

**THE ROLE OF INCREASED ACCOUNTABILITY ON THE USE OF INSTRUCTIONAL
LEADERSHIP TIME BY NEW YORK STATE SUPERINTENDENTS**

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ABSTRACT

The role of the school superintendent has evolved as a result of increased accountability, specifically under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation. Prior to NCLB, superintendents spent the majority of their time on the managerial and political domains of leadership; however, the NCLB accountability movement combined with research on the benefits of instructional leadership intensified the need for superintendents to spend more time as instructional leaders. This qualitative study of twelve New York State Superintendents and six New York State Curriculum Leaders examined the impact of a district's accountability status under NCLB on the how much time superintendents and curriculum leaders spent on instructional leadership and further, whether having support from a curriculum leader impacted the amount of time superintendents spent on instructional leadership. While there was not a noticeable difference in the amount of time spent on instructional leadership between the examined categories (accountability status and support from curriculum leader) in this study, the study revealed all superintendents believed they were instructional leaders. Superintendents and curriculum leaders in this study identified spending a considerable amount of time in the area of instructional leadership. Interviewed leaders cited the need to continuously improve student results as the reason for this expenditure of time. Superintendents and curriculum leaders identified their use of data to make program-related decisions and address student achievement deficits. Superintendents leading districts facing accountability sanctions under NCLB were more likely to modify their program goals as a result of their accountability status. Superintendents leading districts facing accountability sanctions under NCLB, with support from a curriculum leader, reported the most-specific instructional changes as they worked to increase student results under NCLB.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Increased accountability for student learning has shifted the focus of school superintendents, elevating the importance of student achievement outcomes relative to other roles of the superintendent (Bredeson & Kose, 2007). This study focused on the allocation of time by school superintendents as they responded to accountability mandates under the *No Child Left Behind* legislation. This first chapter will outline the purpose of the study, research questions, and provide the context for the examination of this topic.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative comparison study was to explore the change in the use of time for instructional leadership by superintendents with instructional support and those without instructional support as a result of a school district's accountability status under NCLB. The researcher sought to determine if and how increased accountability had an effect on the time superintendents in New York State spent on instructional leadership and how this may have differed if superintendents had instructional support from a curriculum leader. The researcher further sought to study the amount of time and how time was spent by superintendents and curriculum leaders in districts with differing performance designations under NCLB. The study used interviews with a purposeful sample of twelve New York State Superintendents and six New York State Curriculum Leaders.

While many types of accountability impact education, this study focused specifically on accountability for student learning and outcomes as measured by New York State Assessments under NCLB. Instructional leadership for both superintendents and curriculum leaders was defined as establishing a focus on instruction and curriculum including: organizing, supporting, and planning for the instructional program; allocation of instructional personnel; and

professional development of instructional personnel (Bjork & Kowalski, 2005). For the purpose of this study, instructional support for superintendents was defined as professional assistance from another administrator within the school district, whose professional responsibilities entailed overseeing the district's curriculum and instruction. Instructional support was provided by curriculum leaders, who were defined as administrators with supervisory responsibility for curriculum and instruction within their districts. Only curriculum leaders with responsibility for curriculum and instruction, ranging from half-time (.5) to full-time (1.0), were included in this study. Curriculum leaders spending less than half of their time in the role were not considered for this study due to the propensity for other administrative tasks to overshadow their leadership in the area of curriculum. The researcher sought to discover if superintendents with support from a curriculum leader responded differently to accountability, as examined through an exploration of their time spent on instructional leadership, than superintendents without such support.

The researcher specifically focused on if and how superintendents and curriculum leaders have changed the amount of time they spent on instructional leadership as a result of their school's designation under federal and state accountability measures. The study included the identification of factors that may have influenced how much time superintendents spent on instructional leadership. Ratings of school performance, according to NCLB, ranged from districts where all schools were *In Good Standing* to schools facing accountability sanctions including those: *Requiring Academic Progress*, *In Need of Improvement*, *Corrective Action*, or *Restructuring*. The researcher sought to determine whether differences existed in data collected from superintendents relative to the accountability status of their districts.

Additionally, the researcher sought to determine if superintendents and curriculum leaders had changed the manner in which they spent time on instructional leadership as a result

of accountability measures. Further, the researcher sought to determine how increased accountability had influenced the role of superintendents and any differences noted in the time spent by superintendents when they did and did not have curriculum support. This study was designed to help determine the impact of NCLB on the role of the superintendent in the area of instructional leadership. Further, the study enabled the researcher to examine the differing implications of NCLB on districts with a range of performance designations under NCLB.

Research Questions

Research questions were developed to ascertain the impact of accountability on how superintendents and curriculum leaders spent time on instructional leadership. Questions focused on the allocation of time and how the time was spent. Research sub questions were further developed to examine factors not including accountability status that influenced how and how much time superintendents and curriculum leaders spent on instructional leadership to help the researcher isolate the real impact of accountability as reported by interview participants.

(Central Question) Have superintendents and curriculum leaders changed the amount of time they spend on instructional leadership as a result of federal and state accountability measures?

(Sub Question) What factors, not including accountability status, influence how much time superintendents spend on instructional leadership?

(Sub Question) What factors, not including accountability status, influence how much time curriculum leaders spend on instructional leadership?

(Central Question) Have superintendents and curriculum leaders changed how they spend time on instructional leadership as a result of federal and state accountability measures?

(Sub Question) What factors, not including accountability status, influence how superintendents spend their time on instructional leadership?

(Sub Question) What factors, not including accountability status, influence how curriculum leaders spend their time on instructional leadership?

(Central Question) Is there a difference in the amount of time superintendents in districts rated as schools *In Good Standing* spend on curriculum and instruction as compared to the amount of time spent by superintendents in districts facing accountability sanctions (rated as *Requiring Academic Progress, In Need of Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring*)?

(Central Question) Is there a difference in the amount of time curriculum leaders in districts rated as schools *In Good Standing* spend on curriculum and instruction as compared to the amount of time spent by curriculum leaders in districts facing accountability sanctions (rated as *Requiring Academic Progress, In Need of Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring*)?

(Central Question) Is there a difference in how superintendents in districts rated as schools *In Good Standing* spend their time on curriculum and instruction as compared to superintendents in districts facing accountability sanctions (rated as *Requiring Academic Progress, In Need of Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring*)?

(Central Question) Is there a difference in how curriculum leaders in districts rated as schools *In Good Standing* spend their time on curriculum and instruction as compared to curriculum leaders in districts facing accountability sanctions (rated as *Requiring Academic Progress, In Need of Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring*)?

Research Context

Research questions were designed to address the impact of accountability on how superintendents and curriculum leaders spent time on instructional leadership. School superintendents provide comprehensive oversight of diverse, multifaceted, and dynamic educational environments. Within this context, successful superintendents attend to the priorities of local boards of education; implement regulations enacted by policy makers, and respond to the needs of the community, while managing the day-to-day operations of their school districts. Accountability for student learning has further challenged the already-complex landscape of the superintendency, with the effectiveness of both schools and school leaders increasingly measured against levels of student achievement.

Superintendents perform varied roles as the chief operating officers for their districts, though most commonly, these roles fall within the political, managerial and instructional domains of leadership (Cuban, 1988). Within the political domain, superintendents serve as the spokesperson of the district, interfacing with stakeholders and reacting to often competing interests of the community, staff, and Board of Education. Their managerial work involves overseeing the daily operation of the organization including supervision of personnel and administration of many departments. The third domain, instructional leadership, is where superintendents are seen as the teachers of teachers and turn their focus to educational outcomes. Instructional leadership ensures district goals are clear and focused and further ensures alignment of resources with stated priorities (Hoyle, Bjork, Collier, & Glass, 2004; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Marzano & Waters, 2009; J. T. Waters & Marzano, 2007).

Statement of the Problem

The role of the superintendent has changed considerably in the last decade as a result of increased accountability for all public schools. Legislative changes have significantly dominated the focus and attention of schools while simultaneously influencing the priorities of superintendents (Englert, Fries, Goodwin, & Martin-Glenn, 2003; Englert, Fries, Martin-Glenn, & Douglas, 2007; Leithwood, Harris, & Strauss, 2010). The 2001 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), commonly referred to as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, introduced stringent accountability into education (Bredeson & Kose, 2007; Englert et al., 2007; Reeves, 2004; Russell & Sloan McCombs, 2006). NCLB focused on high levels of student achievement for all students and where schools underperformed relative to state measures, schools faced sanctions. The result was increased attention on student performance in school districts across the country as schools looked to elevate student outcomes through additional attention to the area of instruction (Elmore, 2003; Farkas, Johnson, & Duffett, 2003; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Marzano & Waters, 2009).

The field of research in the area of instructional leadership has expanded over the past decade. Increasingly, the importance and benefits of instructional leadership for school administrators, including superintendents, have become more apparent (Black, 2007; Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Cuban, 1988, 2001; Elmore, 2000; Hoyle et al., 2004; Johnson, 1996; Karbula, 2009; Leithwood et al., 2010, 2004; Wahlstrom, Louis, Leithwood, & Anderson, 2010; J. T. Waters & Marzano, 2007). The emphasis on instructional leadership in the field of research and its benefits for student learning and organizational success has shifted the focus of many superintendents as they responded to increased levels of accountability. Where schools were once responsible for inputs (teaching), accountability has required schools to demonstrate

students are learning, thereby requiring a focus on output as well. Schools unable to demonstrate sufficient levels of student achievement under NCLB, as measured by performance on standardized assessments, face an array of sanctions (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). These sanctions, typically viewed as punitive and to-be-avoided by schools, have led to internal changes in organizations. The focus of the changes have centered around instructional improvement, requiring greater emphasis on successful instructional techniques and effective pedagogy in an effort to improve student outcomes (Bredeson & Kose, 2007; Leithwood et al., 2004).

Superintendents have increasingly focused on student outcomes as a result of accountability, leveraging internal organizational capacity to maximize student learning (Farkas et al., 2003; Hoyle et al., 2004). Internal capacity may include other instructional leaders such as curriculum supervisors and building principals. As the highest ranking employee and spokesperson for the district, superintendents have felt pressure to increase levels of student learning and, in some cases, have faced public scrutiny when their schools have been identified under NCLB as requiring improvement (Englert, Fries, Martin-Glenn, & Michael, 2005; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003).

Increased levels of accountability, specifically the punitive ramifications of NCLB, were shown to impact the amount of time superintendents spent on instructional leadership. Bredeson and Kose (2007) studied the priorities of superintendents and how they reported spending their time. Over a ten-year period, with the first responses collected prior to the implementation of NCLB and the second collection of data occurring post NCLB implementation, superintendents reported spending increased time in the area of curriculum leadership and supervision. In places where additional time was not reported, it was typically due to competing demands and a

shortage of time and resources. This seminal work indicated increased accountability impacted the amount of time superintendents spent on instructional leadership.

The field of research on how superintendents spend their professional time and, more specifically, the amount of time spent by superintendents on instructional leadership as a result of increased accountability is limited. The work of Bredeson and Kose (2007) identified superintendents spent more time on instructional leadership as a result of federal accountability measures in a large-Midwestern state. Whether this trend has also occurred in New York State as a result of increased accountability has not been studied directly, nor has the impact on the time superintendents spend on instructional leadership if they have assistance from a curriculum leader been investigated.

Summary

Increased accountability, through No Child Left Behind Legislation, has magnified the importance of student performance on annual assessments. Schools face sanctions for failure to make Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) and as a result, many schools facing accountability sanctions are engaged in the design of school improvement plans with assistance from the New York State Education Department to show significant improvements. Schools not able to show growth over a period of years face reorganization or closure. By contrast, schools consistently classified as *In Good Standing*, have avoided sanctions from the governing body of the state educational system. The purpose of this study is to determine if and how superintendents and curriculum leaders have increased or altered the time they report spending on instructional leadership as a result of their school's accountability status and to compare findings across schools with different levels of curriculum support and differing NCLB designations.

The literature, as it will be outlined in Chapter 2, is replete with examples of the impact of accountability on schools systems and school leaders. The researcher further traced the impact of accountability on the role of superintendents as it related to the time they spent on instructional leadership.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will focus on the historical role of superintendency, the impact of accountability on the superintendency, and the evolving role of the superintendent. Additionally, the researcher will review the existing body of research on the role of superintendents as instructional leaders and the impact of accountability on time spent by superintendents on instructional leadership.

Superintendents, the chief executive officers of school districts, have ultimate responsibility for the performance of the educational institution they are charged to lead. Superintendents provide leadership and oversight for the organization, typically fulfilling a wide range of roles in their posts, and like many chief executive officers, face a multitude of demands on their time. The contexts within which superintendents serve vary greatly based on the size and wealth of the district, community expectations, the priorities and inner-working of the school board, and geographic location. Irrespective of the educational contexts in which they serve, superintendents consistently work within three leadership domains: managerial, political, and instructional (Bredeson & Kose, 2007; Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Johnson, 1996; Jones & Howley, 2009). The amount of time superintendents spend in each of these areas is often influenced by the unique needs and size of the district, though, according to research conducted by Bredeson and Kose (2007), the era of accountability has increased the stakes for schools and school leaders, which has led to superintendents spending a greater amount of their time in the area of instructional leadership.

The work of school leaders, particularly superintendents, has intensified as a result of the accountability movement (Cuban, 2001; Farkas et al., 2003; Lashway, 2002; Sherman & Grogan, 2003). Under the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation schools are measured by the

performance of their students on state assessments as compared to continuously increasing standards (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). Students within schools must show adequate yearly progress, at tested grade levels, both in aggregate and also as distinct sub-groups within the school population. Schools whose students fail to show continued growth face progressive sanctions. The increased accountability, and associated public scrutiny, has magnified the importance of student outcomes and applied additional pressure to school leaders, particularly superintendents (Farkas et al., 2003; Lashway, 2002; Sherman & Grogan, 2003).

Following the enactment of NCLB in 2001, a significant shift occurred in how much time superintendents spend on instructional leadership and the types of activities in which they engage as a result of increased accountability. While earlier studies of the superintendency, conducted by Cuban and Johnson in the 1980s and 1990s, revealed superintendents spent most of their time working in the managerial and political domains of their leadership role, more recent research indicates superintendents have increasingly expanded the time they spend overseeing the instructional programs within their school districts (Bredeson & Kose, 2007; Jones & Howley, 2009).

The additional time spent on instructional leadership by superintendents, relative to the amount of time superintendents dedicate to managerial and political leadership, serves as an indication of the impact of high stakes testing and governmental sanctions. Bredeson and Kose (2007) found if superintendents could hire assistance in the form of another administrator they were most likely to desire a general assistant (32.4%) followed by a curriculum director (23.2%) with fewer superintendents expressing their desire to hire business managers (18.3%), human resources/personnel administrator (10.4%) and communications/public relations assistant (7.0%). Forty percent of superintendents wished for assistance to provide “general relief,” closely

followed by 39.4% who “explicitly wrote the purpose was to directly or indirectly enhance curriculum and instruction,” (Bredeson & Kose, 2007, p. 11). This same study found an increase in time spent by superintendents in the area of instructional leadership. The Bredeson and Kose (2007) study did not address how accountability influenced the amount of time superintendents in New York State spent on instructional leadership and the manner in which they spent their time on instructional leadership.

Additionally, while many larger districts have curriculum leaders providing instructional leadership, there has been little exploration of the actual impact of this added administrative support on the role of superintendents. Yet unknown is whether having additional administrative support from a curriculum leader impacts the amount of time superintendents spend on instructional leadership.

Significance of this Study

The role of superintendent as instructional leader has been emphasized in research as the most direct method for superintendents to positively influence student learning. Further study of how and how much time superintendents spend on instructional leadership as a result of accountability for increased outcomes may yield greater understanding of the larger impact of NCLB on the role of superintendents. Examination of the presence or absence of curriculum leaders within a school district, when examined based on the accountability status of school districts may also lead to a greater understanding of the impact of accountability on the use of instructional leadership time for superintendents.

Historical Role of the Superintendent

Studies of the superintendency spanning the mid nineteenth century through the mid twentieth century reveal much time was spent on tasks related to management and administration, though superintendents were expected to master many roles (Bjork & Kowalski, 2005; Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Cuban, 1988; Hoyle et al., 2004). Cuban (1988) studied self-reported data from superintendents to determine uses of their time, finding,

“the self-reports showing superintendents spending most of their time in administration and less in instructional leadership with brief moments squeezed in to “community leadership,” imply an orderly and prosaic routine; however, the superintendent-watching of the 1970s shows wide variation in behavior, but with some common patterns: superintending is a constant stream of brief encounters, mostly with school board members and subordinated in the central office; constant interruptions; little time spent at the desk or in the schools; and a decided concentration upon verbal exchange with people (planned and spontaneous). In short, like principaling and teaching, superintending is a world of action (Cuban, 1988, p. 129).

Cuban (1988) followed by Johnson (1996) categorized the work of superintendents into three primary domains: managerial, political, and instructional. Managerial tasks involve administering board policy, hiring staff, managing conflict and overseeing the operational activities within the school district. Cuban (1988) identified “the fundamental purpose of the managerial role is to maintain organizational stability,” (p. 136). The importance of the managerial role is evident as it encompasses the day-to-day operations including transportation, food service, and administration of the budget (Bjork & Kowalski, 2005). In their role as political leaders, also referred to as negotiator-statesmen, superintendents serve as the public face of the school district, interfacing with community members, parents, and the Board of Education (Bjork & Kowalski, 2005; Cuban, 1988). It is through leadership in this arena that superintendents manage conflict between competing interests and exercise their power to initiate change (Cuban, 1988). Superintendents, through their work as instructional leaders, position themselves as teacher-leaders, oversee the educational program and focus specifically on student

learning (Cuban, 1988; Hoyle et al., 2004). Working in this realm, superintendents cultivate both capacity and coherence within the organization, yielding desired outcomes (Jones & Howley, 2009). The focus on the managerial, political and instructional roles of superintendents remained relatively consistent over time; however, changing political dynamics, as detailed in the next section, led to a shift in the relative importance of these roles.

Increased Accountability for Student Learning

The 1980s and 1990s became a time of growing concern over the performance of students in the United States and the quality of public schools, which led to increased levels of scrutiny (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2001). Public concern also fueled an increase in federal and state reform mandates (Glass, 1992). According to Darling-Hammond (1993), accountability became “synonymous with mandates for student testing and standard setting,” (p. 3). The goal of legislated accountability initiatives was to “bring rapid order to the educational system by setting high goals and making students, teachers, and administrators responsible for meeting them,” (Darling-Hammond et al., 1993, p. 3).

Publication of *A Nation at Risk*, a report that called into question the work of schools, citing a lack of preparedness for youth to enter the workforce and labeling many schools as failing, in turn led to a push for increased accountability (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). In the wake of *A Nation at Risk* and mounting interest to improve school outcomes, Carter and Cunningham (1997) in *The American Superintendency* reported a growing interest in using test scores to monitor the use of public funds. This was accompanied by the expectation that educators make quick improvements within school systems. Large scale testing programs began to grow in popularity as a way to measure student learning, though these testing

programs were often debated and frequently perceived as both threatening and evaluative within schools systems (Carter & Cunningham, 1997, p. 76).

Public uncertainty related to school outcomes was fueled by *A Nation at Risk* and data that revealed large numbers of students in public schools with subpar literacy skills contributed to growing concern regarding education. These factors, in addition to known achievement gaps between students of differing backgrounds, led to legislative action with President George W. Bush signing into law the *No Child Left Behind* act requiring annual assessment of students, analysis of student performance, both in aggregate and according to identified subgroups, and resulting in the requirement that all students demonstrate proficiency on state benchmarks by 2014 (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Fuhrman & Lazerson, 2005). This federal legislation required every state to establish annual benchmarks for student achievement that were measured through annual formal assessments. These assessment results were used to measure the progress of students relative to the established benchmarks (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

According to the United States Department of Education's publication *No Child Left Behind: A Toolkit for Teachers* (2004), the legislation was important for a number of reasons.

Despite decades of hard work and dedication to education in our nation, achievement gaps remain stubbornly wide. Since 1965, when the Elementary and Secondary Education act (ESEA) was enacted in Congress, the federal government has spent more than \$267.4 billion to assist states in educating disadvantaged children. Yet, according to the most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) on reading in 2002, only 31 percent of fourth-graders can read at a proficient (passing) or advanced level. Achievement among the highest performing students remained stable, and America's lowest performers have improved only slightly. A wide achievement gap remains between poor and more economically advantaged students, as well as between white and minority students (U.S. Department of Education, 2004, p. 6).

NCLB imposed a system of results-based accountability on public schools, requiring schools to administer tests designed to measure student learning. This form of accountability increased the

political investment in schools and made schools more accountable to the general public (Anderson, 2005). Public reporting of student results accompanied by sanctions for poor performance thrust school performance into the media. States without formal assessment programs implemented annual assessment programs aligned with state-established educational standards leading to variation among states under NCLB with different course content assessed and different achievement levels established for proficiency (Russell & Sloan McCombs, 2006).

Impact of NCLB

The impact of NCLB on the field of education was considerable. Public school systems across the country had to face moving away from the traditional version of accountability, historically measured by inputs and adequacy, and instead shifted to a focus on student outcomes (Bredeson & Kose, 2007). Whereas schools were previously accountable to the internal structures and constraints that developed within the organization over a period of time, performance-based accountability imposed external constraints crafted by policymakers, providing “the opportunity for a fresh look at the social contract between schools and the public,” (Fuhrman & Lazerson, 2005, p. 298). Elmore (2000) connected accountability with standards-based reform and emphasized the need to hold schools and school systems accountable for student learning.

