background to the Study

In recent decades, standards-based reform has had a significant effect on instructional practice (Blum, 2000; Cornbleth, 2000; Fusarelli, 2002; Mazzeo, 2001; Vinson, 1999). Ideological shifts have resulted in an expectation that all students will demonstrate achievement of high academic standards on state-developed tests (Leithwood & Earl, 2000). The No Child Left behind Act (*Reauthorization of the ESEA*, 2002) includes a number of requirements and sanctions that schools and school districts face. Schools that fail to make adequate progress in increasing the percentage of students performing proficiently on annual tests in reading and mathematics are subject to a variety of sanctions, including public notification of schools' perceived inadequacies, school choice, and possible dissolution and takeover of schools by the state. Though a number of states also require that students pass such tests at the conclusion of their public schooling in order to receive a high school diploma, most of the responsibility for ensuring that more students demonstrate proficiency

each passing year falls on the shoulders of teachers and school administrators (Ananda & Rabinowitz, 2001).

Administrators at all organizational levels are challenged to meet the demands to improve schools and to close the achievement gap. It is within this high-stakes environment that this study was undertaken. Although superintendents are commonly held responsible for the efficient management of a wide range of school district functions, including personnel administration, fiscal management, facilities planning, and negotiations with employee groups, they face increasing pressure to ensure that the schools under their direction meet the academic needs of all students.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the instructional leadership practices of school superintendents. In the first phase of the study, 114 superintendents reported on their personal involvement in 12 instructional leadership tasks. In the second phase, 65 principals reported on the instructional leadership practices of 23 superintendents. All of the districts represented were categorized as high, moderate, or low Continuous Academic Improvement (CAI) districts based on

the results of student cohort growth in reading and mathematics on the Stanford Achievement Test, 9<sup>th</sup> Edition, from 2001-2004. Responses were compared to determine if statistical differences existed among the high, moderate, and low CAI groups, among male and female superintendents, among superintendents of large, medium, and small districts, and between superintendents' and principals' perceptions.

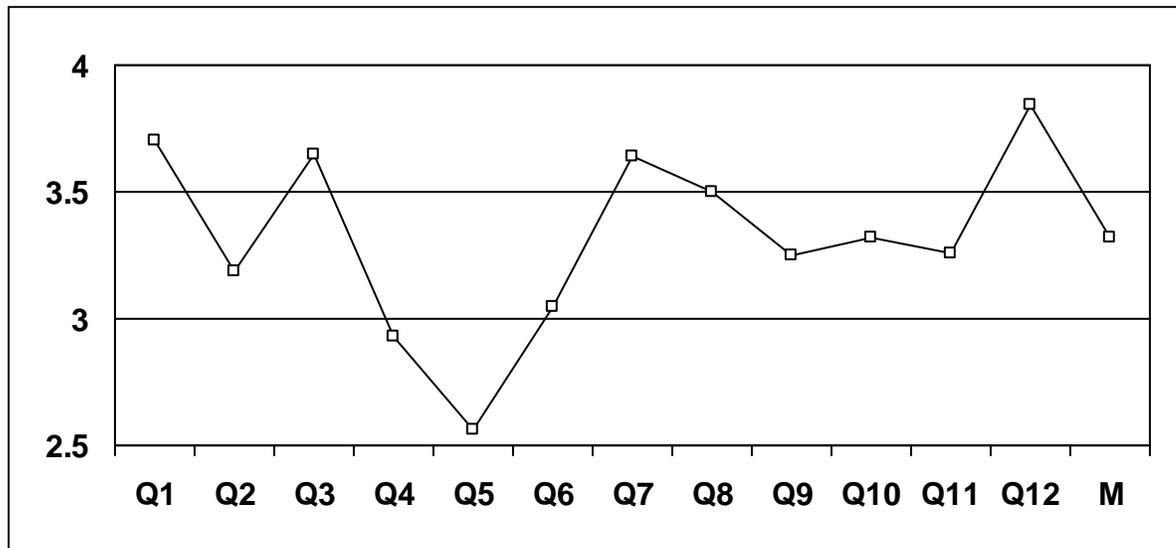
#### Data Analysis

##### *Research Question 1*

Are there differences among Arizona high, moderate, and low Continuous Academic Improvement (CAI) school districts in the self-reported instructional leadership practices of superintendents?

As illustrated in Figure 1, superintendents on the whole reported the greatest involvement in the tasks of communicating district expectations (Mean=3.84), collaboratively developing goals (Mean=3.70), and facilitating instruction through budget (Mean=3.65). Areas in which superintendents reported the least involvement included supervising instruction (Mean=2.56), planning for instruction (Mean=2.93), and monitoring instructional programs (Mean=3.05).

Figure 1. Mean Responses to SILS by Arizona Superintendents



The high, moderate, and low CAI school districts were compared on each of the 12 instructional leadership practices identified using superintendents' responses on the SILS. A one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), which focuses on a comparison of the variability within groups and the variability between groups (Shavelson, 1988), was computed using SPSS (*SPSS 12.0 for Windows*, 2003) on each of these 12 variables to determine if statistical differences existed between the high, moderate, and low CAI groups. In addition, a one-way ANOVA was conducted on the mean ratings for the survey results when taken as a whole.

Table 4 illustrates the mean self-reported

Table 4. High, Moderate, and Low CAI Superintendents' Mean Responses to the SILS (N=114)

Instructional Leadership Practice	High (N=19)		Moderate (N=73)		Low (N=22)		F value	p value
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Collaboratively developing goals	3.58	.51	3.70	.49	3.82	.40	1.29	.28
Evaluating instructional effectiveness	3.21	.79	3.18	.79	3.23	.69	.04	.96
Facilitating instruction through budget	3.42	.61	3.67	.50	3.77	.43	2.64	.08
Planning for instruction	3.00	.82	2.95	.76	2.82	.80	.32	.73
Supervising instruction	2.74	.93	2.53	.88	2.50	.86	.46	.63
Monitoring instructional programs	3.16	.69	3.08	.70	2.86	.64	1.12	.33
Developing principals as instructional leaders	3.68	.58	3.71	.49	3.36	.85	3.05	.05
Developing instructional policies	3.47	.61	3.49	.63	3.55	.51	.09	.92
Reviewing research	3.26	.87	3.23	.72	3.32	.78	.11	.90
Selecting personnel	3.16	.60	3.38	.64	3.23	.69	1.19	.31
Facilitating staff development	3.32	.75	3.26	.71	3.23	.81	.08	.93
Communicating district expectations	3.84	.34	3.82	.44	3.94	.22	.84	.44
Mean of all responses	3.32	.39	3.33	.33	3.29	.33	.16	.85

instructional leadership practices of superintendents in high, moderate, and low CAI districts. There were no statistically significant differences among high, moderate, and low CAI districts, thereby retaining the null hypothesis for this sample:

Ho<sub>1</sub> There are no statistically significant differences among Arizona high, moderate, and low CAI school districts in the self-reported instructional leadership practices of superintendents.

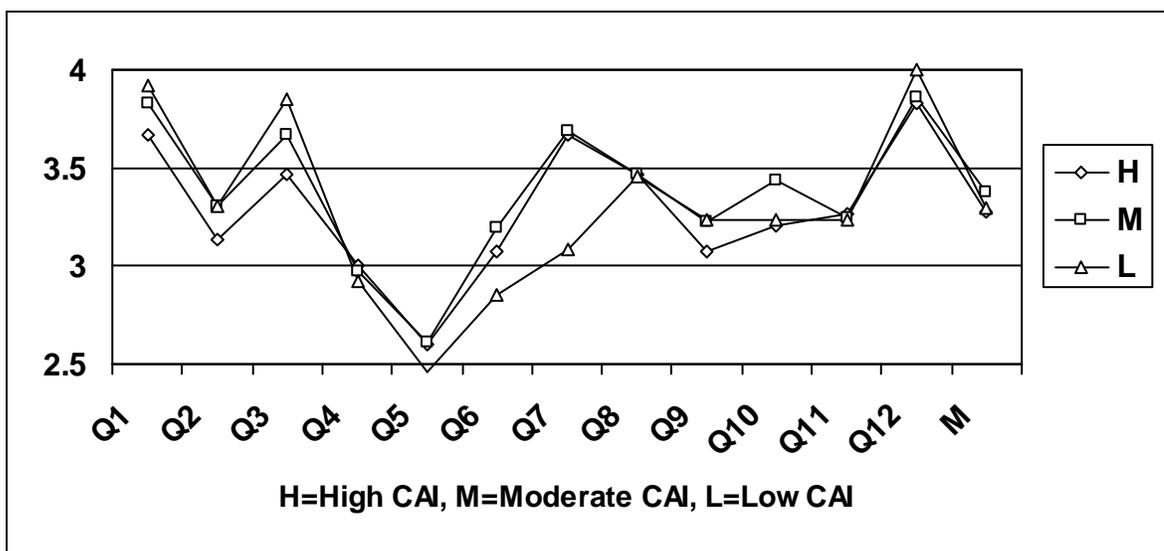
Since a primary purpose of this study was to analyze the differences among high, moderate, and low CAI districts based upon districts' improvements in reading and mathematics over a three-year period, superintendents' responses were also evaluated by limiting the sample to only those superintendents that had been employed as superintendent in the current district for at least three years (N=64). In this instance, there were statistically significant differences among high (3.67), moderate (3.69), and low (3.08) CAI districts in the practice of developing principals as instructional leaders ( $F(2,61)=4.54$ ,  $p=.02$ ). The means for all responses are summarized in Table 5. These means are also illustrated in Figure 2.

Table 5. High, Moderate, and Low CAI Superintendents' Mean Responses to the SILS for Superintendents Serving in Current Role for Three or More Years (N=64)

Instructional Leadership Practice	High (N=15)		Moderate (N=36)		Low (N=13)		F value	p value
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Collaboratively developing goals	3.67	.49	3.83	.38	3.92	.28	1.63	.21
Evaluating instructional effectiveness	3.13	.83	3.31	.79	3.31	.75	.27	.76
Facilitating instruction through budget	3.47	.64	3.67	.54	3.85	.38	1.78	.18
Planning for instruction	3.00	.85	2.97	.85	2.92	.86	.03	.97
Supervising instruction	2.60	.99	2.61	.90	2.46	.78	.14	.87
Monitoring instructional programs	3.07	.70	3.19	.67	2.85	.69	1.27	.29
Developing principals as instructional leaders	3.67	.62	3.69	.53	3.08	.95	4.54	.02*
Developing instructional policies	3.47	.64	3.47	.65	3.46	.52	.00	1.00
Reviewing research	3.07	.88	3.22	.64	3.23	.83	.26	.77
Selecting personnel	3.20	.56	3.44	.56	3.23	.73	1.19	.31
Facilitating staff development	3.27	.80	3.25	.55	3.23	.83	.01	.99
Communicating district expectations	3.83	.36	3.86	.35	4.00	.00	1.20	.31
Mean of all responses	3.28	.39	3.38	.35	3.30	.33	.52	.60

\*p<.05

Figure 2. High, Moderate, and Low CAI Superintendents' Mean Responses to the SILS for Superintendents Serving in Current Role for Three or More Years



Tukey post hoc tests comparing each of the means for these groups revealed that the mean for the low CAI group on the variable of developing principals as instructional leaders was significantly lower than the mean for the moderate CAI group ( $p=.01$ ). There was no statistically significant difference between the means of the high and moderate CAI groups, nor between the means of the high and low CAI groups. Therefore, for the sample of superintendents serving for three or more years in the current role, the null hypothesis was rejected.

