

PUBLICLY AVAILABLE INFORMATION REGARDING THE EVALUATION OF SCHOOL  
DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENTS IN NEW YORK STATE

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **PUBLICLY AVAILABLE INFORMATION REGARDING THE EVALUATION OF SCHOOL DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENTS IN NEW YORK STATE**

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The Sage Colleges, Esteves School of Education, 2017

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The purpose of this qualitative case study from archival material was to evaluate the degree of public transparency in the evaluation methodology and procedures of school superintendents of districts with student populations between 700 and 900 students in the State of New York. This study examined the language of the 71 superintendent employment agreements and school district websites as they related to superintendent annual evaluations, and the responses of 22 of 71 school districts regarding the evaluatory methodologies utilized in evaluating the district leader. Specifically, the questions that guided this study were:

1. What are the stated purposes and processes for the evaluation of the school superintendent amongst these districts as stated in superintendent contracts?
2. In what ways are the *Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership* (2001) referenced in the evaluatory methodology and procedures of school superintendents?

3. How do superintendents promote public transparency with regard to the evaluatory criteria in their evaluation?
4. What are the most common elements for evaluation listed in contract language and how do these criteria relate to the literature surrounding superintendent evaluations?

The study found no explicit usage of the *Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership* (2001), the defined leadership standards for the State of New York in the evaluation process; that the process of evaluating the school superintendent is not highly transparent amongst these school districts; that there are disparate approaches and processes utilized by school boards in evaluating the superintendent; the literature surrounding superintendent evaluation is dated; and there is not an abundance of recent relevant research on the topic of school superintendent evaluations.

The study concluded that the process of superintendent evaluation is not well articulated in New York State due to an ambiguous state regulation regarding superintendent evaluation. Standards driven evaluations do not feature highly in the evaluation process of school superintendents, and that the evaluation process is not highly transparent to stakeholders in the various school districts.

Keywords: Superintendent evaluation; standards; *Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership* (2001); leadership; transparency

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Accountability metrics are increasingly a part of the dialogue regarding schools and how they are viewed by the public. Tied into these conversations are discussions about how to effectively measure the quality of teachers, building leadership, and schools across an array of standards and perspectives. What has yet to emerge as a cogent part of the analysis of what makes effective schools, is how to effectively evaluate the superintendent's role in the educational outcomes of school districts.

Chingos, Whitehurst, & Lindquist (2014) found in a study designed for the Brookings Institute that there is no easy correlation to be made between student performance and superintendent leadership. They held that because of the transient nature of the job, that it is indeed the quality of classroom instruction that best determines the efficacy of a school district. Accordingly, school boards must grapple with how to assess the effectiveness of their school superintendent against an ambiguous threshold of both managerial and educational prerogatives.

The school superintendent is a symbolic figure representing the educational interests of a community. The individual who serves as a superintendent is forced to not only be an educational leader, but also perform as a chief executive officer, managing the day-to-day operations of what is in most cases, a multi-million dollar corporation. The challenges involved in blending educational responsibilities with those of the obligations that come from successful management of human resources, facilities, food services, transportation, business and operations, and technology, often are represented in the board-superintendent dynamic (Kowalksi, 2005). This dynamic, and the opinions of board members have the potential to inform the evaluation of the superintendent. How

the superintendent is provided with feedback, guidance, and direction speaks to how the district, through its elected representatives, perceives itself and its direction, and how it ultimately measures success.

This study explored how superintendents in districts with a student enrollment of between 700 and 900 are evaluated by their boards of education in New York State. This study examined New York State Commissioner's Regulation (NYCRR) 8 NYCRR 100.2(o)(1)(vi) regarding the evaluation process of school superintendents and how this evaluatory practice is implemented and ultimately aligned to the New York State Education Department (NYSED) *Essential Characteristics of Effective School Leaders* (2001). This chapter provides the background information and purpose of the study, along with the relevant research questions and definitions of key terms related to the study.