The increased focus on accountability not only placed a spotlight on educational institutions, but delved deeper forcing an examination of school and district outcomes by focusing on the performance of historically under-served students in subgroups including students with disabilities, English language learners, and economically-disadvantaged students, in an effort to ensure all students have an equal opportunity for learning with high expectations for all students. NCLB influenced how school leaders and teachers viewed curriculum, testing,

and accountability placing increased emphasis on the use of data to adjust curricula to meet higher levels of performance (Englert et al., 2003, 2007; Leithwood et al., 2010). The focus on increased accountability required educators to realign their practice and “to engage in systematic, continuous improvement in the quality of the educational experience of students and to subject themselves to the discipline of measuring their success by the metric of students’ academic performance,” (Elmore, 2002, p. 3).

The impact of accountability on superintendents and the larger school community has varied based on the performance of students within the school district. Schools that do well are rewarded, schools that perform poorly receive sanctions that become more stringent over time including requiring schools to offer school choice, instituting research-based curriculum, extending the school day or school year (Russell & Sloan McCombs, 2006). As described by Reeves (2004), “for many educators, accountability has become a dirty word,” (p. 5). Accountability in schools has been limited to, “a litany of test scores,” (Reeves, 2004, p. 5).

Negative Perceptions of Accountability

Superintendents have felt the impact of increased accountability as they worked to maintain their own credibility and the support of the board, while, “their once imposing authority has eroded considerably,” (Lashway, 200, p. 1). In contrast, increased accountability for student learning also provided superintendents with the impetus to focus on instructional issues, generating the momentum to develop learning communities within their districts (Lashway, 2002). Critics of assessment-based accountability cite numerous reasons for their dismissal of its use to reform schools. Englert et al. (2007) noted the reform is based on the premise that the use

of data from student test scores will lead to change which will in turn lead to academic success.

A critique of NCLB, published in Educational Evaluation and Policy Study stated

“Student achievement data have been a common information source for many educational policy decisions, and increasingly so in recent years. The logic behind the No Child Left Behind Act, for example, is that by testing students frequently and holding teachers and administrators accountable for achievement test results, student learning will improve. The law assumes that, by examining annual achievement data, educators can divine what causes unacceptable outcomes and can correct the unproductive parts of the system. But how can processes be improved by inspecting only their outcomes? (Hiebert et al., 2005, p. 112).

Survey reports from superintendents revealed many believed NCLB was another unfunded mandate, and the requirements relied on too much testing which in turn led to a loss of instructional time (Farkas et al., 2003; Harris, Irons, & Crawford, 2006). External accountability is based on the notion that “learning is external and can be invoked from without,” where learning in reality is an internal function that is tied directly to student motivation creating a disconnect between accountability and learning (Houston, 2001, p. 7). There are many components to student achievement that are not measured (Englert et al., 2007). Teachers also have expressed concern over testing programs, citing their belief that state assessments often do not accurately reflect student skills and learning (Reeves, 2004).

In his book *Class and Schools*, Rothstein (2004) described NCLB as punitive legislation due to its strict penalties for schools failing to make annual yearly progress, labeling the legislation as purely disciplinary and noting the policy is “both harmful and unworkable“ (p. 86). NCLB has been further questioned by Englert et al., (2003), Rothstein (2004), Darling-Hammond (2007), and Noguera (2011) for assessing low level skills to the exclusion of higher-order thinking skills. This focus has narrowed curriculum in schools to content able to be tested

en masse, serving as a disincentive for teachers to work with the very lowest-scoring students, often representing minority or low-income students, and high-scoring students as both sets of students are unlikely to have an impact the school's level of proficiency. This in-turn has driven instruction across American classrooms to focus on the needs of students just below proficiency as schools are typically only rewarded when this narrow group of students demonstrates improvement. Increased focus on test performance has often replaced other important areas of school including safety, discipline, drop-out and retention rates, and other measures of school success. NCLB has also been criticized for not recognizing the improvements made within schools. Schools that have made progress in closing the achievement gap have continued to be labeled as failing schools (Darling-Hammond, 2007)

While NCLB may have exposed the differences in student performance among schools, according to Noguera (2011), it has done little to eradicate the differences. "If we want to bring about significant improvements in learning outcomes for students, we have to do more to address the context in which learning takes place," (p. 141). While criticisms of NCLB and its impact on schools are widely noted, increased accountability not only shifted priorities within schools but also impacted the role of the superintendent, which will be outlined below.

Research on Superintendents as Instructional Leaders

The role of superintendents has evolved over time in response to external accountability measures focused on student achievement. These changes have increasingly shifted the role of superintendent as manager toward the role of instructional leader (Crowson & Glass, 1991). This change is attributed to a growing body of research on the importance of superintendents in their role of instructional leader. Additionally, superintendents increasingly shifted toward

instructional leadership to respond to accountability mandates for increased student outcomes (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

Research on instructional leadership, and its positive impact on organizational outcomes, has led to the prioritization of instructional leadership relative to the myriad of responsibilities faced by superintendents (Bredeson & Kose, 2007; Elmore, 2000; Waters & Marzano, 2007). An increased focus by superintendents on “achievement-improvement behaviors” signaled a shift toward the superintendent influencing school effectiveness (Crowson & Glass, 1991, p. 5). Elmore (2000) wrote, “instructional leadership is the equivalent to the holy grail in educational administration,” (p. 7), stating leadership should be focused on instructional improvement. Superintendents who were knowledgeable about curriculum and instruction were more likely to lead institutions showing improvement (Elmore, 2000).

Superintendents in their role as instructional leaders guide the improvement efforts within their districts. Lashway (2002) identified the need for superintendents to prioritize instruction over managerial and political aspects of the job, though all three roles should be aligned with continuous instructional improvement. Sherman and Grogan (2003) identified the importance of superintendents identifying goals worthy of the expenditure of time. Waters and Marzano (2006) reported effective superintendents focus their efforts on goals, including “monitoring district progress toward achievement and instructional goals to ensure that these goals remain the driving force behind a district’s actions,” (p. 4). Both achievement and instructional goals should be central to the success of superintendents (Marzano & Waters, 2009). Beyond the articulation and monitoring of goals, instructional leadership was found to include recruiting and assigning teachers and administrators who have the capacity and

dispositions to work with underperforming students, monitoring the data related to student learning and the effort of staff and providing support to teachers for their work in instruction. This support can be derived from the provision of resources, on-going professional development, and opportunities for staff to work collaboratively, in conjunction with the establishment of a clear vision for instructional programs (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Hoyle et al., 2004; Leithwood et al., 2010).

Superintendents, in their role as instructional leader of the district, must set the tone that all students can achieve success, shifting their focus from expert manager to collaborator for the good of all children (Sherman & Grogan, 2003). This includes garnering political support within the organization to change internal structures, working with the larger community, and developing shared leadership (Sherman & Grogan, 2003). Research supporting the positive impact of instructional leadership on enhancing educational outcomes served as an impetus for superintendents to focus on instructional leadership. The primacy of instructional leadership became apparent as educational institutions responded to enhanced accountability under NCLB.

Superintendents Respond to NCLB Accountability Mandates

Accountability measures have served as a significant impetus for superintendents to focus on student achievement and instructional leadership (Rueter, 2009; Russell & Sloan McCombs, 2006). Schools that are accomplishing the goals of results-based accountability are more likely to have “visionary instructional leadership,” (Anderson, 2005, p. 6). “Next to school finance, the greatest pressure on school superintendents is the pressure to obtain higher performance on high-stakes tests from the schools in their district,” (Hoyle et al., 2004, p. 23). Superintendents, as the spokespersons for the district, have more at stake than teachers and principals and are

often held responsible for how well teachers teach and how much students learn (Englert et al., 2005; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). Superintendents answer to the school board and school boards consistently identify instructional leadership as an important skill set for superintendents (Black, 2007; Englert et al., 2007). Superintendents are expected to improve curricular, instructional and assessment practices leading to their more direct involvement in instructional decision-making in lieu of delegating much of this work to teachers and principals (Bredeson & Kose, 2007; Lashway, 2002; Rueter, 2009). “Standards-based accountability has made reform not just the trademark of progressive superintendents but a minimum expectation for the job,” (Lashway, 2002, p. 1).

While administrators acknowledge the increased focus on teaching and learning was positive outcome of NCLB, superintendents also reported negative side effects including changes in principals' morale, and the use of assessment scores to compare school districts rather than focus solely on the enhancement of learning (Russell & Sloan McCombs, 2006). A district's accountability status can have wide-reaching influence, in some cases influencing home purchases for families (Rueter, 2009). Concerns over NCLB also grew after the first few years as the threshold for performance, measured as annual yearly progress (AYP) increased sharply over time. Specifically superintendents were not confident that special education and English language learners would perform as well as their grade level peers (Russell & Sloan McCombs, 2006). According to Houston, “accountability and authority are misaligned,” where superintendents are held accountable yet do not have the necessary authority to influence required change (p. 2).

The Impact of NCLB on Superintendents as Instructional Leaders in Urban and Rural Districts

The impact of NCLB, while affecting all public school systems, has differed according to the size and needs of the school district. Cuban (2001) described three tiers of schools related to performance. Schools in the top tier (1 in 10) exceed high standards, schools in the second tier (4-5 in 10) meet or are close to meeting standards and test score thresholds, while third tier schools do not meet the standards. These third tier schools are generally located in urban or rural districts with high poverty and or high minority population (Cuban, 2001, p. 4).

The role of superintendents as instructional leaders in districts of varying size differs. Superintendents leading school districts with smaller enrollments and fewer administrators within the school district are more likely to spend a greater percentage of their time in the managerial role (Jones & Howley, 2009). In a study of how superintendents use data, specifically focused on accountability including NCLB, small, rural superintendents were less likely to use data in their own practices or encourage their staff to use data, indicating less of an impact of NCLB on their leadership practices (Englert et al., 2003).

Superintendents leading urban areas, where there is the greatest concentration of low-income and minority students, face the most significant achievement gap in student performance (Zhao, 2009). The challenges faced by urban leaders include significant social problems, public pressure from boards and communities, and financial challenges (Carter & Cunningham, 1997). Where accountability was not found to have a significant impact on the role of superintendents of small districts (Englert et al., 2003), conversely, NCLB has enhanced the formal authority of many superintendents leading large, city school districts (Useem, 2009). Urban superintendents have become key players in the revival of cities across the nation as the improvement of school quality has the potential to make living within urban boundaries more attractive (Useem, 2009). "Those urban superintendents who thrive in the post learn to lead by consciously blending the

political, managerial and instructional roles to cope with the conflicts arising from issues of race and class as they affect test scores and the broader purposes of public schooling” (Cuban, 2001, pp. 5–6). The reported differences between urban and rural superintendents, as they responded to NCLB, indicate the impact of accountability for student learning differed according to the size and location of the school district.

Constraints Faced by Superintendents in the Role as Instructional Leader

Time constraints and role overload often limit the amount of time superintendents spend on curriculum and instruction (Jones & Howley, 2009) despite the growing body of research indicating the importance of superintendents as instructional leaders (Black, 2007; Bredeson & Johansson, 1997; Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Cuban, 1988, 2001; Hoyle et al., 2004; Lashway, 2002; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Rueter, 2009; J. T. Waters & Marzano, 2007). Reeves (2004) noted in his book *Accountability for Schools* that the demands on superintendents have become unreasonable. Being a superintendent “is a high-stress, high-visibility job – you have to be able to withstand a lot of heat” (Farkas et al., 2003, p. 15). Superintendents identified uninformed or sensational coverage in the local media and parental complaints about school personnel as significant challenges to their work (Farkas et al., 2003). “School leaders describe a frustrating mix of too much nit-picking, not enough time and too many hurdles thrown in their path. Sheer frustration seems to be a recurring theme” (Farkas et al., 2003, p. 16). Bredeson & Kose (2007) studied the role of superintendents, particularly focused on the time superintendents spend on instructional leadership, and found the demands have intensified in the past decades (Bredeson & Kose, 2007).

Time Spent by Superintendents in their Role as Instructional Leader

Bredeson and Johansson (1997) studied the leadership of Wisconsin superintendents and found the role of superintendents is to provide leadership, especially in curriculum and instruction. Wisconsin superintendents included in their survey identified the three most important tasks they completed as (1) budget/finance, (2) public relations/communications, and (3) personnel administration. In this same survey, superintendents ranked instructional leadership as their fourth most important task, although the time they actually spent in this area ranked seventh among leadership tasks performed (Bredeson & Johansson, 1997). Superintendents identified work overload as a barrier to time spent in curriculum and instruction and further identified their desire to hire additional assistance in the areas of curriculum and instruction, business management, and personnel administration. When able to allocate time to instructional leadership, superintendents most frequently identified being involved in: instructional vision, instructional collaboration, instructional support, and instructional delegation. Within these roles, superintendents provided financial, personnel, and resource support (Bredeson & Johansson, 1997).

Jones and Howley (2009) similarly found time constraints and role overload frequently limited the time available for superintendents to spend on curriculum and instruction, finding instead that superintendents devote the majority of their time to managerial leadership, followed by education (instructional) and then political leadership tasks. Superintendents in rural districts with smaller enrollments spend the most time on managerial leadership (Jones & Howley, 2009, p. 12). Jones and Howley (2009) also found that instructional delegation was a common role for superintendents, where superintendents monitored work within the system, kept the board of education informed of school progress, and hired knowledgeable people in the area of curriculum and instruction to provide the instructional leadership for the school system. Competing

demands may serve to pull superintendents away from the work of instructional leadership, toward other roles including managing internal politics and bureaucracy (Farkas et al., 2003).

The study conducted by Jones and Howley (2009) found superintendents functioned as instructional collaborators working alongside principals and teachers to plan, design, implement, and assess curriculum. Superintendents and other administrators working in instructional leadership roles, frequently experienced role overlap, though many superintendents used their work to provide support rather than direct leadership, due to role overload. Though superintendents viewed themselves as instructional leaders and saw instructional leadership as very important, they were unable to spend the majority of their time in the area of instructional leadership. They were, however, able to use their positional power to influence events and direct schools and people in them (Jones & Howley, 2009). Champion (2007) found high stakes testing caused district administrators to alter their practices and increase their focus on student learning. Armbruster (2011) researched how Virginia superintendents spent their time under NCLB accountability. His findings showed NCLB should influence the amount of time superintendents spend on instructional leadership; however, superintendents in his study primarily spent time on political and community relations in addition to school finance. He further noted there was not a significant difference in how superintendents leading schools that had achieved AYP and those who had not spent their time.

Superintendents Shifting Time Toward Instructional Leadership

Bredeson and Kose (2007) conducted a comparative study of time spent by superintendents on the area of instructional leadership across a ten year time span. While Bredeson in earlier work with Johansson (1997) had found superintendents ranked curriculum development as a top

priority, yet ranked it lower in terms of how they actually spent their time, Bredeson and Kose (2007) reported a substantial change from 1994 to 2003 on the amount of time superintendents actually spend on instructional leadership. The largest increase in time allocation for superintendents was identified as the area of curriculum and instruction. Additional survey data indicated a desire on the part of many superintendents to spend even more time and resources in this area with 23.2% of superintendents expressing a desire to add a curriculum director and 39.4% wanting to directly or indirectly enhance curriculum and instruction through additional staff (Bredeson & Kose, 2007). Superintendents identified state and curriculum testing mandates as the largest factor influencing their involvement in curriculum and instruction. According to the report, accountability provided the impetus for superintendents to spend time on what they thought was important (curriculum and instruction) but did not prioritize prior to NCLB. In cases where this increase in time was not reported by superintendents, they indicated role overload stood in the way of implementation. This was further indication that many superintendents wanted to spend more time on curriculum and instruction but were unable to as a result of other demands (Bredeson & Kose, 2007).

Implications

The use of time spent by superintendents on instructional leadership has evolved. While instructional leadership was one of three major roles historically fulfilled by superintendents, the era of accountability and the public scrutiny of schools under NCLB (2001) increased the relative importance of the superintendent as instructional leader. While the research supports the role of superintendent as instructional leader as an effective model for increasing student achievement, the magnitude of the demands placed on superintendents sometimes interfere with their work in the instructional domain. Despite the competing demands placed on

superintendents, recent research indicates superintendents have prioritized their work as instructional leaders, spending more time on instructional leadership (Bredeson & Johansson, 1997; Bredeson & Kose, 2007). The ever-increasing requirements for student performance under NCLB continue to apply pressure to schools and their leaders. Effective leadership is necessary for true reform, fostering a collective moral purpose (Rueter, 2009).

Still unanswered is whether the pressure from accountability impacts New York State Superintendents differently based on the state's implementation of NCLB. Specifically, are there differences in how much time New York State Superintendents spend on instructional leadership and how they spend this time when examined through the lens of their accountability status and instructional support in the form of curriculum leadership?

Summary

The role of superintendents and their efforts to balance the political, managerial, and instructional domains of their positions remain complex and demanding. The era of accountability and the impact of NCLB on schools have elevated the role of instructional leadership among the leadership domains for superintendents. While much has been written in regard to the impact of NCLB on schools and the importance of instructional leadership within schools, where the two intersect and how this intersection can be measured through the use of time spent on instructional leadership remains an area for further study. The next chapter will focus on the methodology used by the researcher to study the instructional leadership of superintendents.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter serves to detail actions taken by the researcher to design and collect data for this study, which focused on changes in the use of time for instructional leadership for superintendents with instructional support and those without instructional support. The purpose of the research and design of the research including population, sampling methodology, instrumentation, limitations and delimitations of the study, and methods of data collection and analysis will be presented in this section.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative comparison study was to explore the change in the use of time for instructional leadership as a result of a school district's accountability status under NCLB by superintendents with instructional support and those without instructional support. The study used interviews with a purposeful sample of twelve New York State Superintendents and six New York State Curriculum Leaders. Curriculum Leaders were defined as administrators with supervisory responsibility for curriculum and instruction within schools or districts.

Research Design

The researcher used a qualitative research design to engage in an in-depth study to determine if and how superintendents and curriculum leaders changed the amount of time they spent on instructional leadership, when examined through a lens of their school's accountability status. The study focused on how much time leaders spent on instructional leadership and further investigated how they spent time related to instructional leadership. The researcher

desired to examine in detail the unique experiences of superintendents serving districts of varying sizes, with differing levels of administrative support and accountability under NCLB.

This type of detailed analysis was suited for qualitative research. Creswell (2011) suggested the use of qualitative research when the researcher was not aware of all the variables to be explored, as was the case for this study. Qualitative research “involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant’s setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data, (Creswell, 2008, p. 4). The researcher sought to gather data from multiple interviews, review and interpret the data, and organize it into categories, a process followed through qualitative research (Creswell, 2008). The use of a grounded theory design was employed to “generate a general explanation (grounded in the views of participants, called a grounded theory) that explains a process, action, or interaction among people,” (Creswell, 2011, p. 21). Grounded theory design, developed by Glaser and Strauss in the 1960s, focused on inductive reasoning, rather than examining data as it related to existing theories (Creswell, 2010, p. 423). In the absence of existing theories, the researcher sought to generate a theory specific to the area of study. The procedures included collecting data through interviews, analyzing the data, and developing themes from the data. This type of research was necessary because of the complexities associated with administrative roles and due to the fact the demands placed on school leaders are wide and varied. The range of variables which impact how school leaders spend their time led to examination through qualitative exploration.

The researcher developed research questions which provided the framework to analyze the different contexts in which superintendents served. The goal was to determine whether the different contexts had an impact on the amount of time spent on instructional leadership in

response to accountability mandates. Six central research questions were developed with four additional sub questions to delineate the responses between superintendents and curriculum leaders.

Research Questions

(Central Question) Have superintendents and curriculum leaders changed the amount of time they spend on instructional leadership as a result of federal and state accountability measures?

(Sub Question) What factors, not including accountability status, influence how much time superintendents spend on instructional leadership?

(Sub Question) What factors, not including accountability status, influence how much time curriculum leaders spend on instructional leadership?

(Central Question) Have superintendents and curriculum leaders changed how they spend time on instructional leadership as a result of federal and state accountability measures?

(Sub Question) What factors, not including accountability status, influence how superintendents spend their time on instructional leadership?

(Sub Question) What factors, not including accountability status, influence how curriculum leaders spend their time on instructional leadership?

(Central Question) Is there a difference in the amount of time superintendents in districts rated as schools *In Good Standing* spend on curriculum and instruction as compared to the amount of time spent by superintendents in districts facing accountability sanctions (rated as *Requiring Academic Progress, In Need of Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring*)?

(Central Question) Is there a difference in the amount of time curriculum leaders in districts rated as schools *In Good Standing* spend on curriculum and instruction as compared to the amount of time spent by curriculum leaders in districts facing accountability sanctions (rated as *Requiring Academic Progress, In Need of Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring*)?

(Central Question) Is there a difference in how superintendents in districts rated as schools *In Good Standing* spend their time on curriculum and instruction as compared to superintendents in districts facing accountability sanctions (rated as *Requiring Academic Progress, In Need of Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring*)?

(Central Question) Is there a difference in how curriculum leaders in districts rated as schools *In Good Standing* spend their time on curriculum and instruction as compared to curriculum leaders in districts facing accountability sanctions (rated as *Requiring Academic Progress, In Need of Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring*)?

Population

The target population for this research was New York State Superintendents and Curriculum Leaders. Curriculum leaders were defined as administrators with district-wide responsibility for curriculum and instruction, ranging from half-time (.5) to full-time (1.0). Full-time principals, assistant principals, or other administrators whose job responsibilities did not entail at least (.5) of their role as responsible for the development and implementation of curriculum for student instruction were not considered curriculum leaders for the purpose of this study given the myriad of other responsibilities assigned to these leaders and the propensity for daily tasks to overshadow leadership within the area of curriculum and instruction.

Sample

The researcher sampled 12 superintendents and 6 curriculum leaders. There were two criteria used in the selection of the sample. The first criterion was whether there was instructional support for the superintendent in the form of a curriculum leader. The second sampling criterion was the regulatory status of the school under the NCLB legislation. The sampling goal was to select six districts from the population experiencing accountability sanctions, having been designated as *Requiring Academic Progress*, *In Need of Improvement*, *Corrective Action*, or *Restructuring* and six districts that were all schools *In Good Standing*. The sample selected included twelve superintendents and six curriculum leaders who represented variation in both the level of instructional support (superintendents with curriculum support and those without curriculum support) and regulatory status under NCLB (schools experiencing accountability sanctions and schools *In Good Standing*). In districts where the superintendent had support from a curriculum leader, the curriculum leader was also interviewed, using the same questions. The researcher continued to contact superintendents who represented districts of varying accountability statuses until the sample size of superintendents reached twelve and, at least six of the twelve had curriculum leaders who were also interviewed as part of data collection.