*Research Question 2*

Are there differences among select medium-sized Arizona high, moderate, and low Continuous Academic Improvement (CAI) school districts in the self-reported instructional leadership practices of superintendents?

Utilizing the sample of superintendents from phase two of the study, the high (N=5), moderate (N=13), and low (N=5) CAI school districts were compared on each of the 12 instructional leadership practices identified using superintendents' responses on the SILS. These results are summarized in Table 6. There were no statistically significant differences among the means of high, moderate, and low CAI districts; consequently, for this sample, the null hypothesis was retained:

Ho<sub>2</sub> There are no statistically significant differences among select medium-sized Arizona high, moderate, and low CAI school districts in the self-reported instructional leadership practices of superintendents.

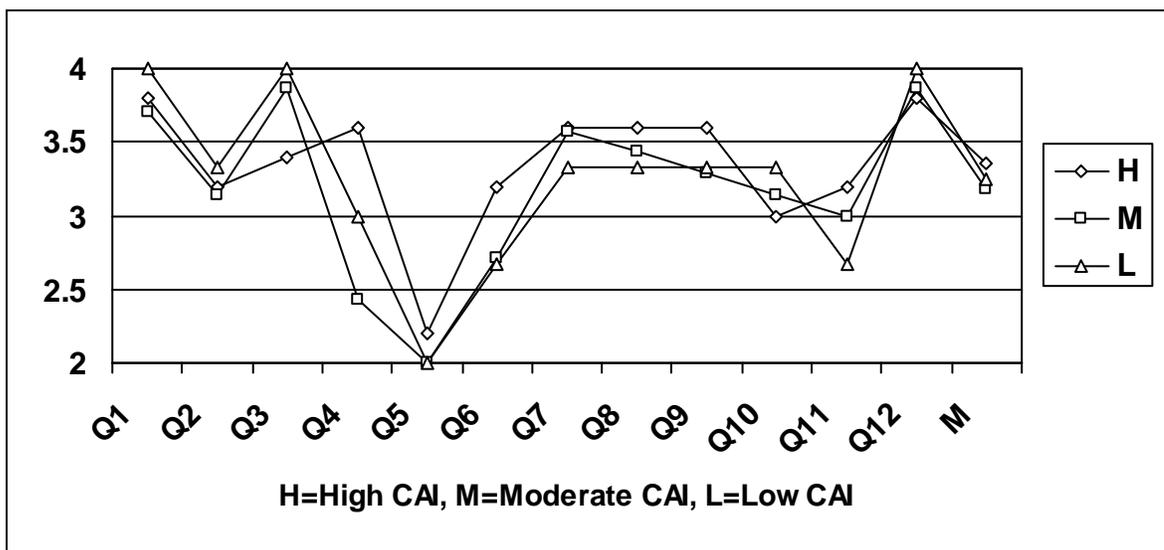
When superintendents that had been employed in the current district for fewer than three years were excluded, thereby bringing the sample size down to 15 select medium-

Table 6. High, Moderate, and Low CAI Superintendents' Mean Responses to SILS in Select Medium-Sized Districts (N=23)

Instructional Leadership Practice	High (N=5)		Moderate (N=13)		Low (N=5)		F value	P value
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Collaboratively developing goals	3.80	.45	3.62	.51	4.00	.00	1.44	.26
Evaluating instructional effectiveness	3.20	.84	3.15	.80	3.20	.84	.01	.99
Facilitating instruction through budget	3.40	.89	3.92	.28	3.80	.45	2.01	.16
Planning for instruction	3.60	.55	2.69	.86	3.00	.71	2.50	.11
Supervising instruction	2.20	.84	2.08	.76	2.00	1.00	.08	.93
Monitoring instructional programs	3.20	.84	2.62	.65	2.60	.55	1.50	.25
Developing principals as instructional leaders	3.60	.55	3.69	.48	3.60	.55	.09	.91
Developing instructional policies	3.60	.55	3.62	.51	3.60	.55	.00	.99
Reviewing research	3.60	.89	3.23	.60	3.40	.89	.48	.63
Selecting personnel	3.00	.71	3.00	.71	3.40	.55	.68	.52
Facilitating staff development	3.20	.84	3.08	.64	2.80	1.30	.30	.75
Communicating district expectations	3.80	.45	3.85	.38	4.00	.00	.47	.63
Mean of all responses	3.35	.34	3.21	.29	3.28	.44	.33	.73

sized districts, as shown in Table 7, there were significant differences among high (3.60), moderate (2.43), and low (3.00) CAI districts in the practice of planning for instruction ( $F(2,12)=4.91, p=.03$ ). The means are shown in Figure 3.

*Figure 3. High, Moderate, and Low CAI Superintendents' Mean Responses to SILS in Select Medium-Sized Districts Including Superintendents Serving in Current Role for Three or More Years*



Tukey post hoc tests comparing each of the means for these groups revealed that the mean for the moderate CAI group was significantly lower than the mean for the high CAI group ( $p=.02$ ). There was no statistically significant difference between the means of the high and low CAI groups, nor between the means of the moderate and low CAI

Table 7. High, Moderate, and Low CAI Superintendents' Mean Responses to SILS in Select Medium-Sized Districts Including Superintendents Serving in Current Role for Three or More Years (N=15)

Instructional Leadership Practice	High (N=5)		Moderate (N=7)		Low (N=3)		F value	P value
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Collaboratively developing goals	3.80	.45	3.71	.49	4.00	.00	.46	.64
Evaluating instructional effectiveness	3.20	.84	3.14	.90	3.33	1.16	.04	.96
Facilitating instruction through budget	3.40	.89	3.86	.38	4.00	.00	1.30	.31
Planning for instruction	3.60	.55	2.43	.79	3.00	.00	4.90	.03*
Supervising instruction	2.20	.84	2.00	.58	2.00	1.00	.12	.89
Monitoring instructional programs	3.20	.84	2.71	.76	2.67	.58	.73	.50
Developing principals as instructional leaders	3.60	.55	3.57	.54	3.33	.58	.26	.78
Developing instructional policies	3.60	.55	3.43	.54	3.33	.58	.26	.78
Reviewing research	3.60	.89	3.29	.76	3.33	1.16	.20	.82
Selecting personnel	3.00	.71	3.14	.69	3.33	.58	.23	.80
Facilitating staff development	3.20	.84	3.00	.58	2.67	1.53	.34	.72
Communicating district expectations	3.80	.45	3.86	.38	4.00	.00	.28	.76
Mean of all responses	3.35	.34	3.18	.33	3.25	.46	.33	.72

\* $p < .05$

groups. Therefore, for this sample, the null hypothesis was rejected.

### *Research Question 3*

Are there differences between the self-reported instructional leadership practices of male and female superintendents?

A one-way ANOVA was computed on each of the 12 SILS variables and on the mean of superintendents' responses to determine if statistical differences existed between the male (N=76) and female (N=38) superintendents in the phase one sample. As shown in Table 8, the ANOVA revealed a statistically significant difference between male and female superintendents' responses on three variables. First, there was a statistically significant difference between male (3.74) and female (3.45) superintendents on the variable of developing principals as instructional leaders ( $F(1,112)=6.24$ ,  $p=.01$ ). Second, there was a statistically significant difference between male (3.42) and female (3.66) superintendents on the variable of developing instructional policies ( $F(1,112)=4.07$ ,  $p=.046$ ). Third, there was a statistically significant difference between male (3.14) and female (3.47) superintendents on the variable of reviewing research ( $F(1,112)=5.04$ ,  $p=.01$ ).

Table 8. Female and Male Superintendents' Mean Responses to SILS (N=114)

Instructional Leadership Practice	Female (N=38)		Male (N=76)		F value	P value
	M	SD	M	SD		
Collaboratively developing goals	3.79	.41	3.66	.51	1.93	.17
Evaluating instructional effectiveness	3.29	.77	3.14	.76	.91	.34
Facilitating instruction through budget	3.74	.45	3.61	.54	1.66	.20
Planning for instruction	3.05	.73	2.87	.79	1.45	.23
Supervising instruction	2.58	.89	2.55	.89	.02	.88
Monitoring instructional programs	3.16	.68	3.00	.69	1.33	.25
Developing principals as instructional leaders	3.45	.72	3.74	.50	6.24	.01*
Developing instructional policies	3.66	.58	3.42	.60	4.07	.046*
Reviewing research	3.47	.65	3.14	.78	5.04	.03*
Selecting personnel	3.26	.69	3.34	.62	.38	.54
Facilitating staff development	3.29	.80	3.25	.70	.07	.79
Communicating district expectations	3.86	.42	3.84	.38	.07	.79
Mean of all responses	3.38	.37	3.29	.32	1.85	.18

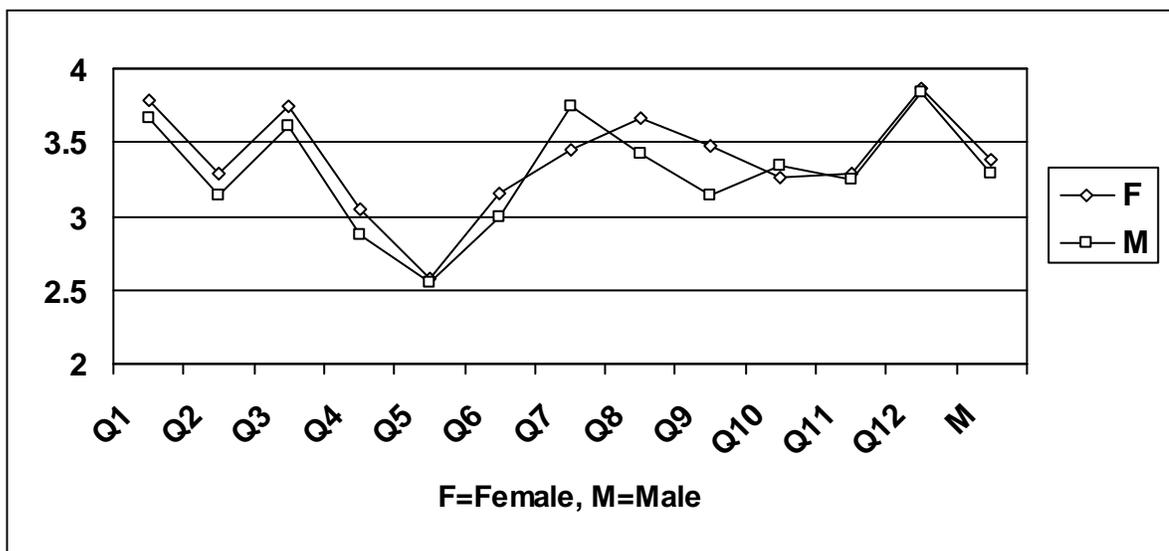
\*p<.05

Therefore, the null hypothesis,

Ho<sub>3</sub> There are no statistically significant differences between the self-reported instructional leadership practices of male and female superintendents,

was rejected. The differences in male and female superintendents' responses are illustrated in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Female and Male Superintendents' Mean Responses to SILS



#### Research Question 4

Are there differences among the self-reported instructional leadership practices of superintendents in large, medium, and small school districts?