## **Background**

In 1998, the Commissioner of Education for the State of New York established a Blue Ribbon Commission to examine the condition of school leadership in the state and make meaningful recommendations regarding how the state education department might develop a pipeline of quality school leaders to fill the growing demand for effective school leadership within the state (Mills, April, 1998). The task at hand when the panel was established was for educational leaders in the State of New York to identify and articulate the knowledge, competencies, and skills necessary for an individual to be deemed an effective leader of the state's public schools, and to help devise a credentialing system that ensured that those characteristics were evident amongst those who were granted school administrative certification by the state (Mills, November 1999).

Commissioner Mills looked at the work of superintendents in New York and shared in his June 1998 report to the Board of Regents that superintendents felt:

Their job is to create a vision that puts the learning and well-being of children first and to keep the vision alive. They must engage everyone, keep the performance data visible, and provide continuous staff development. And they must promote the value of public education (Mills, June, 1998).

As he continued his study of the superintendency and school leadership in New York, he found that “no one points publicly to the connected responsibilities of leader and followers, and there is no acknowledgement of the leader’s need to keep something for self and family” (Mills, June 29, 1998). Knowing that student achievement and learning are linked to the efficacy of the leadership of a school, the urgency to define a systemic approach toward creating and supporting effective school leaders became a critical component of the Board of Regents’ work in the late 1990’s and into the early part of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (Mills, November, 1998).

Subsequently, the New York State Board of Regents issued a report that outlined the key steps necessary for recruiting and retaining school leaders in New York, and that additionally contained a standards’ based framework for school leaders. These standards known as the *Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership* (2001), established the basis for the education, preparation, and assessment of school leaders in the state, and defined the metric by which school leadership was to be measured in the years to come (New York State Board of Regents and The New York State Education Department, n.d.).

These standards facilitate leadership understandings on the part of district leaders, demand that a vision is thoughtfully articulated, and speak to the need for leaders to communicate effectively with their various stakeholder groups. Additionally, the standards are intended to guide leaders to be collaborative in their approaches toward the work they engage in as they encounter challenging circumstances, and foster the development of their respective staffs. New York State also found that effective school leaders utilize an accountability framework to move their schools and districts forward, are continuous learners of best practices that support student learning, and take risks to advance the organizational interests (Duncan-Portier, 2005).

Consequently, recent school leaders in New York State have been recruited and developed as leaders according to these standards, as these metrics have become the value statements by which educational leadership programs in New York State have organized their curricular programming leading to certification as a school superintendent (Duncan-Portier, 2005). Thus, in the absence of any other formally adopted leadership standards by the Board of Regents, these *Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership* (2001) are the only formally established leadership standards for school district leaders in the State of New York.

Concurrently, as the culture of education has shifted toward the need for increased evaluation of the performance of educators in New York, the viability of the standards in the daily practice of school leadership evaluations, particularly those regarding the evaluation of superintendents of schools, remains largely unexplored despite being a defining purpose of their origination.

As DiPaola (2010) notes:



In 1980, the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) and the National School Board Association (NSBA) issued a joint statement calling for formal evaluations of superintendents (AASA, 1980), yet in the intervening years, little systemic progress was made (p. 7).

### **Statement of the Problem**

New York State faces a challenge regarding declining student enrollment. Between the 1994-1995 and 2014-2015 school years, the total student enrollment K-12 enrollment in the state declined by 158,737 students from 2,702,438 students to 2,542,701. This demographic shift of students impacted districts that had a student population of between 700 and 900 students. During the 1994-1995 school year, New York State had 39 school districts that had between 700 and 900 students enrolling a total of 31,255 students, accounting for 1.15% of the total student enrollment and 5% of the school districts in the State of New York. By the 2014-2015 school year, the number of districts in New York State enrolling between 700 and 900 students had grown to include 71 districts, enrolling 56,744 total students accounting for 2.2% of the statewide total of students, but almost 10% of the school districts in New York State ("NYSED: IRS: Public School Enrollment,"n.d.).