Sampling Method

The sampling method employed was non-probability sampling. The researcher specifically sought six superintendents leading districts considered to be *In Good Standing* according to their NCLB accountability status and six superintendents leading districts with one or more school(s) *Requiring Academic Progress*, *In Need of Improvement*, *Corrective Action*, or *Restructuring* status. The researcher accepted variability within these numbers, meaning where six of each category could not be secured for inclusion in the study, the researcher was willing to

include different numbers within the sample, recognizing the range of contexts within which superintendents serve. Within the two samples of superintendents (those experiencing accountability sanctions and those leading schools *In Good Standing*), the researcher selected superintendents with additional instructional leadership support in the form of curriculum leaders and those without additional support in the form of instructional leadership. Six curriculum leaders were also interviewed. In all cases, the curriculum leaders sampled worked in the same districts as the six superintendents sampled who had instructional support. Therefore, the accountability status for curriculum leaders sampled was the same as the accountability status for superintendents with curriculum leaders. The exact sample categories for data collection included:

- Superintendents without curriculum support leading districts where all schools are *In Good Standing*,
- Superintendents with curriculum support leading districts where all schools are *In Good Standing*,
- Superintendents without curriculum support leading districts where one or more schools face accountability sanctions,
- Superintendents with curriculum support leading districts where one or more schools face accountability sanctions,
- Curriculum leaders working in districts where all schools are *In Good Standing*; and
- Curriculum leaders working in districts where one or more schools face accountability sanctions.

This highly specific sampling necessitated convenience sampling of desired characteristics. The purposeful sample represented the range of environments within which school administrators work.

The goal of this research was to focus solely on school districts identified by their accountability status and the instructional support for superintendents. The goal was not to

achieve a representative sample of the broader population of school districts across the state. The researcher did not seek a sample of school districts that was representative based on the size or wealth of the district.

The Sampling Method/Interview Matrix (Appendix A) outlines the range of accountability status and levels of curriculum support within districts. The researcher continued to contact districts representing the continuum of accountability and curriculum support until the desired sample size was reached in an effort to collect data from twelve superintendents and six curriculum leaders. Approximately 55 school districts were contacted before the researcher achieved the desired number of participants willing to take part in the study. The exact numbers were flexible within each category, meaning where the researcher sought three interview participants in each category, the researcher accepted four interview participants in some categories and two in others, recognizing the need to be flexible within categories in order to secure eighteen interview participants and collect data in a timely manner.

The researcher identified potential participants to be surveyed by first reviewing the most recent, publicly-available data, in the New York State School Accountability Status Report for the 2011-12 School Year. The researcher then selected and contacted potential participants that represented a diverse population of superintendents and curriculum leaders in New York State. New York City administrators were excluded as the New York City School District operates under a different administrative structure and the researcher desired to compare school districts under a similar governance structure.

Instrumentation: Reliability, Validity, and Pilot Testing

The researcher collected data through interviews. “A qualitative interview occurs when researchers ask one or more participants, general, open-ended questions and record their answers. The researcher then transcribes and types the data into a computer file for analysis,” (Cresswell, 2011, p. 217). Interviews were conducted in-person or by telephone. The geographic distance and scheduling constraints of the participants necessitated the varied approach to the interviews. The researcher’s instrumentation and design were reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board prior to commencing the data collection.

Qualitative reliability indicates “the researcher’s approach is consistent across different researchers and different projects,” (Creswell, 2008, p. 190). Reliability was enhanced through the use of standardized questions and protocol to ensure that the data collection procedures were similar for each interview. The researcher also carefully reviewed the transcripts, ensuring mistakes were not made during the transcription process (Creswell, 2008).

The researcher ensured validity through the careful inclusion of several steps during the research process. Interview participants were asked to review transcripts of their interviews to ensure accuracy and clarity of their responses. Research questions and interview questions (Appendix D) were reviewed by a school superintendent, a district superintendent, and an assistant superintendent for instruction prior to conducting interviews to ensure clarity of interview questions and alignment of interview questions with research questions. This process, described as face validity by Vogt (2005), was used as an added measure to ensure the validity of the interview questions. “In determining face validity, one often asks expert judges whether the measure seems to them to be valid,” (Vogt, 2005, p. 117). The researcher received approval from the Institutional Review Board prior to having the research questions and interview questions reviewed for alignment and clarity.

Prior to conducting interviews, the researcher practiced interview protocols and interview questions through a pilot testing method. Pilot testing was used to provide important feedback about the interview design (Creswell, 2011). The pilot test, approved by the Institutional Review Board, included one superintendent and one curriculum leader to ensure the interview questions were understandable, and would help the researcher answer the research questions as designed. Pilot testing provided important feedback to the researcher about the interview design, and confirmed the length of the interviews, ensuring questions would be answered in approximately thirty minutes.

Following each interview, the researcher ensured the data were reliable through the use of member checking, whereby the researcher asked the sampled administrators to review the transcript of their interview for accuracy (Cresswell, 2011). Sampled administrators were provided the opportunity to modify their answers to ensure data were complete and reflective of their professional experiences.

The researcher also enhanced the validity of the study through the triangulation of data from different data sources (Creswell, 2008). In this case, curriculum leaders and their superintendents provided responses which confirmed or corroborated data from within their school district. The process of triangulation allowed the researcher to “draw from multiple sources” (curriculum leaders and superintendents) and encouraged “the researcher to develop a report that is both accurate and credible (Cresswell, 2010, p. 259). Data were reported in chapter 4 using “rich, thick descriptions to convey findings,” allowing the reader to engage directly with the data (Creswell, 2008, p. 192).

The researcher approached the collection and review of data free of bias to the extent possible given the fact the researcher is a school administrator in New York State. The researcher worked to ensure data were reviewed according to a systematic process, carefully reading all data sets multiple times, allowing common patterns to emerge from the data.

Data Collection

Following approval for the research design specified in this chapter through the Institutional Review Board, the researcher began the process of data collection. The researcher sent letters to potential participants (Appendix B) until securing eighteen administrators that fit the desired sample with different levels of curriculum support and accountability statuses. The researcher confirmed scheduled interviews using the Interview Confirmation Letter (Appendix C). Twelve superintendents and six curriculum leaders were interviewed. Interview questions were developed to address the research questions, inclusive of central questions and sub questions, and were aligned in a comparative chart (Appendix D) to ensure clarity of purpose. The researcher carefully followed proscribed interview protocols (Appendix E) as described by Cresswell (2008) and adhered to the scripted interview questions and prompts (Appendix F). All sampled administrators were asked to review and sign the Informed Consent document (Appendix G) prior to the interview. The researcher sought organizational approval prior to conducting research, where required, though no organizational approval was required as part of this research (Appendix H). Sampled administrators were reminded of their rights as a research participant through the Informed Consent document (Appendix G) and at the start of the interview. The researcher would have changed the line of questioning or abandoned the interview if signs of distress had been noted.

The researcher read a common definition of instructional leadership to all interview participants at the beginning of the interview to develop a shared understanding of which leadership actions would be classified as falling within the domain of instructional leadership for the purpose of this study. Instructional leadership was defined by the researcher as “establishing a focus on instruction and curriculum including: organizing, supporting, and planning for the instructional program; allocation of instructional personnel, and; professional development of instructional personnel,” (Bjork & Kowalski, 2005).

The use of a digital-recording device was employed for in-person and phone interviews. Administrators were made aware of the audio recording through the Informed Consent document and at the start of the interview. Following the interview, an independent transcriber was employed to transcribe digital files into transcripts. Consistent with approval from the Institutional Review Board, the transcriptionist was required by the researcher to sign a Confidentiality Agreement (Appendix I). Prior to the start of the research process, the researcher successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course, Protecting Human Research Participants.

Pseudonyms (number and letter identifiers) were assigned to administrators to protect the confidentiality of all participants. Pseudonyms were used throughout the collection of data, transcription, analysis, and reporting of data.

The researcher interviewed twelve superintendents and six curriculum leaders to determine the impact of increased accountability on the time superintendents spend on their role as the instructional leader of their districts. A sequence of letters and numbers were assigned to each interview participant to categorize and manage the data (Table 1). The letter sequence identified the context within which the superintendent or curriculum leader worked.

Table 1

Letter Identification Assignments for Interview Participants

S – Superintendent with curriculum support

X – Superintendent without curriculum support

A – District with all schools *In Good Standing*

B – District with one or more schools facing accountability sanctions

C L – Curriculum leader

Numbers (1-4) were further assigned to each interview participant to ensure a unique identifier was provided to manage and report data in an accurate and confidential manner

The idealized sample, as illustrated in Appendix A, was three superintendents in each of the four categories, the actual sample of study participants, however, is outlined in Table 2, Superintendents and curriculum leaders who agreed to participate in the study represented a range of school districts with varying accountability status and varying levels of administrative support in the area of curriculum and instruction (Table 2). Precise interview dates were intentionally removed from citations to maintain the confidentiality of participants.

Table 2

Interview Matrix for Superintendents and Curriculum Leaders in Study

Superintendent Sampling Method	Accountability Status <i>In Good Standing</i>	Accountability Sanctions
<i>Superintendents without Curriculum Support</i>	X A 1	X B 1
	X A 2	X B 2
	X A 3	
	X A 4	
<i>Superintendents with Curriculum Support</i>	S A 1	S B 1
	S A 2	S B 2
		S B 3
		S B 4
<i>Curriculum Leaders (for Superintendents with Curriculum Support)</i>	C L A 1	C L B 1
	C L A 2	C L B 2
		C L B 3
		C L B 4

Through the use of standard interview questions and consistent interview protocols, the researcher collected qualitative data which were reviewed thoroughly and reported as shared with the researcher.

General Description of the Study Participants

Twelve New York State Superintendents were interviewed during this study. Six superintendents did not have support from another administrator serving in the capacity of a curriculum leader (Table 3).

Table 3

Identifier, Gender, Interview Date, and District Accountability Status Matrix for Superintendents without Curriculum Support

Districts with All Schools <i>In Good Standing</i>	Accountability Sanctions
Identifier/ Gender (M/F) /Interview Date	Identifier/ Gender (M/F) /Interview Date
X A 1/ F /February 2012	X B 1/ F /May 2012
X A 2/ M /February 2012	X B 2/ F /May 2012
X A 3/ M /March 2012	
X A 4/ F /March 2012	

Six of the twelve superintendents had curriculum leaders in their school districts (Table 4).

Table 4

Identifier, Gender, Interview Date, and District Accountability Status Matrix for Superintendents with Curriculum Support

Districts with All Schools
In Good Standing

Accountability Sanctions

Identifier/ Gender (M/F) /Interview Date

S A 1/ M /February 2012

S A 2/ M /April 2012

Identifier/ Gender (M/F) /Interview Date

S B 1/ M /March 2012

S B 2/ F /February 2012

S B 3/ M /April 2012

S B 4/ M /April 2012

The corresponding six curriculum leaders, working with the superintendents in districts with curriculum leaders, were also interviewed (Table 5).

Table 5

Identifier, Gender, Interview Date, and District Accountability Status Matrix for Curriculum Leaders (for Superintendents with Curriculum Support)

Districts with All Schools
In Good Standing

Accountability Sanctions

Identifier/ Gender (M/F) /Interview Date

C L A 1/ M /March 2012

C L A 2/ F /April 2012

Identifier/ Gender (M/F) /Interview Date

C L B 1/ F /March 2012

C L B 2/ F /April 2012

C L B 3/ F /April 2012

C L B 4/ F /April 2012

Superintendents, both those with and without curriculum leaders, and curriculum leaders interviewed worked in districts with a range of accountability statuses. Some superintendents and curriculum leaders included in this study worked in districts where all schools had been designated *In Good Standing* according to NCLB designation. Other superintendents and curriculum leaders worked in districts facing a range of accountability sanctions under NCLB including *Requiring Academic Progress*, *In Need of Improvement*, *Corrective Action*, and *Restructuring*. Interview data were collected from six total categories (Appendix J).

Demographic Data of Study Participants

The researcher sought a gender balance among participants within the superintendent sample. Five of the twelve superintendents were women, having served, on average, just less than three years in their positions. Seven of the twelve superintendents interviewed were men, having served an average of slightly more than three years in their current positions. Gender was not as balanced, however, when examined based on which superintendents had support from a curriculum leader. In districts without support from a curriculum leader, four of the six superintendents were women (Table 3). In districts with curriculum leaders, five out of the six superintendents were men. Larger districts were more likely to be led by men and these larger districts were more likely to have a curriculum leader (Table 4). The percentage of women interviewed for the study was higher than the New York State average, as of 2009, where women represented 30% of superintendents (The Council of School Superintendents, 2009).

The average tenure for superintendents leading districts where all schools were *In Good Standing* was four years, while the average tenure for superintendents leading districts with at least one school facing accountability sanctions was two years. Tenure was not linked to specific

superintendents and curriculum leaders in these tables to reduce the number of identifiable connections to participants and to maintain the confidentiality of those within the study.

The six curriculum leaders interviewed, five women and one man, had served an average of six years in their positions (Table 5). When examined by NCLB designation, curriculum leaders working in districts where all schools were *In Good Standing* averaged eight years and those in districts with at least one school facing accountability sanctions averaged five years in their positions.

Data Storage

All data were stored on a password protected computer and/or secure cabinet. Specific names of districts, schools, and administrators were redacted from direct quotations. The precise date of each interview was not included in tables or citations in chapter 4 as an additional measure to protect the confidentiality of participants. At the conclusion of the study, all data were destroyed.

Data Analysis

Following the collection of data, all data were organized and transcribed. Interview participants were asked to member check their responses. Data were analyzed by hand through several readings of the transcripts by the researcher. Data were divided into segments and examined for themes. Interview transcripts were further examined through a comparative lens analyzing responses from districts of different accountability status and differing levels of curriculum support to determine if there were noticeable differences between interview responses. All data were destroyed at the conclusion of the research. Digital recordings were deleted, computer files were deleted and removed from the computer's recycling bin. Hand-written notes and copies of interview transcripts were shredded.

Delimitations and Limitations

The research was delimited to the real and perceived experiences of twelve superintendents and six curriculum leaders. The design of the research further imposed a small sample size (average of three) for each of the categories making the findings less able to be generalized. The study was delimited to superintendents and curriculum leaders in New York State. The results of this study should be interpreted in other settings with caution as the impact and application of the NCLB regulation varied across states. The limitations of this study, common in many qualitative studies, were the accurate reporting of information from superintendents and curriculum leaders rather than the information they perceived to be accurate or preferable. Data collected were based solely on interviews, though in districts where both the superintendent and curriculum leader were interviewed, the researcher was able to triangulate data, adding to the internal validity. “Triangulation is the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals (e.g., a principal and a student), types of data (e.g., observational fieldnotes and interviews), or methods of data collection (e.g., documents and interviews) in descriptions and themes in qualitative research” (Creswell, 2011, p. 259). Interview data were not triangulated through a review of each superintendent’s and curriculum leader’s appointment calendars or any other measure of how sampled administrators actually spent their time. An additional limitation of the study was the differing interpretation of instructional leadership by superintendents and curriculum leaders. While the researcher shared a common definition of instructional leadership at the opening of each interview, responses indicated differing assumptions from superintendents and curriculum leaders related to which leadership actions were actually classified as instructional leadership actions.

Researcher Bias

The researcher entered the design, data collection, and analysis of the research with the intent to gather answers to questions impacting the current practice of administrators. The researcher believed accountability has had an impact on instructional leadership, most specifically as a result of the Bredeson and Kose (2007) study, as noted in Chapter 2. The researcher did not, however, know whether superintendents in New York State have experienced a similar increase in the time they spend on instructional leadership. The researcher is a practicing administrator in New York State and acknowledges this may be a source of unintended bias. Adherence to structured interview protocols and scripted questions, as well as the careful analysis of data including the use of direct quotes when reporting the research, was used to reduce researcher bias. The researcher also carefully reviewed participant responses multiple times looking for patterns as they emerged across all of the data in an effort to control for bias (Creswell, 2008).

Summary

This study, a qualitative comparison study, was designed to explore the change in the use of time for instructional leadership by superintendents with instructional support and those without instructional support as a result of a school district's accountability status under NCLB. Grounded theory design was employed to generate a theory specific to the area of study, in the absence of existing theories. Data were collected through eighteen interviews with superintendents and curriculum leaders. The data were later analyzed by the researcher, looking for themes as they emerged. Convenience sampling was necessary due to the highly specific sampling design. A number of precautions were taken by the researcher to ensure the study was both reliable and valid. A rich, detailed account of the data collected, replete with quotations

from interview participants will follow in chapter 4, as the researcher reported and analyzed collected data.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

The purpose of this chapter is to report and analyze data that were collected, as they relate to the six research questions and sub questions, designed for this study. This chapter focuses on superintendents in their role as instructional leaders, changes in time spent on instructional leadership as a result of accountability, and further addresses each research question in sequential order. The chapter concludes with an overview of the data analysis.

Superintendents in their Role as Instructional Leader

The role of superintendents as instructional leaders was the focus of this study and therefore all participants were asked to identify their role in the instructional leadership of their districts. Prior to the start of the interview, instructional leadership was defined verbally by the researcher as establishing a focus on instruction and curriculum including: organizing, supporting, and planning for the instructional program; allocation of instructional personnel, and; professional development of instructional personnel (Bjork & Kowalski, 2005). The interviewed superintendents reported a variety of roles they perform in the area of instructional leadership including work facilitating instructional leadership, setting the vision within the organization, allocating resources, as well as responsibility for overall supervision of the instructional program.

Superintendents without support from a curriculum leader were more likely to list specific actions related to their role as instructional leaders. Four of the six superintendents, who did not have the support of a curriculum leader, specifically identified the need for their increased involvement in instructional leadership as a result of the small size of their district.

I would say that I am the key person, and that manifests itself in a number of ways. One, we're an extremely small district so we don't have a lot of layers of leadership. But I

view instructional leadership as probably my primary role. (X A 4, personal communication, March 2012)

Another superintendent of a small school district stated,

I think my role, because I happen to be in a small school district, is actually rather pivotal because I'm much closer to the classroom than I would have been in my larger school district. It gives me an opportunity to talk profoundly about curriculum and instruction with the people who are on the ground, both principals and teachers. And I think that because of that – and actually interestingly enough my doctorate is in curriculum and instruction – so it's my particular focus... I always say I am a teacher; I do school administration for a living. (X A 1, personal communication, February 2012)

Another superintendent noted, “Well, unfortunately in a small district without any curriculum directors or assistant superintendents that I would absolutely love to have, I really have to coordinate everything,” (X B 2, personal communication, May 2012). Superintendent X A 3 also stated the small size of the district impacted his role as an instructional leader.

And the small size of the school means we don't have a director or an assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction. We don't have department heads. And all of those tasks are absorbed by other people, including the superintendent. I, for instance, observe classrooms. So I am, in that sense, much more involved than the superintendents that I have worked with throughout my experience as a principal. (X A 3, personal communication, March 2012)

Superintendents X B 2, X A 3 and X A 2 expressed the increased responsibility for instructional leadership in the absence of additional support from a curriculum leader. “I would say I am the leader for instructional leadership. The fact that we don't have an Assistant Superintendent, the

professional development plan, the APPR, the curriculum; all of that falls upon me in my role as Superintendent,” (X A 2, personal communication, February 2012). Responses from these four superintendents were somewhat contrary to the findings of Jones & Howley (2009) who had reported superintendents with smaller enrollments spend the most time on managerial leadership.

Other administrators within the organization who also provide instructional leadership

Superintendents were asked if there were others within the organization who also provide instructional leadership. Each of the six superintendents without curriculum leaders identified building principals as their most important instructional leaders. Superintendents with curriculum leaders identified the central role played by their curriculum leaders in the area of instructional leadership in their districts. In addition to the curriculum leader, all of the superintendents with curriculum leaders noted the role of building principals or, more generally, the members of the administrative team, including directors and assistant principals, as instrumental instructional leaders in the district. “The key role, from my perspective, is the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum...being the relentless, passionate, advocate for focus on outcomes... has been a critical piece,” (S A 1, personal communication, February 2012). The importance of all administrators serving as instructional leaders was identified by Superintendent S B 2, stating, “My expectation is that every administrator, be it a district level, Director of Curriculum Pupil Personnel, principal, assistant principal...my expectation is that everybody in this district is an instructional leader,” (personal communication, February 2012). This reliance on other administrators confirms the work of Jones and Howley (2009) who found superintendents often rely on other administrators within the organization to also provide instructional leadership.

Changes in Time Spent on Instructional Leadership as a Result of Accountability

Increased accountability, as a result of NCLB, has been shown in the research to increase the amount of time superintendents spend on instructional leadership (Bredeson & Kose, 2007). This section focuses on whether superintendents and curriculum leaders working in districts with varying ranges of accountability status in New York State have changed the amount of time they spend on instructional leadership as a result of their accountability status.

Research Question #1 (Central Question) Have superintendents and curriculum leaders changed the amount of time they spend on instructional leadership as a result of federal and state accountability measures?

Superintendents’ responses to whether they changed the amount of time they spent on instructional leadership, as a result of increased accountability, varied according to the context within which superintendents operate and factors unique to their districts (Table 6).

Table 6

Effect of Accountability on Time Spent by Superintendents on Instructional Leadership

Q 1. Has your school district’s accountability status had an effect on the amount of time you spend on instructional leadership?