Utilizing the sample from phase one of the study, a one-way ANOVA was computed on each of the 12 SILS variables and on the mean of superintendents' responses to determine if statistical differences existed between large (ADM greater than 4,500, N=35), medium (ADM of 1,000 to 4,499, N=42), and small (ADM less than 1,000, N=37) districts. As shown in Table 9, there were statistically significant differences among large (2.71), medium (2.19), and small (2.84) districts on the variable of supervising instruction ( $F(2,113)=6.65$ ,  $p=.002$ ). The mean responses are also summarized in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Superintendents' Mean Responses to SILS in Large, Medium, and Small Districts

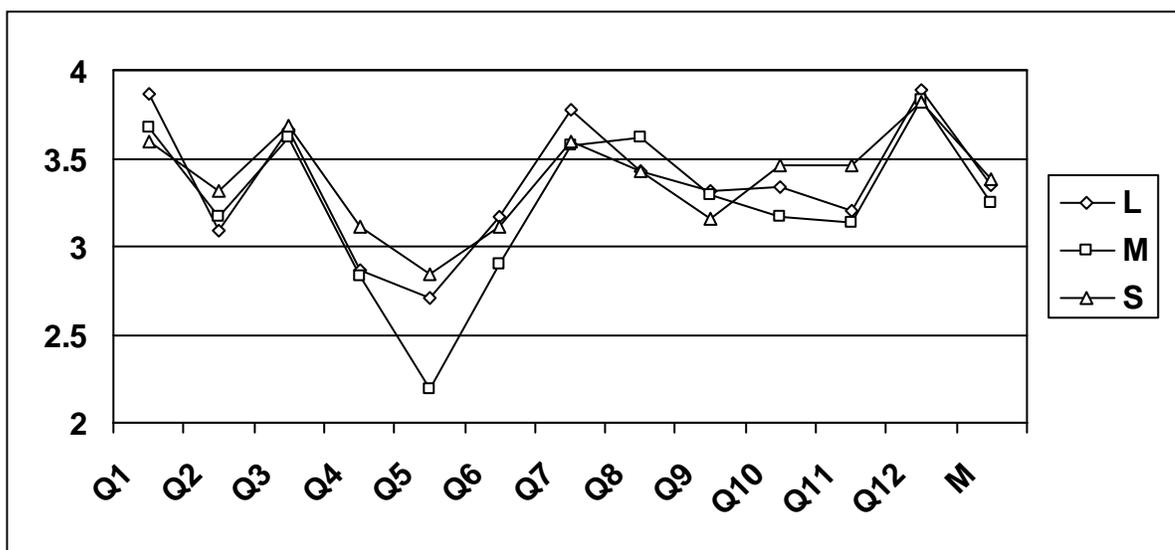


Table 9. Superintendents' Mean Responses to SILS in Large, Medium, and Small Districts (N=114)

Instructional Leadership Practice	Large (N=35)		Medium (N=42)		Small (N=37)		F value	P value
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Collaboratively developing goals	3.86	.36	3.67	.48	3.59	.55	2.99	.05
Evaluating instructional effectiveness	3.09	.85	3.17	.70	3.32	.75	.92	.40
Facilitating instruction through budget	3.66	.48	3.62	.54	3.68	.53	.12	.88
Planning for instruction	2.86	.73	2.83	.73	3.11	.84	1.48	.23
Supervising instruction	2.71	.86	2.19	.77	2.84	.90	6.65	.002*
Monitoring instructional programs	3.17	.71	2.90	.66	3.11	.70	1.62	.20
Developing principals as instructional leaders	3.77	.43	3.57	.59	3.59	.73	1.24	.29
Developing instructional policies	3.43	.61	3.62	.49	3.43	.69	1.32	.27
Reviewing research	3.31	.72	3.29	.67	3.16	.87	.42	.66
Selecting personnel	3.34	.73	3.17	.62	3.46	.56	2.13	.12
Facilitating staff development	3.20	.72	3.14	.78	3.46	.65	2.08	.13
Communicating district expectations	3.89	.29	3.83	.36	3.82	.50	.30	.74
Mean of all responses	3.35	.33	3.25	.30	3.38	.38	1.61	.20

\* $p < .05$

Tukey post hoc tests comparing each of the means for these groups revealed that the mean for medium districts was significantly lower than the mean for large districts ( $p=.02$ ) and small districts ( $p=.003$ ). There was no statistically significant difference between the means of large and small districts. Therefore, the null hypothesis,

$H_{04}$  There are no statistically significant differences among the self-reported instructional leadership practices of superintendents in Arizona large, medium, and small school districts,

was rejected.

#### *Research Question 5*

Are there differences among high, moderate, and low CAI school districts in principals' perceptions of the instructional leadership practices of superintendents?

Utilizing the sample of districts from phase two, the high ( $N=5$ ), moderate ( $N=13$ ), and low ( $N=5$ ) CAI school districts were compared on each of the 12 instructional leadership practices identified using principals' responses on the SILS. These results are summarized in Table 10. Although principals in high CAI districts reported slightly greater mean involvement by superintendents in the 12

Table 10. Principals' Mean Responses to SILS in High, Moderate, and Low CAI Districts(N=65)

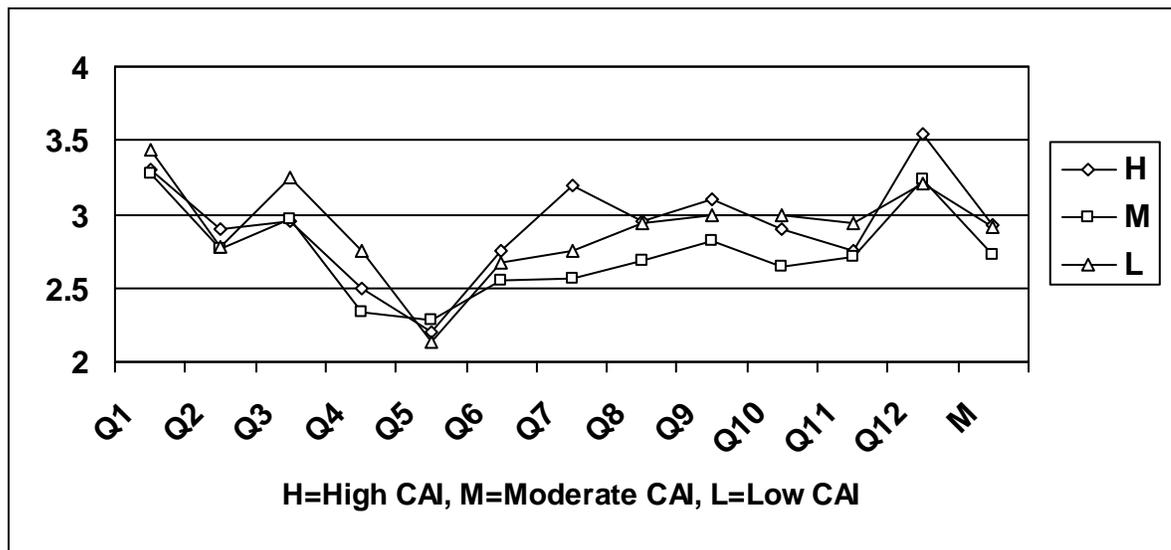
Instructional Leadership Practice	High (N=20)		Moderate (N=29)		Low (N=16)		F value	P value
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Collaboratively developing goals	3.30	.73	3.28	.75	3.44	.73	.26	.77
Evaluating instructional effectiveness	2.90	.97	2.76	.85	2.78	.99	.16	.86
Facilitating instruction through budget	2.95	.83	2.97	.82	3.25	.86	.74	.48
Planning for instruction	2.50	.75	2.34	.81	2.75	.86	1.30	.28
Supervising instruction	2.20	1.06	2.28	.80	2.13	1.03	.14	.87
Monitoring instructional programs	2.75	.97	2.55	.74	2.67	.82	.35	.71
Developing principals as instructional leaders	3.20	.83	2.57	1.00	2.75	1.00	2.60	.08
Developing instructional policies	2.95	.83	2.69	.89	2.94	.85	.70	.50
Reviewing research	3.10	1.17	2.82	.77	3.00	.89	.54	.59
Selecting personnel	2.90	1.02	2.64	.91	3.00	.52	1.00	.37
Facilitating staff development	2.75	1.02	2.71	.94	2.94	.93	.29	.75
Communicating district expectations	3.55	.76	3.24	.95	3.21	.70	.97	.38
Mean of all responses	2.92	.69	2.73	.62	2.91	.67	.68	.51

instructional leadership practices (2.92) than the moderate (2.73) or low (2.91) CAI districts, these differences were not statistically significant. Moreover, there were no statistically significant differences among the means of high, moderate, and low CAI districts on any of the 12 instructional leadership tasks. The null hypothesis,

$H_{05}$  There are no statistically significant differences among high, moderate, and low CAI school districts in principals' perceptions of the instructional leadership practices of superintendents,