The challenges of running a school district of this size present a unique opportunity for those district leaders to respond to a host of pressing concerns. Limited school funding, aging infrastructure, declining tax bases, increased curricular standards, a constantly moving target regarding the teachers' evaluation system, and the general operational needs of running these school districts all coalesce to create occasions for superintendents of schools to be evaluated along a host of different metrics (Copeland,

2013). However, because the *Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership* (2001) were written almost two decades ago, and are broad in their language, these standards that largely comprise school leadership preparation standards may not requisitely translate into the evaluatory metrics and standards of superintendents by their boards of education.

### **Purpose and Research Questions**

To address the challenges outlined above, coupled with an increasing number of school districts of this demographic size, the intent of this qualitative case study from archival material was to evaluate the degree of public transparency in the evaluation methodology and procedures of school superintendents of districts with student populations between 700 and 900 students in the State of New York. New York State Commissioner's Regulation 100.2 holds that each district shall file their procedures for superintendent evaluation and make them "available for review by any individual no later than September 10th of each year" (8 NYCRR 100.2(o)(1)(vi)). This study, conducted by utilizing the publicly available superintendent evaluation documents (superintendent employment contracts, district website materials, and district developed evaluatory methodologies) of the 71 New York State school districts that fall into this demographic grouping, correlates the procedures and methodology of the 2015-2016 evaluation process using descriptive content analysis, to the language of the *Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership* (2001). The research questions that were explored in the study are:

1. What are the stated purposes and processes for the evaluation of the school superintendent amongst these districts as stated in superintendent contracts?

2. In what ways are the *Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership* (2001) referenced in the evaluatory methodology and procedures of school superintendents?
3. How do superintendents promote public transparency with regard to the evaluatory criteria in their evaluation?
4. What are the most common elements for evaluation listed in contract language and how do these criteria relate to the literature surrounding superintendent evaluations?

### **Significance of Study**

As challenges of running smaller sized school districts increase in New York State, so too does the work of boards of education to authentically evaluate the leadership at the district level. As noted by researchers, “participating in hiring a superintendent is one of the most important duties facing a school board member” (Sabatino, 2010, p.xii). This study expanded on that thinking and contends that the evaluation of the superintendent is a critical responsibility of a school board and is imperative to both improving the superintendent as a leader of the educational system and in promoting learning outcomes for students. However, because how school boards evaluate school superintendents in New York State is not as overtly transparent for stakeholders to the educational process as with other levels of educational professionals, this study examined the publicly available information about the superintendent evaluation process among the growing number of school districts between 700 and 900 students to ascertain the common elements involved in the process.

In an era of increased accountability, in which districts must publicize on their websites how teachers and principals are to be evaluated under the Annual Professional

Performance Review (APPR) regulations, the evaluation of school superintendents in New York State is limited to a singular regulation. The sole regulation relating to the evaluation of superintendents in New York State states simply:

The governing body of each school district shall annually review the performance of the superintendent of schools according to procedures developed by such body in consultation with the superintendent. Such procedures shall be filed in the district office and available for review by any individual no later than September 10th of each year (8 NYCRR 100.2(o)(1)(vi)).

Thus, this study sought to find and understand the procedures related to the evaluation of the superintendent amongst the 71 school districts that have a student enrollment between 700 and 900 students and examine the relationship between those procedures and the *Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership* (2001).

Indeed, if the *Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership* (2001) are the benchmark leadership standards for school district leaders in New York State, it would stand to reason that they define the essential characteristics for superintendent evaluations. This study is beneficial to schools of educational leadership as well as board of education members, as it presents an outline of the superintendent evaluation process in these districts, along with the publicly available evaluation elements and the relationship, either overtly or otherwise, to the only defined school leadership standards for school superintendents as adopted by the New York State Board of Regents.