	Districts with All Schools <i>In Good Standing</i>	Accountability Sanctions
Superintendents with Curriculum Support	Yes (1)	Yes (4)
Superintendents without Curriculum Support	Yes (2)	No (2) No (2)

Superintendent responses were mixed; however, clear differences arose according to the context in which superintendents worked as outlined in the next section.

Changes in the amount of time superintendents leading schools *In Good Standing* spend on instructional leadership

Superintendents leading districts where all schools were *In Good Standing* had mixed responses to the impact of accountability on the time they spent on instructional leadership. Increased accountability led to increased time spent on instructional leadership according to responses by half of the superintendents (one of the two with curriculum support; two of the four without curriculum support; Table 6). One superintendent indicated the performance of the special education sub-group was close to not making AYP. “You know, when you’re monitoring results and taking a look at a sub-group that isn’t making it, and realizing, you know, the clock is now ticking, that it does draw additional attention to what we’re doing,” (S A 1, personal communication, February 2012).

The other half of superintendents interviewed leading schools *In Good Standing* believed increased accountability had not led to increased time spent on instructional leadership (Table 6). In these cases, superintendents cited differing reasons behind the lack of impact. “No Child Left Behind, interestingly enough, has not affected us because our cohort size is too small, because we are such a small district,” (X A 4, personal communication, March 2012). Another leader indicated she had not changed the time she spent on instructional leadership as a result of increased accountability measures, since the district’s high achievement levels did not necessitate a change.

Our accountability status is quite strong. So, no, it hasn't had an effect on it. If anything, the effect it's had has been almost the opposite. Because in districts where you have really fine outcomes, it's really easy to become sort of complacent. (X A 1, personal communication, February 2012)

Superintendents leading districts where all schools were *In Good Standing* shared mixed reactions to the impact of increased accountability on how much time they spent on instructional leadership (Table 6). Different factors including concerns about sub-group performance in some cases led to increased time, whereas historically strong student outcomes did not compel superintendents to spend more time on instructional leadership.

Changes in the amount of time superintendents leading schools under accountability sanctions spend on instructional leadership

Superintendents leading schools facing accountability sanctions shared contrasting responses, demarcated by whether or not they had support from a curriculum leader (Table 6). The four superintendents with curriculum leaders believed their school districts' accountability status had an effect on the amount of time they spent on instructional leadership whereas the two superintendents leading schools without support from a curriculum leader did not believe accountability had an effect on the time they spent on instructional leadership. These differing experiences were captured through interview responses as outlined below.

A superintendent of an urban district stated the SINI identification was a "wake-up call," indicating teachers demonstrated a "sense of complacency," prior to accountability sanctions (S B 2, personal communication, February 2012). Another superintendent leading an urban district responded, "It's in front of you all the time. It's in front of you every day. Every classroom

teacher knows it when she comes in the morning, when she works with youngsters who don't have the resources and background," (S B 1, personal communication, March 2012).

Superintendent S B 4 acknowledged the SINI identification "forced us to have some really productive conversations," and believed it was positive to get "feedback from some outside influences," referring to consultants assigned to the district as part of the improvement plan (personal communication, April 2012).

Responses from the participants support published research which indicates accountability has served as an impetus for superintendents to focus on student achievement and instructional leadership (Rueter, 2009; Russell & Sloan McCombs, 2006).

Changes in the amount of time superintendents leading schools in accountability sanctions without curriculum support spend on instructional leadership.

Conversely, superintendents leading school districts facing accountability sanctions without support from a curriculum leader (X B 1 and X B 2) did not believe their school district's accountability status had an effect on the amount of time they spent on instructional leadership.

Well, some of the accountability is related to ...is directly related to instruction and so I believe they dovetail together. So I don't...I wouldn't say that it draws my attention away from anything. I think in some respects it can be a complement. (X B 1, personal communication, May 2012)

Superintendent X B 2 stated,

No, I wouldn't say it's affected me because whether we're in that status or not, we still need to be moving the district and focus on the Common Core and all those changes. It impacted on the middle school principal and the middle school teachers, but I wouldn't say its impacted me. (personal communication, May 2012)

Despite their expressed belief that their accountability status did not affect the amount of time they spent on instructional leadership, these same two superintendents both identified instructional changes made as a result of their school's accountability status.

Well, I think that's been a positive because we've got some teachers that were pretty set in their ways and really thought they were doing an amazing job. And I think it may have been a little rude awakening. I think they're a lot more willing now to implement reading and writing across all the different content areas which I think they were pretty resistant to before. So I think its impacted teachers being more open to changing and realizing maybe they're not quite as perfect as some of them may have thought they were. (X B 2, personal communication, May 2012)

In Superintendent X B 1's school district, changes were also made as a result of their accountability status.

Well, we have had over the years two of our schools go in and out of *School in Need of Improvement* status. And when you go into that SINI status, you immediately...it gives you a reason to focus heavily on certain problems and through an overview and an analysis of the system and by involving everyone in the school building, including parents, we're able to really focus our lens on certain areas that need improvement. And so from that point of view, I think it's helpful. We had an elementary school that went

through the process identified for students with disabilities in ELA and because of the designation we were able to put some new things in place that had pulled... that pulled the school out of the designation. So we're back on track. (X B 1, personal communication, May 2012)

While the superintendents leading school districts in accountability sanctions without support from a curriculum leader did not believe their schools' accountability status impacted the time they spent on instructional leadership, both superintendents indicated changes were made within their districts to respond to the accountability status.

(Sub Question) What factors, not including accountability status, influence how much time superintendents spend on instructional leadership?

Each interviewed superintendent identified factors that influence *how much* time they spend on instructional leadership or *how* they spend time on instructional leadership, unrelated to accountability status. Four superintendents specifically identified factors beyond accountability status that influenced *how much* time they spent on instructional leadership confirming the work of Farkas et al., (2003) which identified other demands that may pull superintendents away from work in the area of instructional leadership toward other leadership roles.

One of the factors is a negative component. You know, the other demands of the position. And so the day-to-day management component, it is certainly a piece of it. The amount of time that the on-going State mandates are starting to take in terms of reporting the mechanism of working with Race to the Top and APPR, and just taking so much time. And yet, interwoven in there, of course, are the discussions about we need assessments that are going to really be useful in instruction. So it's certainly tied to it,

but... takes such massive amounts of time that it does draw away from the instructional piece. (S A 1, personal communication, February 2012)

Superintendents also identified factors that influence how and where they allocate their time.

For Superintendent S A 2, the primary concern related to the reduction in federal and state aid.

You know every school has made major changes in the last four years. Every school has seen a reduction in state aid, a reduction in federal aid. So I think with some of the accountabilities, the Board wants to know, alright, we've made all of these changes in the last few years, show us what's the impact of change on each of the buildings, on each of the programs. (S A 2, personal communication, April 2012)

The superintendents' leadership responsibilities in the areas of the political and managerial domains also surfaced in these responses. Superintendents X B 1 and S B 3 identified several other responsibilities of superintendents. "I'm thinking about all of the distractions that come up with problems that people bring to the district level," (X B 1, personal communication, May 2012).

It's managing board and community relationships. It's managing budget. It's managing plant. It's managing personnel. It's managing all the attendant problems that come up with community relations and the like. So that does impact the amount of time that you spend on instruction. And there's just the sheer managerial parts of the job... I mean how do you manage the amount of time you spend on stuff versus the amount of time you spend on meaningful, important work, which is you know the heart and soul of what we do? And that would be instruction. (S B 3, personal communication, April 2012)

Factors beyond accountability status influenced how much time superintendents spent on instructional leadership in each of the school districts in the study. This supports the work of Farkas et al., (2003) and Bredeson and Johansson (1997) who found barriers, including work overload, limit the amount of time superintendents are able to spend on curriculum and instruction.

(Sub Question) What factors, not including accountability status, influence how much time curriculum leaders spend on instructional leadership?

Whereas four of the twelve superintendents interviewed identified factors outside of accountability that directly impacted *how much* time they spent on curriculum and instruction, two of the six curriculum leaders shared they similarly faced factors outside of accountability that directly impacted *how much* time they spent on curriculum and instruction. These two curriculum leaders, both working in districts facing accountability sanctions, were more likely to identify factors pulling them away from instructional leadership including managerial responsibilities, implementing change, and managing budget shortfalls.

Other demands of the job certainly would be one. I do think that there...you know, working with a number of administrators and also teachers with varying levels of expertise in a particular area and/or their openness to change. I'm a firm believer that you know, like when we were shifting to curriculum mapping there were so many naysayers. You're not going to start off with any effort having 100% of the people on board with where you're going... so working with those people. (C L B 4, personal communication, April 2012)

Another curriculum leader shared,

Well, I think a lack of money right now is going to affect that (time spent on instructional leadership.) I've been handed a lot of grants that I'm looking into right now which are going to take a lot of time to write... I mean indirectly the money might go to instruction or in the future, but somebody has to get the money into the district first...we're heading down a path of looking for more grant money to fund the things we had to cut this year. (C L B 2, personal communication, April 2012)

In total, four of the twelve superintendents and two of the curriculum leaders identified influences not related to accountability affected *how much* time they spent in the area of curriculum and instruction. In response to the interview questions, however, superintendents and curriculum leaders were more likely to identify *how* they spent their time on instructional leadership.

Research Question #2 (Central Question) Have superintendents and curriculum leaders changed how they spend time on instructional leadership as a result of federal and state accountability measures?

Differences arose in response to the impact of increased accountability on superintendents' and curriculum leaders' roles as instructional leaders, specifically *how* they spent their time on instructional leadership. A greater level of specificity, including increased focus on the academic performance of students, more time spent on review of student data, and greater focus on instructional leadership, was noted in a review of interview responses from superintendents and curriculum leaders leading districts facing accountability sanctions.

Changes in how superintendents leading schools *In Good Standing* with support from a curriculum leader spend time on instructional leadership

Both superintendents leading districts *In Good Standing*, who also had support from curriculum leaders, were asked how increased accountability impacted their role as an instructional leader in their district. Both referenced work done by their curriculum leaders in their responses.

The place I've seen that the most has been with our Special Ed sub-group. And so, you know, as we've watched those results and you know, checked to see if we have enough students in the sub-group for it to be measured in the single year, the discussions have changed certainly. But it's kind of interesting in that when we first hit that dynamic, it kicked into place a ... a long-term response. So when the immediacy was there it got our attention. And again, I credit [curriculum leader's name] with that in terms of, all right...then instead of worrying about the score and whether we're going to be on the list for next year, let's look at what we're doing programmatically for that sub-group. (S A 1, personal communication, February 2012)

This was confirmed by the curriculum leader working with Superintendent S A 1 who noted,

It's served in a positive way in terms of leveraging the accountability and the focus on sub-groups...we've really just taken it upon ourselves to use this as an opportunity to create a healthy sense of urgency to become even better for students. (C L A 1, personal communication, March 2012)

The second superintendent referenced how accountability had an effect on others within the organization.

I don't know how most people answer this. I'm going to say I think it impacts my building principals and my... and [curriculum leader's] position...my curriculum and

instruction person more than it does me. This is the part where I have to try to back off and let them do what they're good at and what they know. And then they just report to me... Here's how we do on tests. Here's how we did on the results. I mean, and that...I think that's what she should be doing. I shouldn't have to be doing...I could very easily go on and check all the numbers and everything, but I think...I think it's more on them than it is on me. (S A 2, personal communication, April 2012)

The curriculum leader who worked alongside the aforementioned superintendent shared,

This is going to sound crazy... but it hasn't had much of an impact. In our district where I am right now, we have always had a long history of academic excellence, of a board that is pushing for innovation. (C L A 2, personal communication, April 2012)

Responses shared by Superintendents S A 1 and S A 2, indicate they both valued the work of the curriculum leader.

Changes in how superintendents leading schools *In Good Standing* without support from a curriculum leader spend time on instructional leadership

Superintendents currently leading school districts *In Good Standing* without curriculum leaders shared a range of experiences as a result of increased accountability. Responses varied from those of superintendents whose schools had previously faced accountability sanctions, though had moved to schools *In Good Standing* as compared to those leading districts that had never faced NCLB sanctions.

Our accountability status is quite strong. So no, it hasn't had an effect on it. If anything the effect it's had has been almost the opposite. Because in a district where you have

really fine outcomes, it's really easy to become sort of complacent. And I think it's my job to stir the pot on that so that we don't become complacent. (X A 1, personal communication, February 2012)

Superintendent X A 2 believed the increased accountability had shifted his focus as a leader.

Well, looking back when I first became the Superintendent I would say that I spent a lot more time on policy issues, budget issues, PR issues, communication. I would say that that has changed drastically. I'm spending a lot less time on those things and most of...a majority of my time is now focused on instructional issues and certainly that has a lot to do with the State's reform agenda. (X A 2, personal communication, February 2012)

In two other districts, both currently *In Good Standing*, the superintendents reviewed data more carefully as a result of increased accountability.

The accountability through No Child Left Behind, interestingly enough, has not affected us because our cohort size is too small, because we are such a small district. However, I have used that function of NCLB to help our teachers understand that if our cohort size were bigger... particularly in Special Ed and in Limited English Proficiency, we would be on one of the lists. And that is extremely telling that even though we're fortunate enough to not be on the list, that our kids in those two categories are not achieving at a high enough level. And I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but I couldn't let people continue to believe that because all these other schools were getting on the list and we weren't that we had nothing to worry about. So that particular dimension forced me to look more closely at our data and to share with our faculty that our kids in those...particularly in those two categories...are really not making enough progress.

They are really not achieving at a high enough level and that we really need to do things differently. A status quo is not good enough. Because when I look at where our kids end up coming out of Special Ed or coming out of LEP or ESL or whatever you want to call it, our kids are not being prepared to do what they need to do at the high school level and graduate with a high school diploma. Although we are not on a list, we would be on the list if our cohorts were bigger. And as far as I'm concerned it has forced the conversation; and some uncomfortable conversations. (X A 4, personal communication, March 2012)

Use of data to identify weaknesses in the instructional program was identified by another superintendent leading a school *In Good Standing*. This school had previously faced accountability sanctions, having been identified as a *School In Need of Improvement*.

When I got here, the school was on the list as an identified school, as a *School In Need of Improvement*. And we were still laboring under the burden of that label. Knowing that when I interviewed for the position, I really immersed myself in the test scores. It soon became apparent that I, through the interview process, that I knew more about the test scores than anyone currently in the school. That is to say, it wasn't enough to find out the surface level scores. This for example, 62% of the kids got a three or four in fourth grade. I didn't see that the data had been disaggregated. And so in the interview process when I shared my insight, I sensed from the impressions of facial expressions of the people in the interview committee, that they were unaware of the fact that it was double-digit difference between males and females on the tests. There were similarly double-digit, more than double-digit...well, it was double-digit but I'm not talking 10 percentage points, but in some cases 30% difference between kids who were eligible for free and

reduced lunch and kids who were not. It was readily apparent that the profile of kids who are underserved would be a male who is on free and reduced lunch. So my role was to really look at the data to find a difference that would make a difference. And use that as a starting point. Because we lacked the resources with budget cuts that predated me. So I came in after significant budget cuts and we didn't have the resources to just try to do everything. We had to find where the leverage points were. Not just trying to – it wasn't enough to try to improve everyone in that grade where 62% of them had passed the state test; we had to find out the profile of the kids who were in need and perform an instructional triage. And find out where we could make a difference. So my biggest role in instructional leadership from the start was to bring focus on perceived leverage points where we could experience impact and quick successes. (X A 3, personal communication, March 2012)

While the four superintendents in this category referenced reviewing data, a greater sense of urgency to review data to improve student achievement was noted in interview responses from the two districts that had experienced accountability sanctions or would have if the district had a larger sub-group population of students.

Changes in how superintendents leading schools in accountability sanctions with support from a curriculum leader spend time on instructional leadership

Superintendents leading districts with schools facing accountability sanctions identified how accountability sanctions impacted their roles as instructional leaders. Three of the four superintendents leading districts facing NCLB accountability sanctions, and all four of their

curriculum leaders, identified ways accountability had specifically impacted their roles as instructional leaders, often identifying at least one positive impact of NCLB.

I frankly like the impact of accountability because I hold my own self accountable as well as other people. So to me nobody should be doing anything differently than they did before accountability because that is what your job is. So this just puts the pen to the paper. Overall I don't think that...I mean I think it's caused uneasiness with teachers and administrators, but in my mind it should have been done all along anyway. (S B 2, personal communication, February 2012)

Superintendent S B 3 thought,

It (increased accountability) compels us to be instructional leaders. I mean you've got to keep your mind on that and your eyes on that and your heart and your soul on that all the time. And that's got to be the focus of where you direct your resources...so I think NCLB has really forced us to do that. NCLB has really had us look at data. But there's a whole host of other things that I think are negative that I also think are associated with that too. (S B 3, personal communication, April 2012)

Another change associated with increased accountability stems from the public reporting of results under NCLB.

The public perception of having an annual school report card and the transparency of that information that is shared, not only with our own local community, but across the region, across the state that parents have much more access now to information about student achievement as well as other indicators of student performance. (S B 4, personal communication, April 2012)

The superintendent of a large urban school district focused on the relationship between accountability and longevity for superintendents.

I think the main impact is that unless the superintendent is able to move the leaders, specifically toward achievement of those identified categories of students – minorities, special education, English as a second language – unless that superintendent is able to move that leader, probably the superintendent isn't going to stay in that position in that urban setting very long. (S B 1, personal communication, March 2012)

Three of the four superintendents leading districts facing accountability sanctions, with support from a curriculum leader, indicated they had changed how they spend time in the area of instructional leadership as a result of the district's accountability status.

Changes in how curriculum leaders in schools in accountability sanctions spend time on instructional leadership

Four of the four curriculum leaders facing accountability sanctions noted changes made to their instructional leadership as a result of their districts' accountability status. The curriculum leader, working with the superintendent leading the large urban district, noted the progressive impact of increased accountability. When asked about the impact of increased accountability on her role as an instructional leader she responded,

Well, it definitely has added to that role because we are a PLA (Persistently Low Achieving), we have two PLA schools. So under that PLA status, there is more accountability. There is more responsiveness to what the state wants you to do. We have to turn those building around so in doing that we are closely monitored by the state. And we have to ...at least I have to work with those buildings as I said to assure that what we

wrote in our SIG (School Improvement Grant) application, that we are following through with that. (C L B 1, personal communication, March 2012)

A curriculum leader, working in a school district with a newly identified school shared several positive aspects of NCLB.

I'm going to speak specifically to (our) SINI designation I guess because that was our first time this year, like many other places, with our junior high school students with disabilities in ELA. And like many, like we were very overwhelmed by the process. But I will say it has...I don't like that we're on a list, but I really liked the process. The team we brought together I think with teachers, administrators from the ... building administrators, elementary administrators... I think it's been some of the best specific conversations we've had about teaching and learning and how we're ... how we're ... we were caught in the trap of doing things the way we had always done things, because we had always had the results. So it's phenomenal... to transform their faculty meetings and have them more focused on the instructional program and specifically school-wide literacy. Because ELA is my background I've led several of their faculty meetings and worked with their teachers... So it's actually, you know, well it was initially just to fill out all the SINI paperwork, actually put me in the heart and center of that instructional program with much more hands on than I might normally have. And I enjoyed it. I have to be honest. (C L B 3, personal communication, April 2012)

Both C L B 2 and C L B 4 indicated they had increased their use of data as a result of increased accountability. "Our District was highly involved with looking at the New York State assessments and the data analysis, item analysis piece, working with that. We had to move

forward with some common benchmark assessments,” (C L B 4, personal communication, April 2012).

Curriculum leaders in districts facing accountability sanctions articulated the manner in which accountability has impacted the work they do as instructional leaders. Schools facing accountability sanctions were required to submit detailed improvement plans to the State in addition to their typical professional responsibilities. Much of the work related to improvement plans was done by the curriculum leaders as was the careful review of data that occurred as a result of their accountability status.

Changes in how superintendents leading schools in accountability sanctions without support from a curriculum leader spend time on instructional leadership

Superintendents leading schools in accountability sanctions with support from curriculum leaders identified the specific impact of increased accountability on their professional roles, frequently identifying a positive impact of accountability. The two superintendents leading districts facing accountability sanctions who did not have support from a curriculum leader, were less likely to identify positive changes as a result of increased accountability.

Well, it's interesting because there certainly is that accountability and the fact that we need to ...the fact that we are being held accountable certainly puts a focus on what we are doing. But I would like to say we would be as focused without all of that accountability, because if we are truly doing our jobs as educators, we are going to be interested in best practices. We are going to be interested in professional development. We're going to be interested in aligning our curriculum vertically and horizontally. So

I'm not sure what the accountability system has actually done for us. (X B 1, personal communication, May 2012)

Superintendent X B 1 expressed optimism that the district and she would have performed similarly without accountability measures under NCLB, while the perspective shared by the second superintendent in this category (X B 2) indicates a more intrusive, negative impact of increased accountability.

I would say it probably impacted me in a negative way. Small districts for instance, AIS just doesn't work because...at the elementary level it can but at the high school level when you have one teacher that perhaps does AIS Earth Science second period, most of the kids that probably need it aren't available second period, so you have to put one or two kids in there and it's not a very efficient way to spend money and try to help kids. So in that sense, having that mandate is not helpful in really doing what's best for the kids. So I guess my answer is it has impacted us in a negative way rather than positive.

(X B 2, personal communication, May 2012)

Superintendents without support from a curriculum leader, working in districts facing accountability sanctions were more likely to view accountability as not helpful or not the impetus behind instructional changes.

Impact of accountability on how superintendents and curriculum leaders spend time on district goals

All interviewed superintendents indicated they had district goals. When asked whether they had made changes to the district's goals as a result of their accountability status, the range of responses indicated superintendents and curriculum leaders in districts where all schools were

In Good Standing did not make changes to the district's goals as a result of their accountability status, though they were likely to respond that they monitored the results of their students in an effort to increase outcomes and avoid facing accountability sanctions in the future.