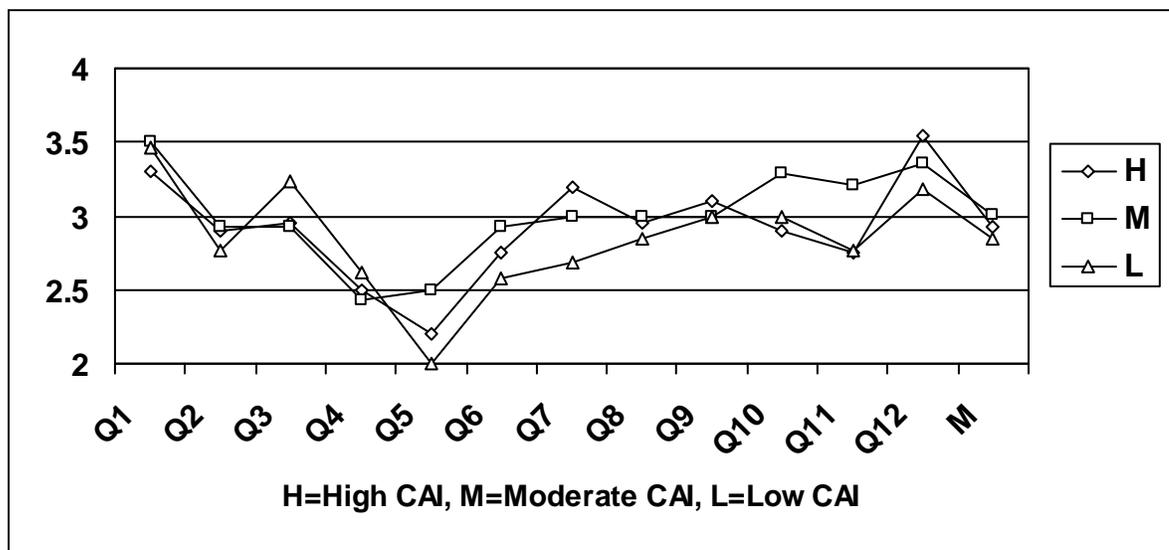
was retained for this sample. The mean responses are shown in Figure 6.

*Figure 6.* Principals' Mean Responses to SILS in High, Moderate, and Low CAI Districts



When school districts that had employed the current superintendent fewer than three years were excluded, principals from high (2.92) and moderate (3.01) CAI districts reported slightly higher mean involvement by superintendents in the 12 instructional leadership tasks than did principals from low CAI districts (2.85). There were, however, no statistically significant differences among high, moderate, and low CAI districts, as shown in Table 11 and Figure 7, thereby retaining the null hypothesis.

*Figure 7. Principals' Mean Responses to SILS in High, Moderate, and Low CAI Districts Including Superintendents Serving in Current Role for Three or More Years*



*Table 11.* Principals' Mean Responses to SILS in High, Moderate, and Low CAI Districts Including Superintendents Serving in Current Role for Three or More Years (N=47)

Instructional Leadership Practice	High (N=20)		Moderate (N=14)		Low (N=13)		F value	P value
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Collaboratively developing goals	3.30	.73	3.50	.65	3.46	.78	.37	.69
Evaluating instructional effectiveness	2.90	.97	2.93	1.00	2.77	.93	.11	.90
Facilitating instruction through budget	2.95	.83	2.93	1.07	3.23	.93	.46	.64
Planning for instruction	2.50	.75	2.43	.85	2.62	.87	.18	.84
Supervising instruction	2.20	1.06	2.50	.86	2.00	1.00	.89	.42
Monitoring instructional programs	2.75	.97	2.93	.62	2.58	.79	.56	.57
Developing principals as instructional leaders	3.20	.83	3.00	.96	2.69	1.03	1.18	.32
Developing instructional policies	2.95	.83	3.00	.96	2.85	.90	.11	.90
Reviewing research	3.10	1.17	3.00	.78	3.00	.91	.06	.94
Selecting personnel	2.90	1.02	3.29	.73	3.00	.58	.90	.41
Facilitating staff development	2.75	1.02	3.21	.80	2.77	.93	1.18	.32
Communicating district expectations	3.55	.76	3.36	.93	3.18	.75	.76	.48
Mean of all responses	2.92	.69	3.01	.61	2.85	.68	.19	.83

*Research Question 6*

Is there a difference between superintendents' self-perceptions of their instructional leadership practices and the ratings of such practices by principals?

Utilizing the sample of principals and superintendents from select medium-sized districts, a one-way ANOVA was computed on each of the 12 SILS variables and on the mean of subjects' responses to determine if statistical differences existed between principal (N=65) and superintendent (N=23) perceptions of superintendents' involvement in the 12 instructional leadership tasks. As shown in Table 12, the ANOVA revealed a statistically significant difference between principal and superintendent responses on six variables and on the overall mean. First, there was a statistically significant difference between principal (3.32) and superintendent (3.74) responses on the variable of collaboratively developing goals ( $F(1,86)=6.54$ ,  $p=.01$ ). Second, there was a statistically significant difference between principal (3.03) and superintendent (3.78) responses on the variable of facilitating instruction through budget ( $F(1,86)=16.57$ ,  $p=.00$ ). Third, there was a statistically significant difference between

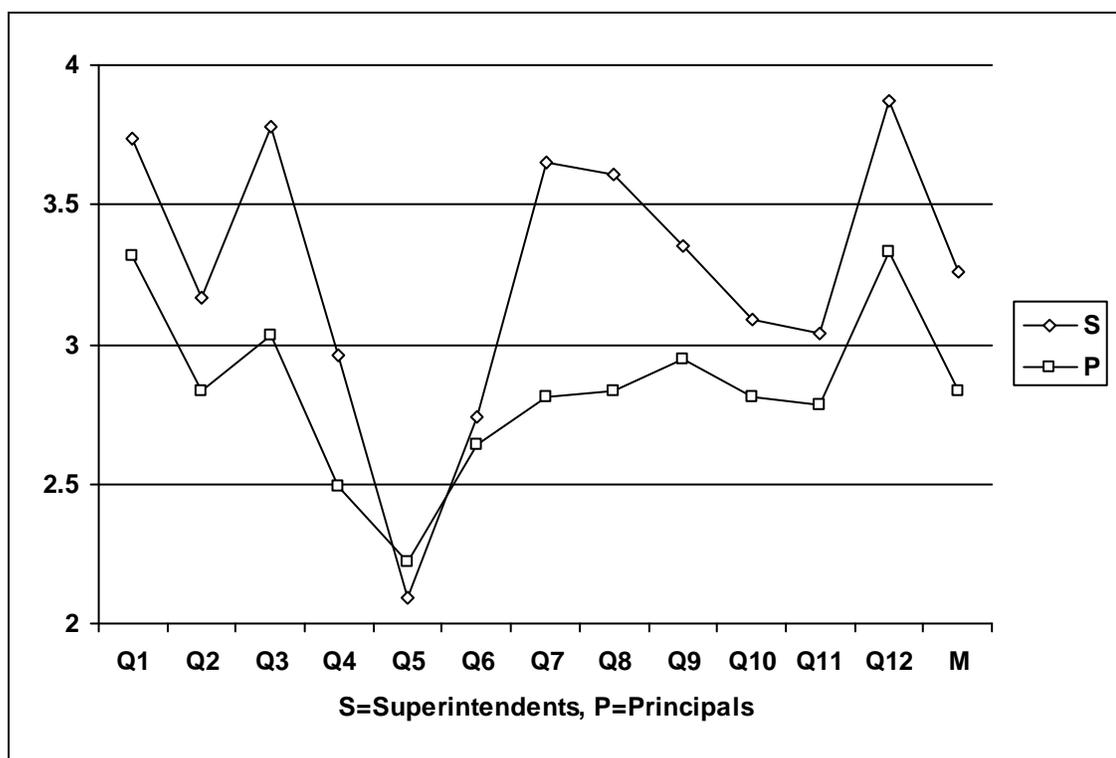
Table 12. Principal and Superintendent Perceptions of Superintendents' Instructional Leadership (N=88)

Instructional Leadership Practice	Principals (N=65)		Supts (N=23)		F value	P value
	M	SD	M	SD		
Collaboratively developing goals	3.32	.73	3.74	.45	6.54	.01*
Evaluating instructional effectiveness	2.83	.93	3.17	.78	2.51	.12
Facilitating instruction through budget	3.03	.83	3.78	.52	16.57	.00*
Planning for instruction	2.49	.81	2.96	.83	5.50	.02*
Supervising instruction	2.22	.93	2.09	.79	.35	.56
Monitoring instructional programs	2.64	.82	2.74	.69	.26	.61
Developing principals as instructional leaders	2.81	.97	3.65	.49	15.61	.00*
Developing instructional policies	2.83	.86	3.61	.50	16.80	.00*
Reviewing research	2.95	.93	3.35	.71	3.39	.07
Selecting personnel	2.81	.87	3.09	.67	1.88	.17
Facilitating staff development	2.78	.95	3.04	.83	1.38	.24
Communicating district expectations	3.33	.84	3.87	.34	8.73	.004*
Mean of all responses	2.83	.65	3.26	.32	9.01	.004*

\*p < .05

principal (2.49) and superintendent (2.96) responses on the variable of planning for instruction ( $F(1,86)=5.50, p=.02$ ). Fourth, there was a statistically significant difference between principal (2.81) and superintendent (3.65) responses on the variable of developing principals as instructional leaders ( $F(1,86)=15.61, p=.00$ ). Fifth, there was a statistically significant difference between principal (2.83) and superintendent (3.61) responses on the variable of developing instructional policies

*Figure 8. Principal and Superintendent Perceptions of Superintendents' Instructional Leadership*



( $F(1,86)=16.80$ ,  $p=.00$ ). Sixth, there was a statistically significant difference between principal (3.33) and superintendent (3.87) responses on the variable of communicating district expectations ( $F(1,86)=8.73$ ,  $p=.004$ ). Finally, there was a statistically significant difference between the mean of principal (2.83) and superintendent (3.26) responses ( $F(1,86)=9.01$ ,  $p=.004$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis,

$H_0$  There is no statistically significant difference between superintendents' self-perceptions of their instructional leadership practices and the ratings of such practices by principals.

was rejected. Superintendents' and principals' mean responses are illustrated in Figure 8.