By understanding the evaluatory process as it currently exists and the efficacy of the *Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership* (2001) in informing the evaluation process of school superintendents, stakeholders to the evaluation process

will be able to more effectively articulate what the driving forces are behind the superintendent's evaluation and how they could be further refined to support the outcomes originally anticipated as a result of their design and implementation by the State of New York.

### **Definition of Terms**

Key terms utilized in the study are defined below:

***Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership:*** The nine school leadership standards defined by New York State as part of its efforts to produce high quality school and district leaders (2001).

***Evaluatory Rubrics:*** The criteria utilized to define the range and scope of a performance evaluation (Marshall, 2008).

***Evaluation Process:*** The purpose, methodology, timeline, forms, and conversations relating to how an educator receives feedback regarding his or her job performance (Marshall, 2013).

***Standards based framework:*** A defined set of skills and guidelines used to assess performance to a given set of expectations.

***Superintendency:*** The period of time and corresponding actions with which an individual serves as a superintendent of schools for a school district.

***Superintendent of Schools:*** The chief executive officer of a school district, employed by a Board of Education to implement policy and oversee the day-to-day and longitudinal operations of a school district.

### **Delimitations/Limitations**

This study examined all school districts in New York State with student enrollment between 700 and 900 students to determine how those districts have devised

and implemented a superintendent evaluation process aligned to the *Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership* (2001), the state adopted leadership standards. This study covers 71 school districts and is based solely upon the publicly available information (superintendent employment contracts, district website materials and district developed evaluatory methodologies) regarding the evaluation of the superintendents during the 2015-2016 school-year. The documents reviewed included all 71 superintendent employment agreements, 22 of 71 district/superintendent evaluation processes provided by the districts who responded to the request from the researcher for such documents, and all 71 district websites' information relating to the evaluation of the superintendent of schools. It should be noted however, that no school district from the Hudson and Long Island region responded to the request for documents resulting in a regional limitation to the study with regard to the district evaluation methodology document. The study is delimited to the review of one academic year and New York State school districts with a student population between 700 and 900 students. The study is limited by the response of 22 of the 71 districts who responded to the document request.

### **Organization of the Study**

This dissertation is organized into five chapters that present background information relevant to the study. Chapter Two will provide a literature review that examines superintendent evaluations, the degree of public transparency involved in the evaluative process, and practices that school boards incorporate into their evaluative processes of superintendents. A presentation of the methodology that supported this study is provided in Chapter Three and a presentation of the relevant information and corresponding data and findings relating to New York State school superintendent

evaluations is found in Chapter Four. Finally a presentation of a summary of findings, conclusions, and recommendations for future study will be offered in Chapter Five.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Introduction**

In 1985, the New York State Board of Regents mandated that school district superintendents be evaluated by their school boards stating, “the governing body of each school district shall annually review the performance of the superintendent of schools according to procedures developed by such body in consultation with the superintendent” (8 NYCRR 100.2(o)(1)(vi)). This regulation was devised as a standalone statement with little context provided to board members regarding evaluation of the superintendent. This regulation was most likely implemented in response to a variety of different policy statements emerging in the early 1980’s on effective school leadership including a joint policy statement of the National School Board Association and American Association of School Administrators regarding the need for superintendent evaluation in 1980 (DiPaola & Stronge, 2003).

In 2010, Chapter 388 of the Laws of New York State directed that training for school board members include a general overview of school district governance and the legal obligations of a school board to evaluate itself and the superintendent (New York State Education Law 2012-a).