A superintendent leading a district where all schools were *In Good Standing* stated, "We've started with buildings having goals then asking individual teams to, in some way, move toward these goals," (S A 1, personal communication, February 2012). The curriculum leader in this district shared,

What we've really tried to emphasize is the importance of buildings having either a SMART goal or an area of focus as well as departments having a SMART goal and an area of focus. So that the teams within them, within the department and buildings can feed into the building or department goals ... we don't have a document with all of those on it...it's actually a good idea of what you're speaking of, in terms of having a district document with the district goals, priorities, where you're headed. We do have that in a general sense, but it would be good to have it more specifically. (C L A 1, personal communication, March 2012)

Another curriculum leader working in a district where all schools are *In Good Standing* shared,

Our area within the accountability piece that really shows up is the sub-group of students with disabilities. We....you know I would say we definitely added a few strategies and activities to the goal related to improving the goals of students with disabilities and closing the gap because there is one. Even though they met AYP it's still a gap. And so it wasn't like we added that goal this year because it is pretty much a standard piece of our district-wide goals every year; because it's an area where we definitely need to

improve...But it's not a new goal because of accountability, but we may have tweaked and added some activities or strategies as a result of it. It's probably going to be an area next year that we're still working, honestly. We still haven't gotten there yet. (C L A 2, personal communication, April 2012)

Superintendents with curriculum support and their curriculum leaders, working in districts where all schools were *In Good Standing*, did not make changes to the district's goals as a result of their accountability status. They did, however, share they monitored student results in an effort to increase outcomes and avoid facing accountability sanctions in the future.

Superintendents leading districts where all schools were *In Good Standing*, who did not have support from a curriculum leader, responded they had not made changes to their district goals as a result of their current accountability status, however, in the district where they recently moved to being all schools *In Good Standing*, the superintendent's response indicated the former SINI experience drove them to remain off the list.

No, we were moving ahead towards what we feel was the vision of the district regardless...we didn't want to center too much on the SINI list ... The goal wasn't to just merely get off the SINI list. The goal was to reach and stretch for excellence. To do the very best we can to meet our potential. I didn't want people to say; well, now we can stop. We're off the SINI list. That would breed complacency and we would end up being back on it. So I maintained that sense of commitment and urgency and remind them that we need to learn what got us on that list, correct it, and move forward so we never have to worry about that. We're not looking backward, we're looking forward. (X A 3, personal communication, March 2012)

Another superintendent, without support from a curriculum leader, who leads a district with all schools *In Good Standing* said, “I would say that some of the goals changed, although it didn’t change because of the accountability status. But in terms of the results of our kids, yes,” (X A 4, personal communication, March 2012)

Superintendents leading districts where one or more schools faced NCLB sanctions were more likely to indicate they adjusted their goals as a result of their accountability status, than their curriculum leaders. A superintendent shared, “Yes, I mean there was greater attention for the junior high performance on special education students on state assessments. Greater attention made to introducing the Common Core in ELA and mathematics. Those sorts of things,” (S B 3, personal communication, April 2012). The curriculum leader in the same district stated, in reference to changes made to district goals as a result of accountability status,

I don’t think so because I think so much of what we had this year in terms of goals was related to curriculum and instruction with the implementation of the Common Core and getting people ready, that a lot of that was in there. So I don’t think we did change it specifically, the actual overall document. But certainly we put more attention into those areas. (C L B 3, personal communication, April 2012)

Similar to the administrative pair (Superintendent S B 3 and Curriculum Leader C L B 3) cited above, Superintendent S B 4 stated the district had made changes, based on the district’s accountability status, whereas Curriculum Leader B 4 did not believe the district had made changes as a result of the district’s accountability status.

When responding to the researcher's question, "Were any changes made to the document (district goals) as a result of your district's accountability status," Superintendent S B 4 responded,

Yes...and we wanted to make a priority obviously on our continuous improvement of our academic program and one of the things you know across the board obviously with Race to the Top goals and the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards at all grade levels and looking at our graduation rate, especially at the secondary level. When I came on board we were about 85% cohort graduation rate and we set a target of about 90% graduation rate. (S B 4, personal communication, April 2012)

The curriculum leader shared,

There were some goals in there regarding graduation requirements. I think that would probably be in there anyway. But the general targets about, you know, Regents performance, graduation percentage, graduation rate percentages, those kinds of things and increasing general overall performance. But they're not specific, I wouldn't say, to accountability... it wasn't OK, we've got this accountability, we're going to build our goals based on accountability. They just... they were general goals and some of the accountability factors might fit into that area. (C L B 4, personal communication, April 2012)

Two administrative pairs (S B 4 and C L B 4; S B 3 and C L B 3) identified similar goals within their district as a result of accountability sanctions. The superintendents (S B 4 and S B 3) believed their districts' accountability status caused them to focus on these goals. Curriculum Leaders (C L B 4 and C L B 3) did not believe the goals had been impacted by their districts'

accountability status. While demonstrating consistent knowledge of the district goals, the superintendents and curriculum leaders had differing interpretations as to the impetus behind the goals.

The superintendent and curriculum leader from the large, urban district facing accountability sanctions in several schools were the exception to this finding. Their responses were more congruent in both identification of similar district goals and changes made to their district goals as a result of accountability. When asked whether or not the district had a document outlining the organization's goals, the superintendent responded,

Sure, it's very simple. It's about one statement. It says all of those students that have been identified by not meeting standards are where we will focus. And those are students with learning disabilities, students of minority and students of English as a second language. Those are our areas that we aren't successful. Those are the areas in graduation rate. It's easy to be proud of your graduation rate in the suburbs where everybody comes with all the resources. If you....if your youngsters aren't making their grade, there's going to be three tutors next week and there's going to be help and there's going to be resources. Whereas in an urban setting where poverty is so overwhelming, that doesn't exist. And so, the frustration of knowing that you have to do with limited resources while you have the greatest challenge, it preys on all of us each day as educators. (S B 1, personal communication, March 2012)

The curriculum leader identified,

The goal is to close the achievement gap with all of those sub groups. Because we have the SWD's who don't make AYP. We have our students of color who don't make AYP. So all of those sub groups, our ELL students in some buildings don't make AYP. So

that's our goal. And I guess you could say one of our main goals which is not written, is to get off these lists we've gotten on. (C L B 1, personal communication, March 2012)

The goal of improving student achievement as a result of the district's accountability status was evident from both the superintendent and curriculum leader in the large urban district.

Each district leader identified goals related to increasing levels of achievement. In most cases, however, district goals were not modified as a result of accountability status, but rather a desire to increase student outcomes was articulated.

Instructional changes made as result of the district's accountability status

Twelve of the twelve interviewed superintendents identified changes that had been made to the instructional programs within their districts. Changes included revamping literacy and math curricula, implementing new benchmark assessments to measure growth, and redesigning Academic Intervention Services (AIS) and special education services to increase student results. Curriculum leaders C L A 1 and C L A 2, both serving in districts where all schools are *In Good Standing*, and neither district having experienced accountability sanctions, both noted the changes were not made as a result of the accountability status, but out of a desire for continuous improvement. Whereas Superintendent S B 1, working in the large, urban district facing accountability sanctions in several schools shared,

Well, I would suggest that mainly we're looking at mostly focusing a good chunk of our time in teaching young people to read. And we know the studies show that if they are not reading by third grade that the chances of graduation drop to about 40%. And we have probably about 40% to 50% of our kids that are reading at level by third grade. So we have to focus on that.....reading, math, reading, math, reading, reading, reading, writing,

math, reading, reading, math. So pretty much, that's been our instructional focus. (S B 1, personal communication, March 2012)

Two superintendents leading districts with schools in accountability sanctions, both of whom also had support from a curriculum leader, shared they had contracted with consultants to provide professional development for teachers in an effort to improve instruction. One of these superintendents noted the need to “create something sustainable” that will last when the consultant leaves. “How do you create something that's accessible all the time?” (S B 3, personal communication, April 2012). A third superintendent within this same category listed several instructional changes the district was in the process of making as a result of their recent identification as a *School In Need of Improvement*. “I think those QIP [Quality Improvement Plans] plans and those review processes have forced us to do a much better job,” (S B 4, personal communication, April 2012).

While all superintendents (twelve of twelve) and curriculum leaders (six of six) identified instructional changes they had made in their districts, administrators in districts facing accountability sanctions were more likely to make instructional changes as a result of their accountability status. This finding supports the work of Elmore (2002) who identified the increased focus on accountability required schools to “engage in systematic, continuous improvement,” (p. 3).

The role of other administrators in instructional changes

Superintendents and curriculum leaders identified how they spend time on instructional leadership and further identified many change initiatives they have undertaken in their districts. Superintendents were asked if there were other administrators in the organization who played a role in the leadership of instructional changes. Twelve of the twelve superintendents identified

the importance of the administrative team in leading instructional changes. *Critical* was the word most often used to describe the role of other administrators, most often principals, within the organization in making changes to respond to accountability. “They have been on the front line with me,” (X A 2, personal communication, February 2012). A superintendent leading a district where all schools were *In Good Standing*, without support from a curriculum leader responded,

The role of the leadership team has been to collaborate on understanding the problem, identifying the problem, understanding facets of the problem, understanding dimensions contributing to the problem, identifying supports, strengths and resources, collaborating with others to make a plan of action, and then supporting the follow through on the action plan. And assisting with the evaluation of our progress. Trouble shooting along the way. (X A 4, personal communication, March 2012)

The two curriculum leaders working in districts where all schools were *In Good Standing* shared,

The leadership team is critical, priority critical and I know there are places where the principals serve as managers and things like that, but that is not how we do business at all. Our principals....for example at the elementary level we had a major reading initiative and actually the principal was hired because of his strong background in scientific you know based reading instruction, and his ability to really mobilize people and resources and you know focus on what kids need for reading. (C L A 2, personal communication, April 2012)

I think that the longer I've been in education, the greater importance I've placed on leadership in terms of things...not only things getting done, but things getting done with

the spirit and intent that we mean, that were trying to bring forward. (C L A 1, personal communication, March 2012)

The role of the administrative team was considered critical in making instructional changes based on each districts' accountability status.

The impact of accountability on the roles of administrators and the administrative structure

The impact of accountability on how time is spent by leaders within the organization extends beyond the role of superintendents and curriculum leaders, also including members of the administrative team. Despite the importance placed on the administrative team by interviewed superintendents and curriculum leaders, the district's accountability status did not impact the administrative structure in all twelve school districts studied for this research. In fact, outside constraints including budget and state and federal mandates placed additional challenges on the roles of administrators and the administrative structure. "It [accountability] hasn't impacted [administrative structure], but moving forward, I think the Reform agenda will make a strong case for me to not diminish the size of my administrative team," (X A 2, personal communication, February 2012). When asked if the district's accountability status impacted the administrative structure, Superintendent S A 2 laughed. "I'm sorry, I laughed, actually there was a decrease," (personal communication, April 2012). Budget constraints required the district to reduce the size of the administrative team.

The superintendent leading a large, urban district under accountability sanctions shared, "We've let go ten administrators...so what's happened is those that are left have a greater burden," (S B 1, personal communication, March 2012). A curriculum leader in a district where

at least one school is identified as SINI stated, “We actually lost an administrator...as of April 1st,” (C L B 2, personal communication, April 2012).

Expanded responsibilities were reported for all administrators in all districts. Specifically, administrators were expected to serve as instructional leaders, initiate change, and respond to increased accountability in spite of diminished budgets.

The impact of accountability on the district’s interface with constituent groups

The manner in which districts interfaced with constituent groups (e.g., community members, parents, teachers, boards of education) was another area of reported change. A superintendent of a district where all schools were *In Good Standing*, with support from a curriculum leader shared several community members were demanding increased results.

We’ve had a few very vocal community members who are really pushing us in terms of results. These community members were saying, “you need to be looking at similar schools and pulling out like a (high-performing school district) which is ranked number one in (another region of) New York. They have similar demographics. Why aren’t you at that same level of 99% on these?” And so at first it was a very threatening discussion to us. And you know, eventually I think at least opened us up to the possibility that we all have areas where we can grow. (S A 1, personal communication, February 2012)

The curriculum leader from this same school district noted

I think the accountability movement along with, you know, different social media have increased the level of involvement, participation, scrutiny, support, of the public in public schools. So I wouldn’t solely attribute the interface between schools and the public and

the different constituent groups to the accountability movement. I think it's one of the pieces that it has contributed to it." (C L A 1, personal communication, March 2012)

Similarly, a superintendent leading a district with all schools *In Good Standing* without support from a curriculum leader shared, "My Board is constantly saying, 'Yeah right, we're great by New York standards, but can we go higher?' 'Is this good enough?' 'Why don't we have more kids going to the Ivies?'" (X A 1, personal communication, February 2012).

In a large, urban district where there are several schools facing a range of accountability sanctions, the superintendent, who had administrative support from a curriculum leader, shared a different experience based on accountability status.

Well, for the most part, the frustration turns out to be that you start to look for a scapegoat. Maybe we can blame the students. Maybe you can blame the parents. Maybe we can blame the teachers. Maybe we can blame the Superintendent. Maybe we can blame the business people. Maybe we can blame the Governor. But the fact of the matter is, in the United States of America, we're all frustrated with our inability to deal with the impact of poverty on education. Now, can...does that mean that all poor kids can't learn? Not at all. It means that raising the bar for some of these youngsters take a lot of different approaches and it takes everybody's effort to try to make it better. Rather than saying, OK it's the teacher or in fact it's the superintendent or in fact it's the parents or in fact it's what it needs to be, is everybody needs to look at it and say okay, what can we do in this part of it. So when you look at the frustration in America of urban setting...in education in urban settings...the same things don't work that work in suburbia. (S B 2, personal communication, March 2012)

A curriculum leader in a large, suburban district, that recently encountered accountability sanctions shared the community has continued to be very supportive.

People were concerned but it hasn't...it hasn't shaken their faith in the institution. I mean we've really talked about it being an opportunity for us to look at, you know, how we can improve our practices for all students and it really hasn't shaken the faith. I think the single biggest group is...and it's better now, but those initial meetings in the fall with the faculty. I mean it was just sad because they do work really hard and they are trying and sometimes they don't really know. And that's what came out. Even some of the specialists don't really know how meet to meet these students' needs. And so you know, trying to say we're all in it together and that they felt guilty for this. And so I think they're the group that really, really, you know, they're being harder on themselves than anybody externally is being. So the stress for them has been tremendous. (C L B 3, personal communication, April 2012)

Accountability drew increased attention from constituent groups on school outcomes, though the reported impact varied based on the accountability status of the school and the length of time within the accountability status. This confirms the work of Farkas et al., (2003), Lashway (2002), and Sherman and Grogan (2003) who reported increased accountability, and associated public scrutiny, has magnified the importance of student outcomes and applied additional pressure to school leaders, particularly superintendents.

(Sub Question) What factors, not including accountability status, influence how superintendents spend their time on instructional leadership?

Superintendents identified a desire to improve student outcomes as the impetus for how they spend time on instructional leadership, regardless of the school's accountability status. "My expectations are that our students need to increase their scores to be competitive with schools in, you know, different demographics, different zip codes," (S B 2, personal communication, February 2012). Another stated,

Well, I think simply because we care about instruction, people are always, always focused on professional development. Our teachers certainly are and so I think our focus would be there anyway because we...everyone is interested in becoming better instructors. Well, I shouldn't say everyone, but lots of people are. Enough that we would be focused in these areas anyway. (X B 1, personal communication, May 2012)

Superintendent X A 3 indicated he would focus on instructional leadership, regardless of the school's accountability status. "It's imbedded in the mission of the school, should be every school, based on some equation of teaching and learning," (personal communication, March 2012). In reference to spending time on instructional leadership, beyond accountability status, the superintendent of a large urban district said, "I think if I don't do it,...these kids are going to be shortchanged," (S B 1, personal communication, March 2012).

Beyond altruistic intentions, other superintendents identified time needed to be spent on instructional leadership to comply with external mandates.

The State has a reform agenda and that's driving a lot of the things we do. Everything we do is about Race to the Top. So...while the accountability is, we've been dealing with that for a long time, particularly with the 3-8 test scores, that has been ratcheted up a few

levels new that we have our own reform agenda that needs to be put in place. (X A 2, personal communication, February 2012)

Superintendent X A 4 reported the time she spends on instructional leadership has increased as a result of the Regents Reform Agenda, regardless of the school or district's accountability designation.

You know, organizing resources for teachers, supervising in classrooms, writing district goals related to instructional leadership, I mean it goes on and on and on. I would probably say 60% of my week and that has increased because of the Regents Reform Agenda. So the increased requirements for the classroom supervision of teachers and also all that's happening with the facilitation of the transition to the Common Core, that...those are all my responsibilities and so that has increased. I always spent a lot of time, but now I am spending even more time. And that's fine with me. That's totally fine with me. (X A 4, personal communication, March 2012)

When not considering the district's accountability status, superintendents identified they spend time on instructional leadership to improve student outcomes and in response to external mandates including the Regents' Reform Agenda, Race to the Top, and the new legislation related to the Annual Professional Performance Review Process (APPR).

(Sub Question) What factors, not including accountability status, influence how curriculum leaders spend their time on instructional leadership?

Similar to the responses from superintendents, curriculum leaders indicated they spend time on instruction to ensure strong student outcomes. Outside of accountability, Curriculum Leader B 3 indicated the superintendent and she had continued to focus on instruction.

I think a big part of the focus on instruction, and I think you'll hear from a lot of our principals like, we spent so much more time in the last 18 months talking about teaching and learning because that's what we're trying to formulate...like this is our priority. Yes, there's the budget and we know the times in which we live; we're not naïve. But really this is why we exist. So I think that has had a huge impact. (C L B 3, personal communication, April 2012)

In a large urban district a curriculum leader stated,

It's the kids, the needy students that we get, that we have to spend much time with for instruction and for curriculum to assure that when they graduate they will be productive citizens and to even assure that they do graduate. So it's that whole humanistic side. What are you here for? Forget about the mandates that exist. What are you here for? Aren't you here to assure that students succeed and that they do well? So that piece alone dictates more work with instruction and curriculum. (C L B 1, personal communication, March 2012)

Curriculum leaders with schools *In Good Standing* identified several initiatives they had led to improve student outcomes. Curriculum Leader A 1 responded, "An overwhelming majority of the work that we've done, we have done without the accountability measures in mind." Referring to the work of implementing Professional Learning Communities, "regardless of outside mandates, that was something that we believed strongly in that was an outstanding vehicle for moving the district forward," (C L A 1, personal communication, March 2012). The school district had also implemented a 21st century learning framework and again the curriculum leader stated "that was more out of a sense of responsibility to student to prepare them for what's

upon us,” (C L A 1, personal communication, March 2012). Curriculum Leader A 2 stated, “It’s always how we can improve.” She outlined a list of technology-focused projects she had worked on including implementation of iPads, enhancements to the science curriculum, and new equipment.

And so while that’s not really part of our state curriculum or our accountability, I think it’s that culture of improvement and innovation that really forces us all, you know, to move forward. I would say that drives me more than accountability or any of those things. (C L A 2, personal communication, April 2012)

Curriculum leaders, like superintendents, identified they spend time on instructional leadership to improve student outcomes regardless of accountability status.

Research Question #3 (Central Question) Is there a difference in the amount of time superintendents in districts rated as *Schools in Good Standing* spend on curriculum and instruction as compared to the amount of time spent by superintendents in districts facing accountability sanctions (rated as *Requiring Academic Progress, In Need of Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring*)?

Superintendents, when asked how much time they spend in a typical week on instructional leadership, reported a wide range of times (Table 7). Responses from two superintendents, both of whom had assistance from curriculum leaders, indicated they spend 20% or less time a week on instructional leadership, with other priorities consuming their time. “It’s not as much as... superintendent as I expected it to be because ...this year much has been dedicated to the budget development process,” (S B 4, personal communication, April 2012). The other superintendent who indicated less than 20% of his time was devoted to instruction

responded, “It certainly depends on the time of year. And so, this time of year, not as much because the budget is all-consuming for me. But typically ... it would probably be a day a week. Not as a whole day, but six-seven hours,” (S A 1, personal communication, February 2012).

The superintendent of a large urban district with support from a curriculum leader, leading a district facing accountability sanctions stated, “I would suggest probably 30%-40% of my time. It’s the Board’s primary goal,” (S B 1, personal communication, March 2012).

Four of the twelve superintendents indicated they spent 50% of their time on instructional leadership (Table 7). One superintendent leading a district where all schools were *In Good Standing* without support from a curriculum leader calculated she spent 60% of her time on instructional leadership.

I spend a lot. Again, because we are so small and because that’s my area of expertise and my preference and also because I view that of all the functions of the superintendent, that is the most critical function. And because I have nobody else to really do it. But in a typical week, on instructional leadership, easily, easily 60% of my week is spent on instructional leadership. Either preparing for professional development, following up on professional development, preparing for faculty meetings which are all professional development kinds of opportunities. You know, organizing resources for teachers, supervising in classroom, writing district goals related to instructional leadership, I mean it goes on and on and on. I would probably say 60% of my week. (X A 4, personal communication, March 2012)

The four remaining superintendents indicated they spent 75% or more of their time on instructional leadership (Table 7). Two superintendents without support from a curriculum

leader, leading districts where all schools are *In Good Standing* shared they spend 80% and 75% of their time, respectively. Two superintendents with support from curriculum leaders, both leading districts facing accountability sanctions shared they spend 90% and “most” of their time in the area of instructional leadership. “I would say 90% of my time is spent, if not more, on instructional leadership. Even if it’s my budget I’m working on, I need to be looking at allocating resources to be the instructional leader. I am in classrooms, I visit both buildings,” (S B 2, personal communication, February 2012). “I think actually, honestly, and I’m proud of this fact; I think I spend most of my time there,” (S B 3, personal communication, April 2012).