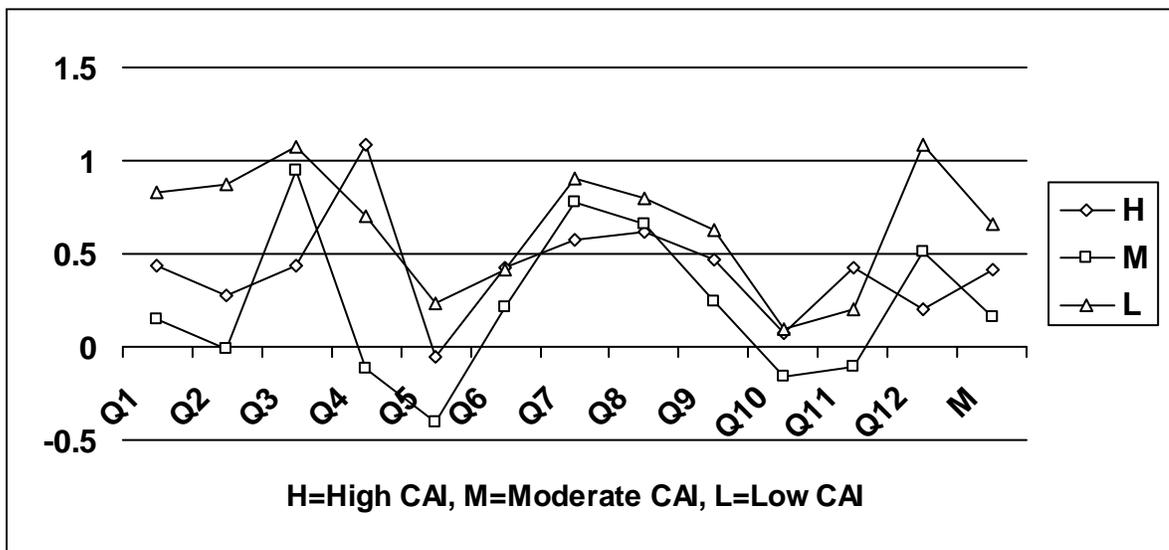
#### *Research Question 7*

Are there differences among high, moderate, and low CAI school districts in superintendents' self-awareness of their instructional leadership practices?

The high, moderate, and low CAI school districts were compared using the difference scores derived by subtracting the mean ratings of each superintendent by the principals in each respective district from superintendents' self-ratings on the SILS. Only those districts where the

superintendent had been employed for three or more years were included. No responses were received from principals in one of the districts, leaving 14 districts' scores available for analysis. A one-way ANOVA was computed on each of these 12 variables to determine if differences existed among the high, moderate, and low CAI groups. The results of the ANOVA are summarized in Table 13 and in Figure 9.

*Figure 9. Differences Between Principals' Ratings of Superintendents and Superintendents' Self-Ratings in High, Moderate, and Low CAI Districts*



Although the mean differences between principal and superintendent perceptions were the least among high (0.42) and moderate (0.16) CAI districts, and greatest among low

Table 13. Difference Scores for High, Moderate, and Low CAI Districts (N=14)

Instructional Leadership Practice	High (N=5)		Moderate (N=6)		Low (N=3)		F value	P value
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Collaboratively developing goals	.44	.63	.15	.42	.83	1.04	1.14	.35
Evaluating instructional effectiveness	.28	.97	-.01	1.33	.87	2.03	.41	.68
Facilitating instruction through budget	.44	.77	.95	.77	1.07	1.25	.64	.54
Planning for instruction	1.09	.59	-.12	.85	.70	.98	3.32	.07
Supervising instruction	-.05	.57	-.40	.62	.23	1.91	.449	.65
Monitoring instructional programs	.43	.71	.21	.71	.42	1.46	.86	.45
Developing principals as instructional leaders	.57	.54	.78	.88	.90	1.49	.13	.88
Developing instructional policies	.62	.62	.66	.71	.80	1.21	.05	.95
Reviewing research	.47	.58	.24	1.15	.63	1.95	.12	.89
Selecting personnel	.07	.84	-.16	.66	.10	.66	.15	.87
Facilitating staff development	.43	.29	-.11	.85	.20	2.25	.31	.74
Communicating district expectations	.20	.57	.51	.67	1.08	.88	1.58	.25
Mean of all responses	.42	.31	.16	.55	.66	1.24	.51	.61

CAI districts (0.66), no differences reached a level of statistical significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis,

Ho<sub>7</sub> There are no statistically significant differences among high, moderate, and low CAI school districts in superintendents' self-awareness of their instructional leadership practices,

was retained.

An additional analysis of the differences in self-other ratings was completed utilizing the method developed by Atwater and Yammarino (1992; 1997) to categorize individuals as *Over-Estimators*, *Accurate Self-Raters*, or *Under-Estimators* based upon the extent of differences between supervisors' and subordinates' ratings of supervisors. Using this method, individuals categorized as *Accurate Self-Raters* were those whose self-ratings were within 0.5 standard deviation of the mean difference for all subjects. Individuals categorized as *Over-Estimators* were those whose self-ratings were greater than 0.5 standard deviation above the mean difference for all subjects. Individuals categorized as *Under-Estimators* were those whose self-ratings were greater than 0.5 standard deviation below the mean difference for all subjects. The

distribution of superintendents based upon high, moderate, or low CAI status is summarized in Table 14. Because of the small number of districts, it cannot be assumed that these differences are significant.

*Table 14.* Distribution of Over-Estimators, Accurate Self-Raters, and Under-Estimators Based Upon CAI Status

CAI Status	Over Estimators	Accurate Self-Raters	Under-Estimators
High	1	3	1
Moderate	0	4	2
Low	2	0	1

## Chapter 5

### SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

As an aid to the reader, this final chapter of the dissertation restates the research problem and reviews the methodology used in the study. The major sections of the chapter summarize the results and discuss possible implications.

### Introduction

For the last two decades, extensive research has been conducted relative to the instructional leadership role of the school principal. The effective schools research which began in the late 1970s tended to point to principals' instructional leadership as central to efforts to improve schools (Edmonds, 1979; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Lezotte, 1989). That body of research contributed to reform efforts that sought to strengthen and take advantage of instructional leadership by the principal.

The instructional leadership role of the superintendent, and the superintendent's capacity to influence improvement efforts, however, has been studied to a much lesser extent (Bridges, 1982; Crowson, 1987; Murphy & Hallinger, 1988; Wimpelberg, 1997). Recent trends in education, particularly standards-based reforms and high-

stakes testing, have forced school districts to abandon the more fragmented control systems of the past and to develop strategies that result in closer coordination of curriculum, instruction, and assessment (Floden et al., 1988; Fusarelli, 2002). Such trends imply a different role for the school superintendent in providing instructional leadership. The changes in this role, and the absence of extensive research on the instructional leadership practices of superintendents, were two of the major reasons for undertaking the present study.

Utilizing the conceptual framework of previous research (Morgan, 2000; Morgan & Petersen, 2002; Petersen, 1999; Watts, 1992), this study was an attempt to understand the role that instructional leadership by the school district superintendent might play in influencing school district performance. This study was also undertaken to apply quantitative methods to a research topic that has primarily been studied using qualitative and mixed methods (Bredeson, 1996; Herman, 1990; LaRocque & Coleman, 1989, 1991; Morgan, 2000; Morgan & Petersen, 2002; Murphy & Hallinger, 1986, 1988; Petersen, 1999; Peterson et al., 1987; Watts, 1992).

### Statement of the Problem

As noted above, the current context of school leadership is one in which administrators at all administrative levels are called upon to provide for continuous and marked gains in measurable academic achievement for nearly all students. Though not directly involved in work at the classroom level, superintendents are increasingly held accountable for guiding and shaping the organizational vision, and, ultimately, the organizational culture, to the degree that the norms of the organization reflect an ongoing commitment to constant improvements in the academic performance of all students (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Fusarelli et al., 2002). The federally-mandated reporting requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act (*Reauthorization of the ESEA*, 2002) call upon public school administrators to lead schools and school districts to educate all students to high standards. Administrators at all organizational levels are confronted with a staggering variety of competing interests and demands on their time, and the challenge that has been issued to close achievement gaps that have persisted for decades is a significant one indeed (Kober, 2001; Rothstein, 2004).

In an environment in which the results of schools and districts are closely scrutinized by policy makers, elected officials, the news media, and parents, it is evident that some school districts have produced continuous gains in student learning that are above norms for the state or the nation at large (Scheurich & Skrla, 2003). While many factors would be expected to influence such gains, the instructional leadership role of the school superintendent is an area that has received limited attention (Bjork, 1993; Bredeson, 1996; Petersen, 1999). Managerial and administrative responsibilities frequently draw the attention of superintendents away from matters relating to instruction, but studies (Bredeson, 1996; Herman, 1990; LaRocque & Coleman, 1989, 1991; Morgan, 2000; Morgan & Petersen, 2002; Murphy & Hallinger, 1986, 1988; Petersen, 1999; Peterson et al., 1987; Watts, 1992) demonstrate differences in the manner in which some superintendents are reported to allocate their individual time, energy, and attention, the choices they make with respect to the selection and promotion of school- and district-level leaders, the way in which they establish a vision for the district, and how expectations relating to curriculum and instruction are communicated to staff and the community.

The fundamental problem that this study sought to address was whether superintendents' practices and self-perceptions vary in relation to the academic performance of school districts.

#### Review of the Methodology

The work of previous researchers (Morgan, 2000; Morgan & Petersen, 2002; Petersen, 1999; Watts, 1992) contributed to the conceptual framework for this study. The study was conducted from a quantitative perspective, and was comprised of two separate phases. In the first phase, superintendents in 114 Arizona elementary and unified school districts rated their involvement in 12 instructional leadership tasks by completing Watts' (1992) Superintendents as Instructional Leaders (SILS) survey instrument. In the second phase, superintendents in 23 medium-sized school districts from the above sample authorized the researcher to administer the SILS instrument to principals. Once this authorization was received, principals were asked to complete the SILS instrument, rating the instructional leadership practices of their superintendents. The second phase included an analysis of the self-ratings of this select sample of superintendents, the ratings of superintendents by their principals, and the

similarities and differences in these ratings. All of the above districts were categorized as high, moderate, or low Continuous Academic Improvement (CAI) districts based on the results of student cohort growth in reading and mathematics on the Stanford Achievement Test, 9<sup>th</sup> Edition, from 2001-2004. An ANOVA was computed on each of these 12 variables and on the mean responses to determine if statistical differences existed among the high, moderate, and low CAI groups, among male and female superintendents, among superintendents of large, medium, and small districts, and between superintendents' and principals' perceptions.

#### Summary of the Results

Watts' (1992) Superintendents as Instructional Leaders (SILS) survey instrument was administered to Arizona superintendents and principals recruited for this study. The instrument includes a four-point Likert-type continuum labeled High and Low. Principals and superintendents were asked to indicate the superintendent's personal involvement in 12 facets of the instructional program in the district by indicating the number that most closely corresponded with the superintendent's current activities. The results of the study are summarized in Table 15.