Table 7

Percentage of Time Superintendents Reported Spending on Instructional Leadership by Accountability Status and Level of Curriculum Support

	Districts with All Schools <i>In Good Standing</i>	Accountability Sanctions
	% of Time (Identifier)	% of Time (Identifier)
Superintendents with Curriculum Support	15-20% (S A 1)	30-40% (S B 1)
	50% (S A 2)	90% (S B 2)
		Most (S B 3)
		Approximately 20% (S B 4)
Superintendents without Curriculum Support	50% (X A 1)	50% (X B 1)
	80% (X A 2)	50% (X B 2)

75% (X A 3)

60% (X A 4)

The results, when examined between the four categories, do not readily reveal whether superintendents leading districts where all schools are *In Good Standing* as compared to those facing accountability sanctions spend more time on instructional leadership. Similarly, when examining superintendents with support from a curriculum leader as compared to superintendents without support from a curriculum leader, there were no clear distinctions in how much time they reported spending on instructional leadership. Furthermore, in spite of the researcher reading a common definition of instructional leadership at the beginning of each interview, a review of transcript data reveal superintendents classified their work differently, particularly time spent preparing the budget. The superintendents' different interpretations rendered results less reliable and therefore inconclusive. The findings did, however, indicate that most of the superintendents interviewed reported spending considerable time in the area of instructional leadership. This finding confirms the research of Bredeson and Kose (2007) and Jones and Howley (2009) who found superintendents have increasingly moved away from the managerial and political domains of leadership, and spent more time in the area of instructional leadership. The two superintendents who reported spending the least amount of time in the area of instructional leadership, relative to the other superintendents in the study, indicated other demands pull them away from instructional leadership. These other demands, which pull superintendents away from instructional leadership, were reported by Bredeson and Kose (2007) who found many superintendents want to spend more time on curriculum and instruction, though are unable to due to other demands.

Research Question #4 (Central Question) Is there a difference in the amount of time curriculum leaders in districts rated as schools *In Good Standing* spend on curriculum and instruction as compared to the amount of time spent by curriculum leaders in districts facing accountability sanctions (rated as *Requiring Academic Progress, In Need of Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring*)?

The six curriculum leaders, when identifying the amount of time they spent on instructional leadership, ranged from 50% to 80% (Table 8). The two curriculum leaders, both of whom work in districts facing accountability sanction, who identified they spend 50% of their time on instructional leadership cited other work demands as the reason they do not spend more time on instructional leadership. Curriculum Leader B 4 shared,

I'll say it this way...we don't have many layers, so I wear a lot of hats. We have a superintendent and we have an assistant superintendent, and then we have a business manager and then we have our building principals. And in our buildings, we don't have team leaders or department chairs and so many of the things...or human resources...so many of those kinds of responsibilities fall under my roof so to speak. But I will say 50%. (C L B 4, personal communication, April 2012)

The curriculum leader, working in a district where all schools are *In Good Standing*, who identified she spends 80% of her time on instructional leadership also fulfills many roles within the organization.

You know, in my day to day role, as I mentioned it's not just the curriculum piece anymore. In the Special Ed piece while it does encompass a lot of things like, you know, IDEA, you know, the funding sources that come through and managing Medicaid, and

I'm the Title IX compliance officer and the homeless liaison and all those things, and chairing CSE committees. Sometimes it has the feeling like its separate from instruction but really I try to be an instructional leader in every area. So if I'm at a CSE meeting on a fifth grade student for example, I'm interested in knowing what is the least restrictive environment we can create instructionally for that child so that he or she can access the curriculum with whatever combinations they need so that they can be successful and always looking to get back into you know mainstreaming in the regular classroom and helping kids to be independent, as independent as they can. So I really feel like that is also being an instructional leader. Having the highest expectations for kids instructionally and chairing those meetings, I think even though it's focused on a child, I think that you're always modeling high expectations for all kids, you know, you're asking how things are aligned to the curriculum at that grade level. You're asking for evidence of student achievement of a learning standard. So I would say you know, there are some things that I need to do that are not really instructionally based, like completing budget forms and things like that. So I'm going to say 80% of my time would be spent as an instructional leader. (C L A 2, personal communication, April 2012)

Table 8

Percentage of Time Curriculum Leaders Reported Spending on Instructional Leadership by Accountability Status

Districts with All Schools
In Good Standing

Accountability Sanctions

% of Time (Identifier/Interview Date)

% of Time (Identifier/Interview Date)

60% (C L A 1)

75% (C L B 1)

80% (C L A 2)

50% (C L B 2)

60% (C L B 3)

50% (C L B 4)

Curriculum leaders reported a more narrow range of time spent on instructional leadership (50%-80%) than superintendents (approximately 15% - 90%). There was not a clear difference between the percentage of time spent on instructional leadership by curriculum leaders working in districts where all schools were *In Good Standing* as compared to curriculum leaders working in districts facing accountability sanctions. This finding, similar for both superintendents and curriculum leaders, indicated there was not a clear difference between the percentage of time spent on instructional leadership when examined based on levels of administrative support (superintendents only) and accountability status (superintendents and curriculum leaders).

Research Question #5 (Central Question) Is there a difference in how superintendents in districts rated as schools *In Good Standing* spend their time on curriculum and instruction as compared to superintendents in districts facing accountability sanctions (rated as *Requiring Academic Progress, In Need of Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring*)?

Superintendents shared a wide variety of responsibilities and areas of focus in their roles as instructional leaders. Many superintendents identified the need to respond to mandates including Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) and other components of the New York State Regents' Reform Agenda. The researcher traced subtle differences in how

superintendents identified they spend time as a result of their accountability status; however, the differences were not connected to whether the superintendents had support from a curriculum leader. The differences, reported in the next several sections of this chapter, appeared to result from whether the school had previously faced accountability sanctions or whether the student data indicated the school might face accountability sanctions in the future.

How superintendents leading schools *In Good Standing* spend their time on curriculum and instruction

Superintendents leading districts where all schools were *In Good Standing* reported many ways they spend their time on instructional leadership. Four of the six noted they were not impacted by their accountability status and therefore their work often centered on internal initiatives and readying the school district in preparation for external mandates. Their responses are discussed separately below based on whether or not superintendents had support from a curriculum leader.

How superintendent leading schools *In Good Standing* with support from a curriculum leader spend their time on curriculum and instruction.

Superintendent S A 2, who explained,

So they've put a lot of those mandates and so forth, it's just you know, getting them done and letting people understand why you have to get them done. Let them know that it's not just me that's making this happen. It's coming from the state. It's coming from the federal government...So, I think it's strictly run by, you have to have this done by this date. You know the Dignity Act which is coming out. Nobody knows too much about it.

We're supposed to be given some draft samples of it. They're not out but you have to have it in place by July 1, 2012. (S A 2, personal communication, April 2012)

Superintendent S A 1 also mentioned a focus on Race to the Top and APPR related mandates and further shared his work related to a district initiative of developing professional learning communities. "We've really been looking at professional learning communities and how student-centered goals really need to be the focus of what we're doing as leaders," (S A 1, personal communication, February 2012).

Both superintendents leading districts *In Good Standing* with support from a curriculum leader identified a focus on external mandates.

How superintendents leading schools *In Good Standing* without support from a curriculum leader spend their time on curriculum and instruction.

A focus on internal initiatives was evident in the work of Superintendents X A 1 and X A 2.

Over the last two years, we've had a radical shift in the way we're delivering math instruction. So instead of just being skills oriented, we're now talking about conceptual understandings. We're using a lot of manipulatives... So a lot of demonstration of conceptual understanding as opposed to just the skills-based, you know, performance. Also in literacy the same thing. (X A 1, personal communication, February 2012)

Our accountability status is quite strong...Because in districts where you have really fine outcomes, it's really easy to become sort of complacent. And I think it's my job to stir the pot on that so that we don't become complacent. (X A 1, personal communication, February 2012)

I think the biggest change has been in regard to two things. One in regard to literacy. We've spent a lot of time focusing on literacy because if ...we recognize if our kids are better readers they're going to be better writers, they're going to be better mathematicians, they're going to be scientists, so we have a much better reading ... literacy program... The other area that I would say that we've seen a change would be Special Ed. That's probably the one population of kids that we have not seen any growth in test scores. So it forced us to do a Special Ed program audit where we had outsiders come in to take a look at our program and it led to the creation of a district-wide committee that established learner characteristics where we ...instead of now saying we have these programs available to kids, we put the kids where we have programs. Now we're looking at the needs of the kids which drives which kind of programs we have. Which led to a much more flexible, diverse program offering for our kids where they get the supports that they need. And our hope is that over the next three years that translates to test scores. (X A 2, personal communication, February 2012)

Responses from Superintendents X A 3 and X A 4 focused on the need to make changes, despite leading districts where all schools were *In Good Standing*, to avoid accountability sanctions in the future. How these superintendents spent their time indicated an ongoing focus on student achievement. Superintendent X A 3 spoke about "monitoring progress" and the need to improve student outcomes to return to designation as a district where all schools were *In Good Standing*.

When I got here it was a SINI school and I also found out that the principals weren't instructional leaders. They were managers at best. So I had to invest a lot of time, and even if we weren't a SINI school I would have had to spend a lot of time to increase the

skill level and expand the skill set of those two administrators. So it went hand in hand that by investing in building their skills, we were also addressing some of the deficiencies that caused us to become a SINI school. And then at the end of the first year we found out that we were no longer a SINI school on the basis of our tests. (X A 3, personal communication, March 2012)

The same superintendent identified some instructional approaches they took to improve student outcomes.

We put AIS in the day. We reorganized instruction, going from a traditional grade three, grade four, grade five, grade six self-contained to accessing a teacher who is a math-certified teacher...we also engaged in more of an inquiry-based learning and we're piloting that. (X A 3, personal communication, March 2012)

Superintendent X A 4 recognized their students were underperforming. Knowing the district would have faced accountability sanctions if they had more students in the sub-groups led to a specific focus on student achievement.

Our accountability status has not changed. However, it did force me, force us to look more closely at our data in LEP and in Special Ed and I did a reconfiguration of staffing in Special Ed and AIS. And I did a complete staffing change in LEP because we were definitely not getting the results we needed. And I knew that, but I was finally forced to say we just can't continue in this way. So it actually has made a big difference. It's also... no, not accountability status but the data in terms of how our kids have done, are doing. It has really...the data has really forced us to make a lot of programmatic changes

related to services for Special Ed kids and for ESL kids. (X A 4, personal communication, March 2012)

Both Superintendents X A 3 and X A 4 further reported, like many other superintendents, they spend time responding to external mandates including attending meetings to learn about the Race to the Top requirements. “You know, priorities or expectations, mandates, regulations coming from the state, how large the initiatives are,” (X A 4, personal communication, March 2012).

All superintendents in this category identified improvements that had been made under their instructional leadership. The level of specificity in the responses showed some variation between school districts that had always been *In Good Standing* as compared to districts where schools had previously faced accountability sanctions or would have faced accountability sanctions if they had a larger cohort size for a subgroup of students in their district. There was a subtle difference with superintendents leading districts who had previously faced accountability sanctions or would face accountability sanctions given larger sub-groups. In both cases greater specificity for instructional improvements was noted in the responses provided.

How superintendents leading schools in accountability sanctions spend their time on curriculum and instruction

Superintendents leading districts in a range of accountability sanctions spent time responding to external mandates. This finding was similar to the experiences reported by superintendents leading schools *In Good Standing*. Further, as indicated by several superintendents facing accountability sanctions, student achievement was a primary area of focus.

Superintendents leading schools in accountability sanctions with curriculum support

The superintendent of the large, urban district identified that he focuses his time in the area of curriculum and instruction on student outcomes.

Well, student achievement primarily. Because if you're below and you've been cited *Persistently Low Achieving* or your students are not graduating at 75%, your whole focus everyday is how do you make that possible for those students to be successful? It's a different job. The resources that you have are less in urban America and less than in rural America. So you're constantly trying to look at how do you maximize your resources so that these young people come with achievement. Poverty has a systematic impact that it...takes every bit of your work and focus so that you can move those students to where they need to be at grade level. It's an overwhelming advantage to be rich. (S B 1, personal communication, March 2012)

The superintendent of a small urban district also focused on student achievement and the need to increase results. Specifically, she identified the need to focus on mandates and

You know, our SINI schools, special education... a lot of it is dictated by the state and really for us it is poor test scores. To me it's just so obvious that we have to improve in everything from SAT scores to attendance to drop outs. So it is just generated by the demographics of the district that I run. (S B 2, personal communication, February 2012)

Specifically in Superintendent S B 2's district, math coaches and literacy coaches were brought in to provide additional support.

We added...the first time we were a SINI school...an extra reading teacher...we have the common language and the literacy across the curriculum...we now have data meetings where we get subs for half days so teachers can understand their data and can aggregate their data...we're using the same textbook series K-12 in math and ELA. (S B 2, personal communication, February 2012)

Superintendent S B 3 identified specific modifications made within the district he leads, including the addition of staff members, which influenced how he spent his time as an instructional leader.

I viewed the budget season through ...an instructional leadership point of view. And you know, we looked at resources and we made a concerted effort to really to say, okay, these are our resources...rather than just cutting...we redirected...actually we hired some staff...three for ELA, three for mathematics to help transition our folks to the Common Core... we have two additional math specialists... we've hired 1.4 additional reading teachers to provide more intervention K-1, which I think is a wise investment. We ...will be hiring a .6 reading teacher at the junior high school level to deal with some of our SINI needs and our special education needs for our struggling readers in special education... and I think we've tried to do an imbedded, ongoing, sustainable approach to our professional development model to bring the Common Core to life (district name). And you know, again, I think that's pretty much research-proven, research-driven and hopefully it will yield great success when it comes to students' achievement. (S B 3, personal communication, April 2012)

Superintendent S B 4 also spent time focused on student achievement through the examination of baseline data on students.

I spend a lot of time just gathering information now based on how we're doing to see, okay, how are we going to start putting together a plan of action for the future. So data is obviously critical to the entire improvement process. (S B 4, personal communication, April 2012)

The specific focus on student achievement through examination of student data, program needs, professional development needs for staff, and measured through outcomes was evident in the responses from superintendents with curriculum support leading districts where one or more school faced accountability sanctions.

How superintendents leading schools in accountability sanctions without curriculum support spend their time on curriculum and instruction.

The two superintendents leading schools in accountability sanctions without support from a curriculum leader, identified different ways in which they spend time in the area of curriculum and instruction. Superintendent X B 2 identified several internal initiatives and compliance with external mandates which occupied her time on curriculum and instruction.

We're trying to get the APPRs done and we've been very focused...or actually because we were way ahead in RtI that's put us way ahead of many districts in terms of getting the Common Core and the new lessons written and we had focused on technology. So we have NWEA in place for the new APPR already. Actually I think we're very close to getting the APPR written with the teachers. And as soon as we can find the model for the principals we'll probably be able to do that pretty quickly. So for a small district we're

moving pretty well. We've really been focused on differentiated instruction and technology and 21st century skills and moving the Common Core along. But I would say the building principals are critical and I also would say the community has no idea how important the administrators are in their role to move the district ahead. So that's another battle. (X B 2, personal communication, May 2012)

Superintendent X B 1 shared her focus has been on both accountability and many additional responsibilities.

We currently have a middle school that was identified...putting all the resources into making certain changes has been helpful. It's been helpful to have a little extra money coming in from the state enabling us to have some summer school, some tutoring, and professional development. (X B 1, personal communication, May 2012)

Superintendent X B 1 further identified a wide array of responsibilities which impact her daily focus including the amount of time and attention she spends on instructional leadership as compared to other managerial tasks. These other responsibilities include,

Personnel issues, issues with parents, issues with transportation, issues with the building facilities and all of those become important too. So trying to balance that ... as a superintendent there are board issues. There are issues of politics. There are issues with the public. So all of that plays into it. And I think if we don't balance our priorities we can easily as superintendent be drawn away from the core mission of the district. (X B 1, personal communication, May 2012)

This response, from Superintendent X B 1, is supported by the work of Farkas et al., (2003) who identified competing demands that may serve to pull superintendents away from the work of

instructional leadership, toward other roles including managing internal politics and bureaucracy. Jones and Howley (2009) also found time constraints and role overload frequently limited the time available for superintendents to spend on curriculum and instruction, finding instead that superintendents devote the most time to managerial leadership, followed by education (instructional) and then political tasks.

The focus on curriculum and instruction for Superintendent X B 2, leading a district in accountability sanctions without support from a curriculum leader, was more similar to the responses from the four superintendents leading districts in accountability sanctions who did have support from a curriculum leader. These superintendents were more likely to identify specific adjustments, specifically related to curriculum and instructional program modifications, they made within their district to improve student achievement.

While superintendents in all districts identified ways they spend time in their roles as instructional leaders, responses varied in specificity. The most general responses regarding how time was spent on instructional leadership were gleaned from a review of the interview transcripts with the two superintendents leading districts where all schools were *In Good Standing* who also had support from a curriculum leader. Superintendent S A 1 focused on establishing professional learning communities, while Superintendent S A 2 stressed responding to mandates including APPR and Dignity for All Students Act (DASA). They further noted the important leadership role played by their curriculum support administrator.

Superintendents leading districts where all schools were *In Good Standing* without support from a curriculum leader, not only indicated they spend a great percentage of their time on instructional leadership but gave additional examples of how they spent time on instructional

leadership. Responses ranged from program enhancements in two districts, to more targeted interventions in the two districts that had previously faced accountability sanctions or would have if their cohort size was larger.

The greatest level of specificity in the areas of instructional leadership was noted in responses from superintendents who had curriculum support and were leading schools facing accountability sanctions. The responses focused on continuous data review, modifications to the curricular program, and careful examination of student achievement. While Armbruster (2011) noted there was not a major difference in how superintendents leading schools that had achieved AYP spent their time as compared to superintendents leading schools who had not made AYP, this finding was not confirmed in this study. In contrast, interview data did reveal differences in the level of specificity in how superintendents with different accountability status spend their time on curriculum and instruction.

Research Question #6 (Central Question) Is there a difference in how curriculum leaders in districts rated as schools *In Good Standing* spend their time on curriculum and instruction as compared to curriculum leaders in districts facing accountability sanctions (rated as *Requiring Academic Progress, In Need of Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring*)?

Curriculum leaders representing each of the six school districts (two districts where all schools were *In Good Standing* and four districts facing accountability sanctions) clearly articulated specific instructional priorities on which they have focused during this school year. Work related to APPR and the shift to the Common Core Learning Standards were the primary target areas for curriculum leaders in all districts.

How curriculum leaders in districts where all schools are *In Good Standing* spend their time on curriculum and instruction

The two curriculum leaders working in districts where all schools were *In Good Standing* identified a myriad of responsibilities and leadership actions related to curriculum and instruction in which they engaged.

We've been working on a 21st century framework for instruction and that is about, that addresses the themes and skills that we want to incorporate into our instruction to prepare students for 21st century. And so in doing that work, after we were completed with the 21st century framework for learning, we then said that we needed a pathway document that would give teachers guidance in terms of the type of instruction that would serve as a pathway to those themes and skills in the classroom. So as you can see with that type of work and when you're working with a committee, it was...it encompassed a large part of my days; working with committee members, having committee meetings, having follow-up sessions, to build that type of document. At the same time we had, we were moving ahead with Response to Intervention, doing a lot of work with that. Not to mention the APPR work that we've been doing. It's not unique to me. We're all, you know, taking on these responsibilities. And so a large....when there's a lot of state initiatives that you're taking on as well as any initiatives that the district might have. (C L A 1, personal communication, March 2012)

Curriculum Leader A 2 identified many specific initiatives, including analysis of student performance data and innovative curricular content, on which she spends her time.

I would say that the role of the instructional leader is setting up conditions or situations where instruction is a priority. So it's not always standing up there and leading the groups but kind of the behind the scenes work that really does make instruction a priority.... You know, looking at performance over time, and what are the areas I would say curriculum wise, you know, where do we see gaps when we look at our student achievement data? We've done it a few different ways, but essentially we drill down to the skill level. So whether it's the performance indicator level you know, we're a tiny district so we're able to really have everybody involved in that analysis process. And then we look, at you know...what areas did our third graders have trouble with this year? And for ELA it might be, you know, making meaning of an unfamiliar word given the context; like using context clues. So you know we would definitely look at the particular indicator. But then more importantly, we would look at those indicators that show up over time that continue to show up, even with different cohorts of kids. And so when you see multiple groups of kids sort of struggling in the same areas, you know that that's really a curriculum issue. And so we've tried to make changes on that particular indicator, that is one that we are....that was showing up repeatedly as being a problem. So as early as kindergarten we implemented some changes you know whereas teachers are doing some of their lessons in reading with kindergarten, you know, covering up....let's guess the word... So it's really important to the teachers where I work that you know if we're going to give all these tests that we use it and in some way that's meaningful to change what we do with kids. But it's definitely not the be all and end all. And the message from our Superintendent and from our Board of Education is while those things are important and we have a responsibility to look at them for what they're

telling us our kids need and what our kids can do well, more importantly they want to see changes in our instructional program that are not really aligned with accountability.

Things like infusing more STEM opportunities for kids. They want to see nano-science in kindergarten and helping kind of de-mystify some of that for our kids. And really changing our curriculum to be more innovative and more you know timely and things like that. (C L A 2, personal communication, April 2012)

While neither district, nor any schools within the districts faced accountability sanctions, both curriculum leaders identified priorities within their curricular programs to enhance student outcomes. When compared to the superintendents leading these high-performing school districts, it was evident the curriculum leaders were more focused on specific work related to instructional leadership.

How curriculum leaders in districts where schools face accountability sanctions spend their time on curriculum and instruction

Curriculum leaders in districts where schools faced accountability sanctions were also detailed in the description of their work to improve student outcomes. A review of the interview transcripts provided a sense of the wide-range of activities these curriculum leaders performed as instructional leaders.