Table 15. Summary of Findings

Hypothesis	Findings	Status of Null Hypothesis
HO <sub>1</sub>	Relationship Between CAI Status and Superintendents' Development of Principals as Instructional Leaders (p=.02)	Null Hypothesis Rejected
HO <sub>2</sub>	Relationship Between CAI Status and Superintendents' Involvement in Planning for Instruction (p=.03)	Null Hypothesis Rejected
HO <sub>3</sub>	Relationship Between Superintendent Gender and Involvement in Developing Principals as Instructional Leaders (p=.01), Developing Instructional Policies (p=.046), and Reviewing Research (p=.03)	Null Hypothesis Rejected
HO <sub>4</sub>	Relationship Between District Size and Superintendents' Involvement in Supervising Instruction (p=.002)	Null Hypothesis Rejected
HO <sub>5</sub>	No Relationship Between Principals' Perceptions of Superintendents' Instructional Leadership Practices and CAI Status	Null Hypothesis Retained
HO <sub>6</sub>	Differences Between Principal and Superintendent Perceptions of Superintendents' Involvement in Collaboratively Developing Goals (p=.01), Facilitating Instruction Through Budget (p=.00), Planning for Instruction (p=.02), Developing Principals as Instructional Leaders (p=.00), Developing Instructional Policies (p=.00), and Communicating District Expectations (p=.004)	Null Hypothesis Rejected
HO <sub>7</sub>	No Relationship Between Superintendents' Self Awareness and District CAI Status	Null Hypothesis Retained

The following were the research questions that were addressed in the study. The data consisted of principal and superintendent responses to the SILS survey instrument.

*Research Question 1*

Are there differences among Arizona high, moderate, and low Continuous Academic Improvement (CAI) school districts in the self-reported instructional leadership practices of superintendents?

From a sample of 114 superintendents responding to the survey, there were no statistically significant differences among Arizona high, moderate, and low CAI school districts in the self-reported instructional leadership practices of superintendents. However, since this study was primarily concerned with analyzing the differences among high, moderate, and low CAI districts based upon districts' improvements in reading and mathematics over a three-year period, superintendents' responses to the survey were also evaluated by limiting the sample to only those 64 superintendents that had been employed as superintendent in the current district for at least three years, prior to the current year. Analysis of these results revealed that superintendents in low CAI districts were less involved in developing principals as

instructional leaders than superintendents in moderate CAI districts to a statistically significant degree. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

*Research Question 2*

Are there differences among select medium-sized Arizona high, moderate, and low Continuous Academic Improvement (CAI) school districts in the self-reported instructional leadership practices of superintendents?

An analysis of all subjects in this sample revealed that there were no statistically significant differences among select medium-sized Arizona high, moderate, and low CAI school districts in the self-reported instructional leadership practices of superintendents. When the sample was limited to only those superintendents that had been employed in the current district for at least three years, there were statistically significant findings. Analysis of these results revealed that superintendents in moderate CAI districts were less involved in planning for instruction than superintendents in high CAI districts to a statistically significant degree. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

*Research Question 3*

Are there differences between the self-reported instructional leadership practices of male and female superintendents?

There were statistically significant differences between male and female superintendents' self-reported involvement in three instructional leadership tasks. First, male superintendents reported being more involved than female superintendents in developing principals as instructional leaders. Second, female superintendents reported being more involved than male superintendents in developing instructional policies. Third, female superintendents reported being more involved than male superintendents in reviewing research. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

*Research Question 4*

Are there differences among the self-reported instructional leadership practices of superintendents in large, medium, and small school districts?

Analysis of these results revealed that superintendents in medium-sized districts were less involved in supervising instruction than superintendents in both large and small districts to a statistically

significant degree. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

*Research Question 5*

Are there differences among high, moderate, and low CAI school districts in principals' perceptions of the instructional leadership practices of superintendents?

Principals' responses were analyzed by first reviewing the results from all responding districts, then from only those districts where the superintendent had been employed for three or more years. In both cases, although principals from high and moderate CAI districts reported slightly higher mean involvement by superintendents in the 12 instructional leadership tasks than did principals from low CAI districts, there were no statistically significant differences among principals' responses. For this question, the null hypothesis was retained.

*Research Question 6*

Is there a difference between superintendents' self-perceptions of their instructional leadership practices and the ratings of such practices by principals?

There were statistically significant differences between principals' and superintendents' ratings of

superintendents' involvement in six instructional leadership tasks. First, superintendents' self-ratings of their involvement in collaboratively developing goals were higher than principals' ratings of superintendents' involvement. Second, superintendents' self-ratings of their involvement in facilitating instruction through budget were higher than principals' ratings of superintendents' involvement. Third, superintendents' self-ratings of their involvement in planning for instruction were higher than principals' ratings of superintendents' involvement. Fourth, superintendents' self-ratings of their involvement in developing principals as instructional leaders were higher than principals' ratings of superintendents' involvement. Fifth, superintendents' self-ratings of their involvement in developing instructional policies were higher than principals' ratings of superintendents' involvement. Sixth, superintendents' self-ratings of their involvement in communicating district expectations were higher than principals' ratings of superintendents' involvement. Finally, superintendents' mean self-ratings of their involvement in the 12 instructional leadership tasks were higher than principals' ratings of superintendents' involvement. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

*Research Question 7*

Are there differences among high, moderate, and low CAI school districts in superintendents' self-awareness of their instructional leadership practices?

For this question, the mean ratings of each superintendent by principals in each respective district were subtracted from the superintendent's self-ratings. The resulting values were used as a measure of self-awareness, with lower values representing greater self-awareness. Then, an ANOVA was utilized to determine if there were differences among high, moderate, and low CAI districts in the mean difference scores. Although the mean differences between principal and superintendent perceptions were the least among high and moderate CAI districts, and greatest among low CAI districts, no differences reached a level of statistical significance. An analysis of the distribution of superintendents based upon the district's status as a high, moderate, or low CAI district, and upon the degree to which superintendents' self-ratings corresponded to principals' ratings revealed that superintendents in low CAI districts were least likely to have self-ratings that corresponded to principals' ratings. All of the superintendents whose self-ratings corresponded closely to

principals' ratings were found in high or moderate CAI districts. However, the small number of subjects represented calls into question the significance of these relationships. For question 7, the null hypothesis was retained.

#### Discussion of the Results

On the basis of this study alone, it would be unreasonable to reach sweeping conclusions that attribute district-wide improvements in student academic achievement to superintendents' leadership practices. Student learning is, in fact, the result of many variables. For example, researchers have demonstrated that factors including instructional time, teacher and principal variables, family educational culture, curricular alignment, classroom practice, and instructional resources (DeMoss, 2002; Goddard et al., 2000; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999a; Quinn, 2002; Skrla et al., 2000; Smith, 2000; Sweetland & Hoy, 2000; Togneri, 2003) are all important variables affecting student achievement. Moreover, although principals are in much closer daily contact with teachers than superintendents, there is limited evidence to suggest a direct relationship even between principal leadership behaviors and student achievement (Andrews & Soder, 1987;

Hallinger et al., 1996). However, findings from this study represent a contribution to the existing body of research demonstrating that superintendents' instructional leadership can be an important factor in facilitating district-wide improvements in student learning.

In the present study, there were few significant differences among high, moderate, and low CAI districts in superintendents' involvement in instructional leadership practices. This was the case whether respondents were superintendents or principals. There were, however, some findings that merit discussion.

First, when superintendents' responses were analyzed without regard to the number of years that superintendents had served in that role in the current district, there were no significant differences. However, as illustrated in Tables 5 and 7, when samples were limited to superintendents that had served in the current district for at least the school years 2001-02, 2002-03, and 2003-04, there were significant differences in superintendents' reported involvement in developing principals as instructional leaders and planning for instruction. This time frame was identical to the years during which students' Stanford Achievement Test score gains were

analyzed in order to rank districts as high, moderate, or low CAI districts. The fact that significant results surfaced when samples were limited to those superintendents that were present during these years further supports the conclusion that superintendents' involvement in developing principals as instructional leaders and planning for instruction are significant factors in districts with improving student achievement. Moreover, such findings point to the importance of sustainability in district leadership over time.

Second, it is worth noting that male and female superintendents reported statistically significant differences in their involvement in three of the 12 tasks (Table 8). Prior research by Pitner and Ogawa (1981) had found similarities in the work characteristics of male and female superintendents. Watts' research in 1992 had found significant differences in male and female respondents in the area of planning for instruction, where females had reported greater involvement. In the present study, female superintendents reported being more involved in reviewing research and developing instructional policies. Male superintendents reported being more involved in developing principals as instructional leaders.

While male and female superintendents reported their involvement in instructional leadership tasks to be more alike than different, the differences that were evident could also be associated with total years of experience as a superintendent. Females, on average, reported significantly fewer years of total experience in the superintendency (6.2 years) than was reported by male superintendents (9.3 years) ( $F(1,113)=6.52, p=.01$ ).

Third, the absence of differences among large, medium, and small school district superintendents was an unanticipated finding. Given the range in size of participating school districts, some subjects expressed the opinion that greater differences in practices would be reported by superintendents, as indicated by the following three respondents:

Probably the size of the district will determine the superintendent's direct involvement with the above facets.

As you know the smaller the district the more involved with the actual instructional program the superintendent will be.

Having been a superintendent in both small and large districts, my observation is that involvement in instruction [by the superintendent] differs significantly. I believe that district size plays a factor in how individuals respond.

Arizona superintendents in districts of varying sizes reported similar levels of involvement in the 12 instructional leadership tasks. The one exception was in the area of supervising instruction, in which superintendents in medium-sized districts reported being less involved.

A fourth area that merits discussion is the finding of significant differences between principals' and superintendents' ratings of superintendents' instructional leadership practices. Although prior research on self-other ratings has demonstrated that one's self-ratings tend to be inflated in comparison to ratings by others (Bass & Yammarino, 1991; Harris & Schaubroeck, 1988; Podsakoff & Organ, 1986), the scale of the differences was unexpected. There were statistically significant differences in six areas and in principals' and superintendents' mean ratings.

These differences may reinforce findings by Bredeson (1996) and Boone (1998) showing evidence of gaps between superintendents' perceptions of the importance of instructional leadership tasks and their actual involvement in such work. They may also point to differing expectations held by superintendents and principals concerning the work of superintendents, as well as to the relative effectiveness of superintendents' instructional leadership. Principals responding to the survey tended to see superintendents as much less involved in instructional leadership than did superintendents themselves. Where significant differences exist between self-other perceptions, this can sometimes be accounted for by a lack of effective communication or insufficient motivation to improve (Atwater & Yammarino, 1997). Leaders who already see themselves as performing at a high level, even when such views are at odds with those around them, may believe there is little reason to alter one's leadership activities.

A fifth area that is worthy of additional discussion is a comparison of the 114 superintendents' responses in the present study to Watts' initial administration of this survey to 148 Georgia superintendents during the 1991-92

school year. Although superintendents' responses appear to be reasonably similar in these two samples, superintendents in the present study reported overall levels of involvement that were higher in 9 of the 12 instructional leadership areas. A *t* test comparing Watts' original data and the data from the present study revealed that subjects from the present study had significantly higher involvement in seven areas, and that the subjects from the original study reported significantly higher involvement in two areas. The responses for the two samples are presented in Figure 10 and in Table 16.