Curriculum Leader B 1, working in a large, urban district, reported,

Well if the needs of the building...the factors that have...that have increased it (time spent on instructional leadership) to 75% or even more at times is the accountability system...the change to the Common Core. I mean there's work that we have to do because of the fact that we now have different standards. We have Common Core

standards that teachers have to be aware of, have to understand, be able to work with those the six shifts that we have and then fully understand that and infuse all of this into their classroom and the instruction. So all of those accountability factors... All of that outside influence and the fact that we want our teachers to be more successful with our kids. The need for our students, while we're in the accountability areas that we are in now, is because our students are very needy and our structure has needed additional strategies to work with them to differentiate what they do with them. And our students I guess would be number one. (C L B 1, personal communication, March 2012)

The curriculum leader went on to identify her leadership focus on AYP, the performance of sub groups, professional development for teachers, and the use of pre-testing and post-testing to monitor student growth. "We ... have a monitoring role and we have a role of providing help and assistance where necessary," (C L B 1, personal communication, March 2012). Curriculum Leader B 2 noted a wide range of responsibilities in her role. These responsibilities included overseeing administration of state assessments, grant writing, staff development, technology, and data storage.

I'm the CIO for the district. I'm in charge of making sure that we have testing going on in both buildings for all state testing. I'm in charge of developing and executing APPR plans for both principals and teachers. I'm in charge of the mentoring program. I'm in charge of multiple grants, sometimes I write them myself. Sometimes BOCES assists with writing them. I coordinate the activities that go with all those grants and all the paperwork that needs to go with that. I'm in charge of all of the staff development and professional development days that we have. I'm in charge of making sure that all the teachers are approved or not approved to go out to staff development. Let's see...I'm in

charge of the SAVE committee for the health and safety of the district. I'm in charge of all the technology purchasing and making sure that its up and running. And I'm in charge of the three BOCES people that we have coming in to service the ... (computer network) systems that run through BOCES. I'm in charge of eSchool... I'm in charge of.....well I'm trying to think of all of these little things... We spend a lot of time reviewing test scores, K-8 specifically, and pre- and post-tests. So we have a lot of meetings with data. (C L B 2, personal communication, April 2012)

Unlike Curriculum Leader B 2, Curriculum Leader B 3 reported providing leadership more directly aligned with the district's instructional program, presumably due to the fact that the district in which she worked was larger and administrative tasks were distributed among other administrators.

So that's the general curriculum oversight. I'm also in charge of professional development for the district. So I plan...I have the staff development committee, but I oversee the plan and set the guidelines for all of our Superintendent's Conference Days. We are....next year if the budget passes, we are bringing in six instructional coaches. And they will work under my supervision, my direct supervision. They are particularly for the K-6 level since we don't have.....the higher up you go here, kind of the more intense supervision you have subject specific. So they'll work directly under me. So I have all....an amazing amount of general oversight. (C L B 3, personal communication, April 2012).

She further identified specific work related to how she spends her time on instructional leadership related to programmatic enhancements and alignment.

Because we have a couple of elementary schools who could have been in trouble they just didn't have as many students in their Special Ed cohort. So we really needed to get that information out. So I think what we did was after we spent our time at the junior high making sure we hit all those deadlines, then we started moving into a process where we were looking at what was going on in our elementary buildings to be more proactive. And I think our elementary principals.... were very concerned about, OK but we're feeding those kids to you. So where are they, where do they begin? So also looking at....we've put together a group of teachers and administrators to look at our 5-8., even though we don't have a 5-8 structure, to look at sort of the upper end of the elementary and look at how that's feeding into the junior high, and increasing their articulation. Because the articulation was really, really not what it should have been. (C L B 3, personal communication, April 2012).

State mandates, including the shift of the Common Core and APPR, were an area of focus for Curriculum Leader B 4.

At the same time we're engaging and embarking in this direction with the APPR, we're shifting to the Common Core. So now we're trying to come up with testing opportunities for APPR but we also have to do this curriculum work over here with less money... I do meet regularly with the inquiry teams and with the building principals. ... We do a lot of our professional development... We have teachers in the field that are experts in a particular area and they conduct workshops on whatever it be, literacy centers or whatever particular aspect. (C L B 4, personal communication, April 2012)

The responsibilities, tasks, and discreet actions identified by all six curriculum leaders in the area of curriculum and instruction were illustrative of how these leaders spend their time in

the domain of instructional leadership. Each described specific examples of curriculum related efforts they guided within their districts. While the work of the curriculum leaders in districts facing accountability sanctions was often tied directly to plans created as a result of their accountability status, the two curriculum leaders in districts where all schools were *In Good Standing* were also highly specific about their work and described a clear link between how they spent their time on instructional leadership and the intended outcome of increased student achievement.

Summary of Data Analysis and Key Findings

The researcher sought to determine the impact of accountability on the total time spent by superintendents in this study and how time was spent by superintendents in the domain of instructional leadership. The researcher also sought to identify differences between superintendents with support from a curriculum leader and those without support from curriculum leaders. Superintendents and curriculum leaders were interviewed who represented a range of accountability designations under NCLB. The research yielded several findings.

Most apparent was that in all cases, superintendents perceived themselves to be instructional leaders. This was evident throughout all of the interview responses. Each superintendent identified work being done within their district to enhance the instructional program and improve student outcomes.

A comparison of responses from superintendents leading school districts with varying accountability status and superintendents both with and without support from a curriculum leader allowed the researcher to draw conclusions based on the context within which these superintendents worked. Superintendents without curriculum leaders were more likely to identify specific instructional leadership actions they performed within their district. The

absence of a curriculum leader required these superintendents to assume greater responsibility for the instructional programs within their districts.

Superintendents leading schools *In Good Standing* had mixed reactions to the impact of accountability on the time they spent on instructional leadership. In cases where the districts had always been *In Good Standing* and student performance was considered to be high when compared to other districts, NCLB seemed to have less impact on the role of superintendents. In districts where sub-groups of students were close to not making AYP, superintendents were more likely to indicate NCLB impacted the amount of time they spent on instructional leadership as they worked to avoid accountability sanctions.

Superintendents leading schools facing accountability sanctions, with support from a curriculum leader, indicated that the district's accountability status increased the amount of time they spent on instructional leadership. Leading the district to improved levels of student performance became a priority for many of these superintendents causing a shift in how they spent their time. The support of the curriculum leader was important, though the superintendents themselves also prioritized spending time on improvements to the instructional programs.

Where superintendents did not believe they had increased the time they spent on instructional leadership as a result of their accountability status was in districts facing accountability sanctions, without support from a curriculum leader. These superintendents had mixed reactions about the impact of accountability and believed they would have made improvements to the areas where they faced accountability sanctions regardless of their accountability status. One superintendent specifically identified her desire to have more administrative support so she could devote more time to instructional leadership.

All superintendents identified other professional responsibilities as keeping them from spending additional time in the area of instructional leadership. Managerial responsibilities, implementation of federal and state mandates, and the development of the school district budget were often cited as areas in which superintendents spent time unrelated to instructional leadership.

The Impact of Accountability on District Goals

Superintendents leading schools where one or more school was facing accountability sanctions reported that they were more likely to adjust their organizational goals and make instructional changes based on student data. The need for these superintendents to respond to the underperformance of students drove specific modifications within their districts. Increased focus on literacy and math instruction was a common theme as was a systematic review of student performance data. While all district leaders were able to identify organizational goals, the superintendents leading districts facing accountability sanctions revised their goals in an effort to increase student performance as a result of their districts' accountability. Superintendents leading districts not facing accountability sanctions were less likely to have made changes to their district goals.

All Superintendents and Curriculum Leaders Made Instructional Changes within Their Districts

All superintendents and curriculum leaders identified changes made to their instructional programs. For superintendents and curriculum leaders in districts *In Good Standing*, changes were made to the instructional program in order to promote continuous improvement. Superintendents and curriculum leaders in all districts, regardless of accountability status,

identified continuous improvement of student achievement and response to external mandates as the impetus for change.

The Role of the Administrative Team in Instructional Leadership

Superintendents leading schools *In Good Standing* with curriculum leaders identified their curriculum leaders as instrumental in leading instructional changes. Superintendents and curriculum leaders were not the only professionals leading change efforts in their districts, however. All superintendents and curriculum leaders in this study identified the role of the administrative team as critical in making instructional changes. In all districts in the study it was apparent that members of the administrative team were expected to serve as instructional leaders, initiate change, and respond to increased accountability.

Impact of Accountability on the Administrative Structure

Despite the impact of accountability in many districts, particularly those facing accountability sanctions, and the expectation that all administrators serve as instructional leaders, no changes were made to the administrative structure in any of the districts in this study as a result of the districts' accountability status. Where superintendents may have wanted to increase or at a minimum retain their administrative team, serious budget shortfalls in many districts led to the reduction of administrators.

Consistent Review of Student Performance Data

In addition to the focus on student outcomes, superintendents and curriculum leaders indicated they reviewed student performance data as a result of NCLB accountability. The close scrutiny of data drove instructional changes, where needed. While all leaders in the study

indicated they reviewed student data, districts that currently or previously had faced accountability sanctions were more likely to cite specific changes made to the instructional program as a result of their use of data. These targeted interventions were made to address faltering student performance and as stated by one curriculum leader to “get off all those lists we’ve gotten on.”

No Noticeable Difference Reported in Time Spent on Instructional Leadership

Additionally, the researcher sought to identify whether there was a difference in the amount of time superintendents and curriculum leaders working in different settings spent on instructional leadership. The researcher did not find a noticeable difference in the amount of time:

- superintendents with curriculum leaders spent on instructional leadership as compared to superintendents without curriculum leaders;
- superintendents leading districts where all schools were *In Good Standing* spent on instructional leadership as compared to superintendents leading districts facing accountability sanctions; and
- curriculum leaders in districts where all schools were *In Good Standing* spent on instructional leadership as compared to curriculum leaders in districts facing accountability sanctions.

Differences in How Time was Spent on Instructional Leadership

While the amount of time spent on instructional leadership was not noticeably different between the various categories, differences were identified in how superintendents spent their time. These differences varied according to context of their work environment. Superintendents

without curriculum leaders, regardless of their accountability status, were more specific in their identification of how they spent time in the area of instructional leadership than superintendents leading schools *In Good Standing* who had curriculum leaders. Presumably this difference was due to the fact these superintendents were not able to delegate instructional leadership to a curriculum leader and therefore were responsible for leading change initiatives within their districts.

Superintendents leading schools facing accountability sanctions who had curriculum leaders were highly specific about how they spent their time on instructional leadership, as compared to all other groups in this study. Responses from these superintendents were focused specifically on change efforts and moving the district to improved levels of student achievement. These superintendents stressed updates and enhancements to district curriculum and the ongoing review of achievement data as areas of focus. Superintendents facing accountability sanctions, with administrative support from a curriculum leader, were the most substantially impacted by accountability when compared to the other groups examined in this study.

The importance of instructional leadership and the ongoing review of student performance data were evident in all interviews. The relative importance of instructional leadership as compared to the managerial and political domains of leadership was also identified by the researcher in a majority of the responses from superintendents. Further, superintendents leading districts with schools in or near accountability sanctions identified specific areas of focus placed on improving student achievement, revealing a heightened sense of urgency as a result of the potential sanctions. This finding is supported by the Rueter (2009) and Russell and Sloan McCombs (2006) studies who reported accountability measures have served as a major impetus for superintendents to focus on student achievement and instructional leadership. Where this did

not appear to be the case (Superintendent X B 1), role overload and competing demands were noted, which is supported by the work of Farkas et al., (2003) and Jones and Howley (2009).

There were some differences noted in the responses from superintendents leading districts where all schools were *In Good Standing*, based on whether or not they had support from a curriculum leader. Superintendents without curriculum support were more specific in responding to changes made to their instructional program, whereas superintendents with curriculum support tended to provide more generalized responses and identified the importance of the curriculum leader in spearheading the instructional leadership within the district. Curriculum leaders in all districts of this study focused extensively on their roles as instructional leaders.

The researcher will outline conclusions drawn from the research study, based on the key findings, and provide recommendations for both system level leaders and policy makers in the next chapter. Recommendations for future areas of study will also be detailed in the fifth chapter.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides a general summary of the research study followed by conclusions drawn from the study. These conclusions will be placed in the context of existing literature as reported on this topic. Further, the researcher will outline recommendations for system leaders, policy makers, and suggested areas for future research.

The purpose of this qualitative comparison study was to explore the change in the use of time for instructional leadership as a result of a school district's accountability status under NCLB by superintendents with instructional support and those without instructional support. Twelve superintendents and six curriculum leaders representing districts with varying ranges of accountability status were interviewed. Research questions were developed by the researcher to clearly define the specific areas of study.

A review of previous research on the work of superintendents identified three domains in which superintendents focused their time: managerial, political, and instructional. A growing body of research indicated superintendents, in their role as an instructional leader, positively impact organizational outcomes (Elmore, 2002; Leithwood, Harris, & Strauss, 2010; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). Further, the impact of increased accountability under NCLB provided an additional impetus for superintendents to concentrate time spent in the area of instructional leadership to improve student achievement (Bredeson & Kose, 2007; Jones & Howley, 2009).

Conclusions

Several conclusions can be drawn regarding the impact of accountability as it related to how much time superintendents spent time on instructional leadership and how superintendents spent on instructional leadership. Superintendents and curriculum leaders in all districts of this study

viewed themselves as instructional leaders and identified spending a considerable amount of time in the area of instructional leadership. They cited the need to continuously improve student results as the reason for this expenditure of time. The importance of instructional leadership was noted in all interview responses.

This conclusion is consistent with previous studies of superintendents in their work as instructional leaders. Crowson and Glass (1991) noted the role of superintendents has evolved over time in response to external changes. Rueter (2009) and Russell & Sloan McCombs (2006) found that NCLB and the impact of public accountability has encouraged superintendents to focus on student achievement and instructional leadership. These changes have increasingly shifted the role of superintendent as manager toward the role of instructional leader.

The importance of instructional leadership was a primary theme in responses from superintendents throughout the research process. Lashway (2002) identified the need for superintendents to prioritize instruction over managerial and political aspects of the job, though all three roles should be aligned with continuous instructional improvement. Superintendents have increasingly expanded the time they spend overseeing the instructional programs within their school districts (Bredeson & Kose, 2007; Jones & Howley, 2009). Increased accountability and the associated public scrutiny has magnified the importance of student outcomes and applied additional pressure to school leaders, particularly superintendents (Farkas et al., 2003; Lashway, 2002; Sherman & Grogan, 2003). It was evident through the analysis of data reported in this study that superintendents saw instructional leadership as an important component of their job and considered themselves to be instructional leaders. Further, accountability under NCLB, placed additional pressure on superintendents leading districts where schools faced accountability sanctions or were close to facing accountability sanctions. These superintendents

were more like to modify their programs and goals as a result of their district's accountability status. In all cases, superintendents, regardless of accountability status, indicated concern related to student outcomes.

Each district leader readily identified adjustments made within their school system focused on improving student outcomes. This conclusion confirms that the work of school leaders, particularly superintendents, has intensified as a result of the accountability movement, increasingly focusing on higher levels of achievement (Cuban, 2001; Farkas et al., 2003; Lashway, 2002; Sherman & Grogan, 2003). As documented by Bredeson and Kose (2007), the impact of NCLB on the field of education was considerable. Public school systems moved away from the traditional version of accountability, which provided students with a good instructional program and instead carefully examined not only instruction, but student learning outcomes.

The researcher in this study concluded a focus on data, particularly for the purposes of improving student achievement, was evident in all districts. This emphasis on the use of data to improve student achievement, while noted in all districts, was most noticeable where superintendents and curriculum leaders faced accountability sanctions. A heightened sense of awareness and desire to make necessary instructional improvements was revealed in the analysis of responses from superintendents and curriculum leaders who faced accountability sanctions. As reported by Englert, Fries, Goodwin, and Martin-Glenn (2003); Englert, Fries, Martin-Glenn, and Douglas (2007); and Leithwood, Harris, and Strauss (2010), NCLB influenced how school leaders analyzed curriculum, assessment, and accountability placing increased emphasis on the use of data to adjust curricula to meet higher levels of student performance.

All district leaders in this study were able to identify organizational goals, though superintendents leading schools where one or more school was facing accountability sanctions were more likely to adjust their organizational goals based on student data. Interview responses indicated superintendents were motivated by the need to improve outcomes. Sherman and Grogan (2003) had identified the importance of superintendents identifying goals worthy of the expenditure of time, while Waters and Marzano (2006) reported effective superintendents focus their efforts on goals including, “monitoring district progress toward achievement and instructional goals to ensure that these goals remain the driving force behind a district’s actions,” (p. 4).

There was not a noticeable difference in the amount of time superintendents reported spending on instructional leadership, regardless of whether or not they had support from a curriculum leader or faced accountability sanctions. Superintendents leading districts facing accountability sanctions with support from a curriculum leader, however, did believe their accountability status caused an increase in the amount of time they spent on instructional leadership. There was also not a noticeable difference in how much time curriculum leaders spent on instructional leadership when examined based on whether their districts faced accountability sanctions.

While there was not a noticeable difference in the amount of time superintendents reported spending on instructional leadership between the four distinct groups of superintendents: (a) Superintendents without curriculum support leading districts where all schools are *In Good Standing*, (b) Superintendents with curriculum support leading districts where all schools are *In Good Standing*, (c) Superintendents without curriculum support leading districts where one or more schools face accountability sanctions, and (d) Superintendents with curriculum support

leading districts where one or more schools face accountability sanctions, the prominent role of instructional leadership was evident, as was the considerable expenditure of time in the area of instructional leadership for most superintendents and curriculum leaders. This allocation of time, albeit self-reported, appears to support the work of Bredeson and Kose (2007) who reported the era of accountability has increased the stakes for schools and school leaders, which has led to superintendents spending a greater amount of their time in the area of instructional leadership.

While the time reportedly spent on instructional leadership was not noticeably different, when examined based on the four categories of superintendents in this study, how superintendents spent their time on instructional leadership changed based on the context within which they worked. Greater specificity in how superintendents spent time in the area of instructional leadership was apparent in schools facing accountability sanctions. These superintendents were able to identify extensive lists of work they had undertaken to enhance instructional programs within the district. In districts where superintendents had mixed views of the impact of accountability (no curriculum support and facing accountability sanctions) the superintendents were able to clearly outline specific actions they took as instructional leaders to improve outcomes. The superintendents leading districts *In Good Standing*, with support from a curriculum leader, were more likely to rely on their curriculum leaders to lead instructional changes sharing more broad responses to instructional improvements made within their districts.

The level of specificity found in schools facing accountability sanctions was identified by Elmore (2002) who reported accountability would require schools to go beyond examination of aggregate performance. The accountability movement required deeper examination of outcomes by focusing on the performance of under-served students in subgroups including students with disabilities, English language learners, and economically-disadvantaged students, in an effort to

ensure all students have equal opportunity for learning with high expectations for all students (Elmore, 2002). This study appears to support Elmore's (2002) beliefs about accountability, particularly in schools facing accountability sanctions, schools close to accountability sanctions, and schools recently released from accountability sanctions.

These conclusions are in contrast to the research of Armbruster (2011) who did not note major differences in how superintendents leading schools that had achieved AYP in Virginia spend their time as compared to superintendents leading schools who had not made AYP. Differences in the implementation of accountability state by state may, however, have impacted both Armbruster's (2011) study and this research study, rendering it difficult to draw a direct comparison.

Superintendents identified other professional responsibilities that kept them from spending more time on instructional leadership. The need for compliance with mandates and the demands of developing the district's budget were commonly identified, as were the need to provide managerial oversight to the district and work with Board of Education members. Role overload and competing demands often appeared in literature as the reason superintendents did not spend additional time in the area of instruction (Jones & Howley, 2009). This was especially apparent for the two superintendents facing accountability sanctions who did not have support from a curriculum leader.

Some superintendents without curriculum leaders noted they would have liked to add administrative support in the form of a curriculum leader. Other superintendents lamented reductions to their administrative team over the past few years as a result of budget shortfalls. While the researcher did not seek to determine how many superintendents would have added to

or modified their administrative structure, given the opportunity, the research of Bredeson and Kose (2007) indicated many superintendents have the desire to add administrative support in the area of curriculum and instruction.

Accountability has increased the focus on student achievement in all districts in this study. While there have been many criticisms of NCLB and the accountability movement in general, many leaders facing accountability sanctions who also had support from a curriculum leader, identified positive outcomes of NCLB, specifically the close scrutiny of programs and the development of plans to address deficiencies.

Accountability placed greater emphasis on student outcomes and required superintendents to prioritize their role as instructional leaders in this study. While the findings from this study did not reveal considerable differences in the amount of time superintendents spend on instructional leadership based on their context, the researcher noted the relative importance of instructional leadership in all districts. Further, the data showed accountability status impacted how superintendents spend time on instructional leadership. Superintendents in districts facing accountability sanctions with support from a curriculum leader identified highly specific plans for instructional improvements. All superintendents, regardless of the context in which they worked, identified instructional improvements they were making to increase outcomes.

Recommendations

The findings and conclusions from this research study provide the opportunity to make recommendations to system leaders and policy makers. Recommendations will also include areas for future study.

Recommendations for System Level Leaders

Superintendents interviewed for this study reportedly prioritized instructional leadership. Recognizing the importance of spending time on instructional leadership to increase student achievement, close monitoring of the real and actual allocation of time is important. System level leaders are encouraged to monitor the actual allocation of their time between the managerial, political, and instructional domains. Based on this monitoring, system level leaders are encouraged to evaluate their expenditure of time on a weekly basis. If leaders find a disproportionate amount of their time has been spent in the managerial or political domains of leadership, they are encouraged to consider ways they may reallocate their time to spend more time on instructional leadership. Absent this monitoring and potential reallocation of time, the goal of enhancing student learning outcomes is less likely to be realized.

System leaders working in high-performing districts are encouraged to identify specific targets for the achievement of all students, with a focus on sub-groups. While the accountability movement sought to ensure all students demonstrated grade level proficiency and this benchmark has been achieved where districts are *In Good Standing*, there are students in these schools who fall below grade level proficiency. While these students may not cause the school to lapse into accountability sanctions, these students are also in need of highly-specialized interventions. Additionally, high-performing districts can examine aspirational goals, college and career readiness, and the infusion of 21st century skills into program throughout their districts.