*Figure 10.* A Comparison of Responses from the Present Study with Watts' Original 1992 Study

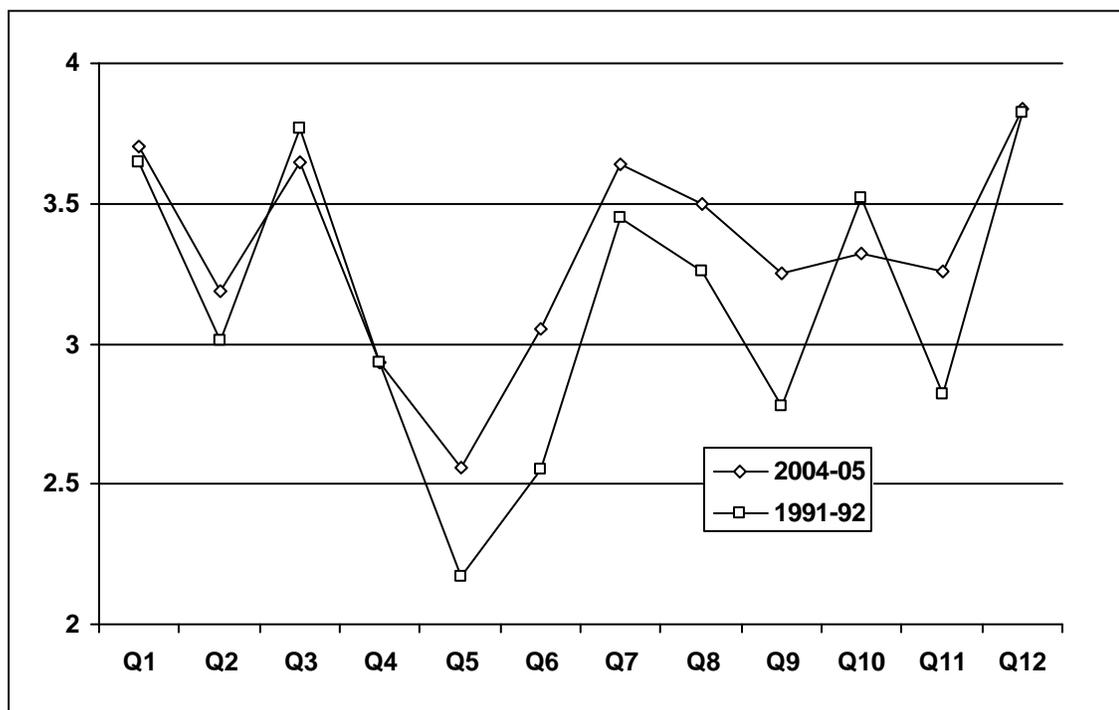


Table 16. Comparison of Present Study to Watts' 1992 Study

	Study	M	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Q1	Davidson	3.70	.48	.95	.34
	Watts	3.64	.52		
Q2	Davidson	3.19	.76	2.21	.03*
	Watts	3.01	.60		
Q3	Davidson	3.65	.52	-2.21	.04*
	Watts	3.77	.45		
Q4	Davidson	2.93	.77	-.03	.98
	Watts	2.93	.69		
Q5	Davidson	2.56	.88	3.84	.00*
	Watts	2.17	.77		
Q6	Davidson	3.05	.69	4.67	.00*
	Watts	2.55	.77		
Q7	Davidson	3.64	.60	2.64	.01*
	Watts	3.45	.59		
Q8	Davidson	3.50	.60	3.27	.00*
	Watts	3.26	.60		
Q9	Davidson	3.25	.75	4.77	.00*
	Watts	2.78	.82		
Q10	Davidson	3.32	.64	-2.51	.01*
	Watts	3.52	.67		
Q11	Davidson	3.26	.73	4.98	.00*
	Watts	2.82	.71		
Q12	Davidson	3.84	.39	.49	.63
	Watts	3.82	.45		

\* $p < .05$

Arizona superintendents reported being more involved in evaluating instructional effectiveness, supervising instruction, monitoring instructional programs, developing principals as instructional leaders, developing instructional policies, reviewing research, and facilitating staff development. One factor that may have contributed to the differences in superintendents' responses may be the increasing attention to standards-based reform and student academic achievement within recent years. This is consistent with findings in prior research (Fuller & Johnson, 2001; Johnson et al., 2000; Koschoreck, 2001; Sclafani, 2001; Skrla et al., 2000; Skrla et al., 2001) that lead to conclusions that states' reform initiatives forced superintendents to move from tending to more traditional cultural, political, financial, and logistical functions to becoming more involved in carrying out instructional leadership responsibilities. It would seem reasonable to conclude that accountability initiatives in Arizona and at the federal level have influenced superintendents to become more involved in matters related to instruction.

One area in which Arizona superintendents reported lower levels of involvement than their Georgia peers was in

the area of facilitating instruction through budget. One possible conclusion that could be reached from this evidence is that this is due to Arizona's comparatively low per-pupil funding for education. Since the late 1990s, Arizona has consistently ranked at or near the bottom of the states in per-pupil operational funding. It is plausible that Arizona superintendents report less involvement in facilitating instruction through budget due to limited capacity for such involvement.

#### Limitations to the Study

There are a number of limitations that the reader should be aware of when reviewing this study.

1. In this study, school districts were ranked as high, moderate, or low CAI districts based on student cohort gains on a norm-referenced standardized test. The use of such data in this manner amounts to a fairly narrow definition of student academic improvement, as such assessments, while important, represent but a small glimpse of academic achievement.
2. Another limitation was the extent of change in student cohorts in some districts from 2001-2004. Arizona is a state with a rapidly-growing

population, and some of the districts sampled experienced significant growth during this period. Because of this growth, changes in achievement test data may have been the product of changes in the student cohort, rather than the outcome of district instructional practices.

3. The absence of any findings among high, moderate, and low CAI districts in principals' ratings of superintendents' instructional leadership practices is assumed to be attributable to the small number of districts participating. Although the response rate from principals was acceptable, there were only 14 of 36 districts that agreed to take part in the study where the superintendent had served for at least three years.
4. The frequency of superintendent turnover is a limiting factor. One-fifth of the superintendent respondents were in their first year in that role in the current district, nearly one-half had served in that capacity for just over two years, and less than one-quarter had served for more than five years. The departure of superintendents

by resignation or retirement thereby limited the availability of relevant data.

5. Since the 12 instructional leadership tasks of the SILS are not defined in the instrument that subjects completed, these tasks may have been interpreted differently by subjects. Variances in interpretations could have affected the accuracy of the results.
6. The researcher for the present study has been a practicing Arizona administrator for 16 years, and was therefore acquainted with many of the subjects. This may have affected the manner in which subjects responded to the survey. In particular, although the researcher was not known by most of the principals, the fact that the researcher was a superintendent familiar to other superintendents may have affected principals' responses. Even though subjects received written assurance that individual responses would not be identified by name or by employer, this relationship may have lead some principals to respond differently than if the researcher had been unacquainted with the subjects.

### Implications for Practice

While this study found that, in general, there were few differences between superintendents' instructional leadership practices in high, moderate, and low CAI districts, as viewed by both superintendents and principals, a number of implications for practitioners are suggested by the study. One of the principal implications not only from this study, but from prior research as well (Morgan, 2000; Morgan & Petersen, 2002; Petersen, 1999, 2002), is the importance of the superintendent's actions in modeling an academically-oriented vision for the entire district. This implication is supported by the findings that superintendents in higher-performing districts are more involved in planning for instruction and developing principals as instructional leaders, two crucial areas in which superintendents can articulate a vision.

Just as principals' influence on instructional outcomes tends to be mediated through teachers, superintendents' leadership is mediated through others as well (Southworth, 2002). This study suggests that superintendents should not exclude themselves from involvement in instructional planning, but should instead work with system-wide curriculum personnel and principals

to draw attention to the importance of clearly-articulated goals and effective classroom practice. Previous studies (Morgan, 2000; Morgan & Petersen, 2002) have found that instructionally-effective superintendents consistently work with others to collaboratively set instructional goals and make instructional decisions. One superintendent who was a subject of this study articulated his approach to instructional planning in responding to the survey as follows:

My style is more permissive than directive. I try to hire the most trustworthy and effective instructional leadership that I can. When I judge them to be moving in the right direction, I simultaneously stay out of their way and cheer them on.

This study also points to the importance of investing time and resources in developing principals' instructional leadership. Principals play a critical leadership role in the district's instructional program through their daily interaction with students and teachers. Superintendents can develop such skills through their involvement in evaluation processes, their influence on the nature and scope of professional development activities, and the manner in which they model attention to classroom observations and

other instructional matters. As one subject noted, the quality of one's background as a teacher may also be critical.

The principal should be the instructional leader at that school. Good teachers make good principals. Great teachers make great principals.

The results of this study also suggest the need for superintendents to make use of formal and informal strategies for gathering 360-degree feedback (Yammarino & Atwater, 1997) concerning their performance. In this study, wide gaps were evident in principals' and superintendents' views of the level of superintendents' involvement in instructional leadership tasks. Though not statistically significant, these gaps were widest in the lowest-performing districts. These gaps may point to differing expectations with respect to the capacity of superintendents to be involved in instructional matters, but the gaps may also point to differing perceptions of superintendents' effectiveness in this regard. In either case, leaders with highly favorable self-perceptions that are inconsistent with how they are viewed by others may see little reason for personal or professional growth. Such

perceptions can have a significant impact on the organization's effectiveness (Sosik & Megerian, 1999).

#### Recommendations for Further Research

One limitation of this study involved the method by which districts were categorized as high, moderate, or low CAI districts. Future research on differences in superintendents' instructional leadership practices could lessen the impact of this limitation by including achievement data from more than one source. For instance, both norm-referenced and criterion-referenced assessments could be used to ascertain districts' relative performance in improving teaching and learning.

Another limitation was the extent to which enrollment in some districts had changed during the period from 2001-2004. Future research of this nature could be strengthened by tracking identical cohorts of students over a period of time to assess the added value of the instruction provided by the districts sampled.

Case study research on superintendents' instructional leadership in school districts that have consistently demonstrated higher-than-expected achievement gains for all students and in all schools would contribute to an understanding of the leadership factors that distinguish

effective districts from those that are less effective. Such research could focus particularly on specific strategies that superintendents use to participate in instructional planning and to develop the instructional leadership capacity of principals and others. This research could also provide a more rich description of the strategies employed than can be obtained through survey research.