Superintendents leading districts facing accountability sanctions are encouraged to work with lawmakers and community agencies to address the role of poverty in many academic achievement deficiencies. Data from two superintendents leading districts facing accountability

sanctions indicated their students needed more fundamental skill development coming from impoverished backgrounds. As schools, they had the added responsibility of eradicating the gaps in student achievement faced by many students in poverty that would not be faced by their suburban counterparts. While these leaders should continue to design enhancements to the educational program to boost levels of achievement, the causes of the achievement gap are systemic and difficult to completely eradicate with good instructional practice alone. Superintendents and policy makers alike are encouraged to seek additional supports for families and students outside of the school day, specifically focusing on additional academic interventions, but also including nutrition and health care.

Recommendations for Policy Leaders

Policy leaders, through their support of NCLB, have influenced the manner in which schools prioritize student achievement. No longer are inputs, such as the isolated act of teaching, the sole focus of schools. As a result of the achievement-based accountability system, schools expect outcomes in the form of student learning and when they are lacking, modify the instructional program. Policy makers must prioritize educational expenditures in recognition of the critical importance of student achievement for the future success of our country and in knowing the role instructional leadership plays in increasing student outcomes. As revealed throughout this research, budget shortfalls and reductions in administrative staff were realities. Given the pivotal role of administrators as instructional leaders, most school districts will continue to struggle to move instructional change efforts forward without the support of a fully staffed administrative team.

Further, schools facing accountability sanctions that lack assistance from a curriculum leader require additional supports. Greater access to regional networks through the Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) or shared administrative services would benefit small schools with limited resources, enabling them to capitalize on the hidden benefits of accountability sanctions as the impetus for organizational change. This would also help to mitigate the obvious role overload for superintendents who lack curriculum support when faced with the challenge of leading a district facing accountability sanctions.

Policy makers are further encouraged to focus on student growth, rather than solely on academic outcomes. Accountability systems designed to measure student growth would help equalize the expectations placed on schools. Regardless of the wealth, location, or existing levels of student performance, a model of accountability focused on student growth would require all schools to enhance student outcomes. NCLB accountability focused on academic outcomes, requiring all schools to meet proficiency benchmarks. This system did not provide adequate opportunity for districts where student performance fell short of proficiency to receive any recognition despite the fact their students may have made above-average progress in a given year. Similarly, districts with large concentrations of high-performing students could meet the proficiency benchmarks without students demonstrating adequate growth.

As found in this study, increases in student achievement in districts where all schools were *In Good Standing*, have been driven by highly-motivated leaders and staff and/or community pressure and expectations. A more balanced system of accountability, focused on student growth, would positively reinforce above-average growth in under-performing districts while simultaneously requiring high-performing districts to continue to modernize their programs to attain even higher outcomes.

Recommendations for Future Research

While the researcher sought to identify the impact of accountability on the time superintendents spent on instructional leadership based on contextual differences, all data relative to time were self-reported from the interview participants. While much of the details they provided served to substantiate their self-reported expenditures of time, future research which could triangulate self-reported data with observation by the researcher and paired with a review of actual work in the form of a case study would help to confirm the work presented in this study.

It would be important to note if and how accountability sanctions impact the long-term behaviors of superintendents. A study of districts released from accountability sanctions as compared to districts still facing accountability sanctions may serve to identify the lasting impact of accountability sanctions on how much time superintendents dedicate to instructional leadership and further, how they actually spend their time.

The data from this study were drawn from a sample of eighteen superintendents and curriculum leaders. Due to the small sample size, future research which includes a greater number of superintendents in the study may help to confirm these findings. Additionally, the reauthorization of NCLB and the subsequent waivers granted to states, including New York State, provides the opportunity to examine time spent on instructional leadership under NCLB as compared to time spent under the new system of accountability.

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Appendix A
Sampling Method/Interview Matrix

<i>Superintendent Sampling Method</i>	<u>Accountability Status:</u> All schools in district identified as <i>In Good Standing</i>	<u>Accountability Status:</u> One or more schools in district identified as <i>Requiring Academic Progress, In Need of Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring</i>
Superintendents with Curriculum Support	<u>List District Pseudonyms</u> 1. 2. 3.	<u>List District Pseudonyms</u> 1. 2. 3.
Superintendents without Curriculum Support	<u>List District Pseudonyms</u> 1. 2. 3.	<u>List District Pseudonyms</u> 1. 2. 3.

<i>Curriculum Leader Sampling Method</i>	<u>Accountability Status:</u> All schools in district identified as <i>In Good Standing</i>	<u>Accountability Status:</u> One or more schools in district identified as <i>Requiring Academic Progress, In Need of Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring</i>
Curriculum Leaders	<u>List District Pseudonyms</u> 1. 2. 3.	<u>List District Pseudonyms</u> 1. 2. 3.

Appendix B

Letter to Potential Participants

Dear

You are being asked to voluntarily participate in a doctoral research project on the impact of a school's accountability status on the time and manner in which superintendents address instructional leadership. The research is being conducted under the guidance of Dr. Ray O'Connell, Associate Professor of Education in the Educational Leadership Program at the Sage Colleges. The researcher is Elizabeth Wood Pustolka, a doctoral candidate in the program. This project is funded solely by the researcher.

The purpose of this qualitative study is to determine whether a school district's accountability status impacts the amount of time devoted to curriculum and instruction and the way that time is used. The primary method of inquiry will be interviews with superintendents and curriculum leaders in New York State. The data collected will be used to examine the impact a school's accountability status has on the use of administrative time dedicated to curriculum and instruction.

Sharing how you use your instructional leadership time will be a valuable contribution to the field of educational leadership. The interview will take approximately forty-five minutes, may be conducted by phone or in-person, and will be scheduled at a mutually convenient time. With your consent, I will audio record each interview, have the interview transcribed, and ask that you review the transcript for accuracy and content. This study is confidential and names of administrators and school districts will not be used in the recording and reporting of the data. Any identifying data will be deleted. To maintain confidentiality, the data will be stored on a password protected computer and all data, including the audio recording, will be destroyed after the doctoral research study is complete. For these reasons, participation in the study poses minimal risk.

Please review the attached document regarding informed consent. If you are willing to participate in this study or have any questions regarding the nature or scope of this research, please feel free to contact me at 518.694.6171 cell, 518.881.6000 work or woodeliz@shenet.org.

I hope you will consider participating in this research. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Wood Pustolka

Appendix C

Interview Confirmation Letter (sent with informed consent)

This letter is to confirm your participation in research is being conducted by Elizabeth Wood Pustolka, under the guidance of Dr. Ray O'Connell, Associate Professor of Education in the Leadership Program at the Sage Colleges.

The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of a school's accountability status on the time superintendents spend on instructional leadership.

Thank you for agreeing to be part of the study. Please review the Informed Consent Form (enclosed/attached), ask any questions you may have, sign and return the form to the researcher, prior to the interview.

Our interview is scheduled for:

Date	Location	Time
mm/dd/yyyy	In Person: _____ (Address) By Phone: _____ (Phone Number)	__ : __ am/pm

With gratitude,

Elizabeth Wood Pustolka
Doctoral Candidate
Sage Graduate College

Appendix D

Comparative Chart - Research Questions and Corresponding Interview Questions

<u>Research Question</u>	<u>Interview Questions</u>
Warm-up Question/Demographic Information	<p>How long have you served as superintendent/curriculum leader in the school district?</p> <p>What other positions have you recently held in administration?</p> <p>What is your role in the instructional leadership of the district?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><u>Probes:</u> Are there specific tasks you perform in your role as instructional leader? (If yes, what?)</p> <p>Are there others within the organization who also provide instructional leadership? How?</p>
<p>(Central Question)</p> <p>Have superintendents and curriculum leaders changed the amount of time they spend on instructional leadership as a result of federal and state accountability measures?</p>	<p>Has your school district's accountability status had an effect on the amount of time you spend on instructional leadership? If yes, in what way? If no, why?</p> <p>How much time do you spend on instructional leadership in a typical week?</p>
<p>(Sub Question)</p> <p>What factors, not including accountability status, influence how much time superintendents spend on instructional leadership?</p>	<p>Are there factors, not including accountability status, that impact the amount of time you spend on instructional leadership? If yes, would you please share specific examples?</p>
<p>(Sub Question)</p> <p>What factors, not including accountability status, influence how much time curriculum leaders spend on instructional leadership?</p>	<p>Are there factors, not including accountability status, that impact the amount of time you spend on instructional leadership? If yes, would you please share specific examples?</p>

<p>(Central Question)</p> <p>Have superintendents and curriculum leaders changed how they spend time on instructional leadership as a result of federal and state accountability measures?</p>	<p>What impact, if any, has increased accountability had on your role as an instructional leader?</p> <p>Do you have a document which outlines your organization's goals for this school-year? Were any changes made to the document as a result of your district's accountability status?</p> <p>What instructional changes have been made as a result of the district's accountability status?</p> <p>What has been the role of the administrative leadership team in these changes?</p> <p>What impact has increased accountability or the district's accountability status had on the district's administrative structure?</p> <p><u>Probes:</u> Are there specific changes you have made as a result of your school's accountability status? If yes, please describe. If no, why?</p> <p>How has your school's accountability status under NCLB had an impact on your interfacing with constituent groups? (Ask specifically about administrators, teachers, parents, students, Board of Education and community at-large.)</p>
<p>(Sub Question)</p> <p>What factors, not including accountability status, influence how superintendents spend their time on instructional leadership?</p>	<p>Are there factors, not including accountability status, that impact the amount of time you spend on instructional leadership? If yes, please explain.</p>
<p>(Sub Question)</p> <p>What factors, not including accountability status, influence how curriculum leaders spend their time on</p>	<p>Are there factors, not including accountability status, that impact the amount of time you spend on instructional leadership? If yes, please</p>

<p>instructional leadership?</p>	<p>explain.</p>
<p>(Central Question)</p> <p>Is there a difference in the amount of time superintendents in districts rated as <i>Schools in Good Standing</i> spend on curriculum and instruction as compared to the amount of time spent by superintendents in districts rated as <i>Requiring Academic Progress, In Need of Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring</i>?</p>	<p><i>Analysis of answers from superintendents serving in districts with schools in Good Standing as compared to the answers from superintendents serving in districts with schools Requiring Academic Progress, In Need of Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring.</i></p>
<p>(Central Question)</p> <p>Is there a difference in the amount of time curriculum leaders in districts rated as <i>Schools in Good Standing</i> spend on curriculum and instruction as compared to the amount of time spent by curriculum leaders in districts rated as <i>Requiring Academic Progress, In Need of Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring</i>?</p>	<p><i>Analysis of answers from curriculum leaders serving in districts with schools in Good Standing as compared to the answers from curriculum leaders serving in districts with schools Requiring Academic Progress, In Need of Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring.</i></p>
<p>(Central Question)</p> <p>Is there a difference in how superintendents in districts rated as <i>Schools in Good Standing</i> spend their time on curriculum and instruction as compared to superintendents in districts rated as <i>Requiring Academic Progress, In Need of Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring</i>?</p>	<p><i>Analysis of answers from superintendents serving in districts with schools in Good Standing as compared to the answers from superintendents serving in districts with schools Requiring Academic Progress, In Need of Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring.</i></p>
<p>(Central Question)</p> <p>Is there a difference in how curriculum leaders in districts rated as <i>Schools in Good Standing</i> spend their time on curriculum and instruction as compared to curriculum leaders in districts rated as <i>Requiring Academic Progress, In Need of Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring</i>?</p>	<p><i>Analysis of answers from curriculum leaders serving in districts with schools in Good Standing as compared to the answers from curriculum leaders serving in districts with schools Requiring Academic Progress, In Need of Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring.</i></p>

Appendix E

Interview Protocols

Project: Instructional Leadership: The Role of Increased Accountability on the Use Time by New York State Superintendents

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Pseudonym of Interviewee:

Position of Interviewee: Superintendent Curriculum Leader (circle one)

Review with Sampled Administrators:

- ✓ Thank administrator for willingness to participate in this study.
- ✓ The purpose of this study is to examine changes in the amount of time superintendents and curriculum leaders spend on instructional leadership as a result of their school's accountability status. Twelve superintendents and six curriculum leaders will be interviewed for the study.
- ✓ Data collected will be stored on a password-protected computer. The transcriptionist has signed a confidentiality agreement.
- ✓ At the conclusion of the doctoral study, all notes will be shredded, audio-recordings destroyed, and data files on the computer will be deleted and further removed from the recycling bin.
- ✓ Data will be reported confidentially through the use of pseudonyms.
- ✓ Prior to the interview, the participant read and signed the Interview Consent Form.
- ✓ The participant has the right to withdraw from participation in the study at any time.

Nature of the Interview:

- ✓ Interview will last approximately 45 minutes.
- ✓ Remind the participant the interview will be audio-recorded. The participant will have the opportunity to review responses for accuracy.
- ✓ (Turn on the audio-recorder and test it)

Ask Interview Questions (and probes, as needed):

At the close of the interview:

- ✓ Thank the interview participant
- ✓ Remind the participant that he/she will receive a copy of the transcript to verify the accuracy and clarity of responses Interviewees will be given one week to check the transcript for accuracy. A lack of response will be interpreted as agreement with the accuracy of the transcript.
- ✓ Remind participant about confidentiality of the responses

Appendix F

Interview Questions

The same set of questions will be asked of all participants.

How long have you served as superintendent/curriculum leader in the school district?

What other positions have you recently held in administration?

What is your role in the instructional leadership of the district?

Probes:

Are there specific tasks you perform in your role as instructional leader? (If yes, what?)

Are there others within the organization who also provide instructional leadership? How?

What impact has increased accountability had on your role as an instructional leader?

How much time do you spend on instructional leadership in a typical week?

What factors influence how much time you spend on instructional leadership?

Has your school district's accountability status had an effect on the amount of time you spend on instructional leadership? If yes, in what way? If no, why?

What instructional changes have been made as a result of the district's accountability status?

Are there factors, not including accountability status, that impact the amount of time you spend on instructional leadership? If yes, would you please share specific examples?

Do you have a document which outlines your organization's goals for this school-year? Were any changes made to the document as a result of your district's accountability status?

What has been the role of the administrative leadership team in these changes? [Leadership team will be defined as the group of school administrators with shared responsibilities in working toward district goals.]

What impact, if any, has increased accountability or the district's accountability status had on the district's administrative structure?

Probes:

Are there specific changes you have made as a result of your school's accountability status? If yes, please describe. If no, why?

How has your school's accountability status under NCLB had an impact on your interfacing with constituent groups? (Ask specifically about administrators, teachers, parents, students, Board of Education and community at-large)

Appendix G

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

To: _____ (Name of Participant)

You are being asked to participate in a research project entitled: The Role of Increased Accountability on the Use of Instructional Leadership Time by New York State Superintendents

This research is being conducted under the guidance of Dr. Ray O'Connell, Associate Professor of Education in the Leadership Program at the Sage Colleges. The researcher is Elizabeth Wood Pustolka, a doctoral candidate in the program. The project is funded solely the researcher.

Explanation of the Study

Purpose: The purpose of this qualitative grounded theory study is to explore the impact of a school's accountability status on the time superintendents spend on instructional leadership. Interviews will be conducted with superintendents leading districts with varying NCLB accountability status ranging from schools *In Good Standing* to schools *Requiring Academic Progress, In Need of Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring*. The researcher will also interview curriculum leaders where such positions are part of the administrative structure. A total of 18 interviews are planned.

Duration of the study: The study will take place from January, 2012 through August, 2012. During this time participants will be asked to answer interview questions during interview sessions which will last approximately forty-five minutes.

Procedures to be followed: Data will be primarily collected through interviews. The interviews will be conducted either in-person or on the telephone, at a convenient time for the subject. Interviews will last approximately forty-five minutes. The researcher will capture data collected during the interview through the use of an audio-tape recorder. Audio-tapes will be transcribed by a transcriptionist who has signed a confidentiality agreement. Interview participants will be provided with their transcript to review for accuracy and clarity of responses

This study is confidential. The data will be stored on a password protected computer. At the conclusion of the doctoral research study all hand-written notes will be shredded. All data files on computers will be deleted and additionally purged from the recycle bin. All audio recordings will be destroyed. Administrators and schools will be assigned pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality. Any identifying information will be deleted.

Benefit of participation: The expected benefit associated with your participation is your ability to contribute to the field of research in the area of instructional leadership by superintendents in schools with differing accountability status as assigned through NCLB.

There are minimal potential risks for participation in this study. There is a slight possibility you could be identified through a description of the school, though the researcher will take all

measures to avoid sharing information which may be used to identify you. You may also stop the interview at any time. However, due to the interview nature of this study, this is considered a “minimal risk” study. Risks involve the sharing of information with the researcher in a confidential, but not anonymous, setting.

Should you decline to have the interview be audio-recorded, the student researcher will record your answers using hand-written notes.

Audio tapes will be used to record answers to interview questions. The tapes will be used by the researcher for data analysis only. The tapes will only be played by the transcriptionist and student researcher. Participants will be identified by assigned pseudonyms on the audio-tape.

I give permission to the researcher to play the audio tape of me in the places described above. Put your initials here to indicate your permission. _____

In the event that I am harmed by participation in this study, I understand that compensation and/or medical treatment is not available from The Sage Colleges. However, compensation and/or medical costs might be recovered by legal action.

Participation is voluntary, I understand that I may at any time during the course of this study revoke my consent and withdraw from the study without any penalty.

I have been given an opportunity to read and keep a copy of this Agreement and to ask questions concerning the study. Any such questions have been answered to my full and complete satisfaction.

I, _____, having full capacity to consent, do hereby volunteer to participate in this research study and give permission to the researcher to record me during the course of the interview.

Signed: _____ (Research participant)

This research has received the approval of The Sage Colleges Institutional Review Board, which functions to insure the protection of the rights of human subjects. If you, as a participant, have any complaints about this study, please contact:

Dr. Esther Haskvitz, Dean
Sage Graduate Schools
School of Health Sciences
65 First Street
Troy, New York 12180
(518) 244-2264
haskve@sage.edu

Two copies sent to each participant. One copy for the participant to keep, one copy to be signed and returned to the researcher.

Appendix H

Letter to Superintendent Requesting Permission to Interview Curriculum Leader

Dear Superintendent:

I am currently a doctoral candidate in educational leadership at Sage Graduate School in Albany, New York and am writing to request permission to interview a curriculum leader within your district. I am conducting research on the use of time for instructional leadership as a result of a school district's accountability status under No Child Left Behind (NCLB) by superintendents with instructional support and those without instructional support.

The purpose of my qualitative study is to examine if and how increased accountability has had an impact on the amount of time superintendents spend on instructional leadership. The research will be conducted through interviews with twelve superintendents in New York State and when the school district has a part-time or full-time administrator for curriculum and instruction, the curriculum leader will also be interviewed.

The goal of the research will be to determine the impact of increased accountability measures on the use of time by superintendents in the area of instructional leadership

All responses are confidential and will not be shared with anyone in any way that identifies the school district or individual. All interview participants will be made aware of their rights to withdraw from my study at any time through the informed consent agreement.

The expected benefit associated with participation in this study is the ability to contribute to the field of research in the area of instructional leadership by superintendents in schools with differing accountability status as assigned through NCLB.

If you have any questions regarding the nature or scope of this study, please feel free to contact me at 518.694.6171 cell, 518.881.0600 work, or woodeliz@shenet.org.

Thank you for your consideration,

Elizabeth Wood

Please sign and return to:

Elizabeth Wood

**Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
Shenendehowa Central School District**

Fax: 518 - 881-0626

Date ____ / ____ / 2012

By signing below, I agree to allow the curriculum leader in our District to participate in this study.

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____

Participating School District: _____

Appendix I

Confidentiality Agreement Transcription Services

I, _____, transcriptionist, agree to maintain full confidentiality in regards to any and all audiotapes and documentation received from Elizabeth Wood Pustolka related to her doctoral study on The Role of Increased Accountability on the Use of Instructional Leadership Time by New York State Superintendents. Furthermore, I agree:

1. To hold in strictest confidence the identification of any individual that may be inadvertently revealed during the transcription of audio-taped interviews, or in any associated documents;
2. To not make copies of any audiotapes or computerized files of the transcribed interview texts, unless specifically requested to do so by Elizabeth Wood Pustolka;
3. To follow established protocols for my role in the project;
4. To not share any of the information on the tapes with anyone except the researcher listed on this form;
5. To store all study-related audiotapes and materials in a safe, secure location as long as they are in my possession;
6. To return all audiotapes and study-related documents to Elizabeth Wood Pustolka in a complete and timely manner.
7. To delete all electronic files containing study-related documents from my computer hard drive and any backup devices.

I am aware that I can be held legally liable for any breach of this confidentiality agreement, and for any harm incurred by individuals if I disclose identifiable information contained in the audiotapes and/or files to which I will have access.

Transcriber's name (printed) _____

Transcriber's signature _____

Date _____

Appendix J

Categories for Data Collection (*with Individual Letter, Number Sequence Identifiers*)

1. Superintendents without curriculum support leading districts where all schools are *In Good Standing* (*X A 1, X A 2, X A 3, X A 4*)
2. Superintendents with curriculum support leading districts where all schools are *In Good Standing* (*S A 1, S A 2*)
3. Superintendents without curriculum support leading districts where one or more schools face accountability sanctions (*X A 1, X A 2, X A 3, X A 4*)
4. Superintendents with curriculum support leading districts where one or more schools face accountability sanctions (*S B 1, S B 2, S B 3, S B 4*)
5. Curriculum leaders working in districts where all schools are *In Good Standing* (*C L A 1, C L A 2*)
6. Curriculum leaders working in districts where one or more schools face accountability sanctions (*C L B 1, C L B 2, C L B 3, C L B 4*)