## APPENDIX A

## LETTER TO ALL SUPERINTENDENTS

Dear Fellow Superintendent:

As you may know, I have been superintendent of the Casa Grande Elementary School District since 1997. I am also a doctoral student at the University of Arizona, and am currently completing my dissertation, which focuses on perceptions of the instructional leadership practices of school superintendents.

All Arizona elementary and unified school district superintendents are being asked to complete a 12-item survey. In addition, principals from thirty-six medium-sized Arizona school districts will be included in this study.

In my dissertation, I will analyze superintendents' perceptions of their own instructional leadership practices, as well as the perceptions held by principals. I am requesting that you complete the on-line survey at <http://fp.arizona.edu/edl/superintendent.asp>. The survey should take approximately five minutes to complete. Before deciding whether you will participate, please read the "Subject's Disclaimer Form" at the end of this letter.

I appreciate your participation in this study. All survey information will be kept strictly confidential. Should you have any questions, please contact me at 520-876-3202 or 520-560-8501.

Sincerely,

Frank Davidson, Superintendent  
Casa Grande Elementary School District

Doctoral Candidate  
University of Arizona

## APPENDIX B

## LETTER TO SUPERINTENDENTS OF PHASE TWO DISTRICTS

Dear Fellow Superintendent:

I recently contacted you to request your permission to include your district in my dissertation research, which focuses on perceptions of the instructional leadership practices of school superintendents.

Thank you for completing the on-line survey for superintendents. If you agree to have principals in your school district participate in the study, you will need to sign the attached form entitled, "Authorization to Conduct Research." Should you provide permission to conduct this research in your district, principals will be asked to complete a 12-item on-line survey as well.

I appreciate your participation in this study. All survey information will be kept strictly confidential. Should you have any questions, please contact me at 520-876-3202 or 520-560-8501.

Sincerely,

Frank Davidson, Superintendent  
Casa Grande Elementary Schools

Doctoral Candidate  
University of Arizona

## APPENDIX C

## LETTER TO PRINCIPALS

Dear Principal:

I am a doctoral student at the University of Arizona, and am currently completing my dissertation entitled, "Instructional Leadership Practices of the School Superintendent." All superintendents of Arizona elementary and unified school districts are being asked to take part in this study, along with principals from 36 medium-sized Arizona school districts. Your superintendent has granted permission to include your district in this study.

In my dissertation, I will analyze superintendents' perceptions of their instructional leadership practices, as well as the perceptions held by principals. I am requesting that you complete the survey on-line at <http://fp.arizona.edu/edl/principal.asp>. The survey should take approximately five minutes to complete.

I appreciate your participation in this study. All survey information will be kept strictly confidential. Should you have any questions, please contact me at 520-876-3202 or 520-560-8501.

Sincerely,

Frank Davidson, Superintendent  
Casa Grande Elementary Schools

Doctoral Candidate  
University of Arizona

APPENDIX D

SUPERINTENDENTS AS INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS - SUPERINTENDENTS

**Self-Administered Questionnaire for Superintendents**

School District \_\_\_\_\_  
 Superintendent's Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Superintendent's Gender \_\_\_\_\_  
 Number of Years You Have Been Superintendent at This School  
 District (including this year) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Total Number of Years You Have Been Superintendent  
 (including this year) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Would you like to receive an executive summary of the study  
 results? \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate your personal involvement in these facets of the instructional program of your district by circling the number that most closely corresponds with your current activities.

	Personal Involvement			
	Low		High	
1. Collaboratively developing goals	1	2	3	4
2. Evaluating instructional effectiveness	1	2	3	4
3. Facilitating instruction through budget	1	2	3	4
4. Planning for instruction	1	2	3	4
5. Supervising instruction	1	2	3	4
6. Monitoring instructional programs	1	2	3	4
7. Developing principals as instructional leaders	1	2	3	4
8. Developing instructional policies	1	2	3	4
9. Reviewing research	1	2	3	4
10. Selecting personnel (at any level)	1	2	3	4
11. Facilitating staff development	1	2	3	4
12. Communicating district expectations	1	2	3	4

## APPENDIX E

## SUPERINTENDENTS AS INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS - PRINCIPALS

**Questionnaire for Principals**

School District \_\_\_\_\_  
 Superintendent's Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Principal's Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Number of Years You Have Been Principal at This School  
 (including this year) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Would you like to receive an executive summary  
 of the study results? \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate your superintendent's personal involvement in these facets of the instructional program of your district by circling the number that most closely corresponds with his/her current activities.

	Personal Involvement			
	Low			High
1. Collaboratively developing goals	1	2	3	4
2. Evaluating instructional effectiveness	1	2	3	4
3. Facilitating instruction through budget	1	2	3	4
4. Planning for instruction	1	2	3	4
5. Supervising instruction	1	2	3	4
6. Monitoring instructional programs	1	2	3	4
7. Developing principals as instructional leaders	1	2	3	4
8. Developing instructional policies	1	2	3	4
9. Reviewing research	1	2	3	4
10. Selecting personnel (at any level)	1	2	3	4
11. Facilitating staff development	1	2	3	4
12. Communicating district expectations	1	2	3	4

## APPENDIX F

## SUBJECT DISCLAIMER FORM FOR PHASE ONE SUPERINTENDENTS

APPROVED BY UNIVERSITY OF AZ IRB.  
 THIS STAMP MUST APPEAR ON ALL  
 DOCUMENTS USED TO CONSENT SUBJECTS.  
 DATE: 11/19/04

**SUBJECT DISCLAIMER FORM**  
 (Superintendents of Small and Large School Districts)

Title of Project: **Superintendent and Principal Perceptions of Superintendent Instructional Leadership Practices in Improving School Districts (doctoral dissertation)**

You are being invited to voluntarily participate in the above-titled research study. The purpose of the study is to investigate perceptions of the instructional leadership practices of school superintendents. You are eligible to participate because you are superintendent of an elementary or unified school district in Arizona.

If you agree to participate, your participation will involve completion of a 12-item on-line survey. The survey should take approximately five minutes to complete.

Any questions you have will be answered and you may withdraw from the study at any time. There are no known risks from your participation and no direct benefit from your participation is expected. There is no cost to you except for your time and you will not be compensated for your participation.

Only the principal investigator will have access to your name and the information that you provide. The information collected from you is anonymous, therefore, your name cannot be revealed in any reports. In order to maintain your confidentiality, the name of your school district/employer will not be revealed in any reports that result from this project. Survey information will be locked in a cabinet in a secure place.

You can obtain further information from the principal investigator, Frank Davidson, doctoral candidate, at 520-876-3202 or 520-560-8501. If you have questions concerning your rights as a research subject, you may call the University of Arizona Human Subjects Protection Program office at (520) 626-6721.

By participating in the survey at <http://fp.arizona.edu/edl/superintendent.asp>, you are giving permission for the investigator to use your information for research purposes.

Thank you.

Frank Davidson, Superintendent  
 Casa Grande Elementary School District

Doctoral Candidate  
 University of Arizona

## APPENDIX G

## SUBJECT DISCLAIMER FORM FOR PHASE TWO SUPERINTENDENTS

APPROVED BY UNIVERSITY OF AZ IRB.  
THIS STAMP MUST APPEAR ON ALL  
DOCUMENTS USED TO CONSENT SUBJECTS.  
DATE: 11/19/07

**SUBJECT DISCLAIMER FORM**

(Superintendents of Select Medium-Sized School Districts)

Title of Project: **Superintendent and Principal Perceptions of Superintendent Instructional Leadership Practices in Improving School Districts (doctoral dissertation)**

You are being invited to voluntarily participate in the above-titled research study. The purpose of the study is to investigate perceptions of the instructional leadership practices of school superintendents. You are eligible to participate because you are superintendent of an elementary or unified school district in Arizona.

If you agree to participate, your participation will involve completion of a 12-item on-line survey. The survey should take approximately five minutes to complete. If you agree to have principals in your school district participate in the study, they will be asked to complete a 12-item on-line survey as well.

Any questions you have will be answered and you may withdraw from the study at any time. There are no known risks from your participation and no direct benefit from your participation is expected. There is no cost to you except for your time and you will not be compensated for your participation.

Only the principal investigator will have access to your name and the information that you provide. The survey is anonymous. In order to maintain your confidentiality, the name of your school district/employer will not be revealed in any reports that result from this project. Survey information will be locked in a cabinet in a secure place.

You can obtain further information from the principal investigator, Frank Davidson, doctoral candidate, at 520-876-3202 or 520-560-8501. If you have questions concerning your rights as a research subject, you may call the University of Arizona Human Subjects Protection Program office at (520) 626-6721.

By participating in the survey at <http://fp.arizona.edu/edl/superintendent.asp>, you are giving permission for the investigator to use your information for research purposes.

Thank you.

Frank Davidson, Superintendent  
Casa Grande Elementary School District

Doctoral Candidate  
University of Arizona

## APPENDIX H

## SUBJECT DISCLAIMER FORM FOR PRINCIPALS

APPROVED BY UNIVERSITY OF AZ IRB.  
 THIS STAMP MUST APPEAR ON ALL  
 DOCUMENTS USED TO CONSENT SUBJECTS.  
 DATE: 11/19/04

**SUBJECT DISCLAIMER FORM**

(Principals in Select Medium-Sized School Districts)

Title of Project: **Superintendent and Principal Perceptions of Superintendent Instructional Leadership Practices in Improving School Districts (doctoral dissertation)**

You are being invited to voluntarily participate in the above-titled research study. The purpose of the study is to investigate perceptions of the instructional leadership practices of school superintendents. You are eligible to participate because you are a school principal in a medium-sized elementary or unified school district in Arizona.

If you agree to participate, your participation will involve completion of a 12-item on-line survey. The survey should take approximately five minutes to complete.

Any questions you have will be answered and you may withdraw from the study at any time. There are no known risks from your participation and no direct benefit from your participation is expected. There is no cost to you except for your time and you will not be compensated for your participation.

Only the principal investigator will have access to your name and the information that you provide. The survey data is anonymous. In order to maintain your confidentiality, the name of your school/employer will not be revealed in any reports that result from this project. Survey information will be locked in a cabinet in a secure place.

You can obtain further information from the principal investigator, Frank Davidson, doctoral candidate, at 520-876-3202 or 520-560-8501. If you have questions concerning your rights as a research subject, you may call the University of Arizona Human Subjects Protection Program office at (520) 626-6721.

By participating in the survey at <http://fp.arizona.edu/edl/principal.asp>, you are giving permission for the investigator to use your information for research purposes.

Thank you.

Frank Davidson, Superintendent  
 Casa Grande Elementary School District

Doctoral Candidate  
 University of Arizona



APPENDIX J

EXEMPTION FROM HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW

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