The regulatory language, broad in its scope but narrow in its mandate, presents a challenge to school boards when it comes to how and with what criteria they should evaluate the superintendent of schools. Because the elements of what must be contained in the evaluations of the superintendent are not overtly defined in the regulations and training requirements for either the superintendent or board members, individual districts



are left to devise their own methodology and evaluatory elements for reviewing the school district superintendent. Such legal ambiguity has led to a range of practices, standards, and criteria being utilized to evaluate superintendents across the State of New York (Ehrenberg, Chaykowski, & Ehrenberg, 1988). DiPaola (2010) found that this variation of evaluatory criteria has been evident across the nation for decades stating:

The National School Boards Association (NSBA, 2000) identified eight “key action areas” for both the superintendent and board that include: vision, standards, assessment, accountability, alignment, climate, collaboration and continuous improvement. These and other standards (such as ISLLC) provide guidance in developing a set of domains to serve as the framework for an evaluation system. A review of evaluation systems adopted by states, school board and AASA state affiliates across the nation reveals a variation in the number of suggested domains (p.12).

The intent of this qualitative study utilizing descriptive content analysis was to evaluate the degree of public transparency in the evaluation methodology and procedures of school superintendents of districts with student populations between 700 and 900 students in the State of New York. New York State Commissioner’s Regulation 100.2 holds that each district shall file their procedures for superintendent evaluation and make them, “available for review by any individual no later than September 10th of each year” (8 NYCRR 100.2(o)(1)(vi)). This study, conducted by utilizing publicly available superintendent evaluation documents (superintendent employment contracts, district website materials, and district developed evaluatory methodologies) of the 71 New York State school districts that fall into this demographic grouping, correlates the procedures

and methodology of the 2015-2016 evaluation process using descriptive content analysis, to the language of the *Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership* (2001) (New York State Board of Regents and The New York State Education Department, n.d.).

The review of the literature regarding superintendent evaluations examines how school boards have attempted to create a formalized process for the evaluation of the school district superintendent. Because the Commissioner's Regulation requires an evaluation of school superintendents by school boards but does not specify the tools, criteria, or procedures by which to conduct the evaluation, the literature references ideas and concepts toward best practices, trends, and generalized suggestions for how to approach such a process. Focus on process over substantive evaluatory content has been a historical trend in the development of the literature regarding superintendent evaluation (DiPaola & Stronge, 2003). Further, focus on managerial tasks and priorities have often been supported in the evaluation of the school superintendent thereby limiting deliberative attention to the role of the superintendent in leading curriculum, instruction, and assessment within a learning organization (DiPaola & Stronge, 2003). DiPaola and Stronge (2003) further found in their study of superintendent evaluations that:

Although there is increasing consensus that assessment of student progress must be used in educational evaluation (Candoli, et al, 1997), student learning alone does not capture the realm of public expectations nor does it capture the day-to-day realities of the responsibilities of school superintendents (p.23).

The literature review that follows is organized into three major categories: first a review of why evaluations of school superintendents are important within the framework

of accountability standards; next a description of how school boards measure the leadership qualities of the district superintendent with regard to an evaluatory methodology; and finally how the board-superintendent relationship is defined by the evaluatory process as developed by the stakeholders to the practices of the performance appraisal.

### **Evaluations and Accountability**

Evaluations establish a framework for understanding between the superintendent and school board regarding expectations, desired longitudinal outcomes, and progress relating to district goals (Robinson & Bickers, 1990). While these expectations, outcomes, and progress metrics vary between school districts, the general reasons for developing them as part of the evaluation process are based upon intentional practice. While there has been a wealth of literature developed in recent years regarding the importance of effectively evaluating teachers and school building leaders, the literature regarding superintendent evaluation remains dated, underdeveloped, and in many instances anecdotally written by school board members, superintendent search consultants, and practicing and retired school district leaders. (Boyd, 1966; Turner, 1971; Bippus, 1985; Braddom, 1986). Because of the lack of formalized studies undertaken regarding the evaluation of the superintendent, the arc of the literature reviewed for this study encompasses a broad swath of contributors to the extant literature surrounding the evaluation of the school superintendent.

### **Purpose for Evaluation**

The culture of accountability as it is often perceived with regard to superintendent evaluations has less to do with the superintendent's accountability to the board than the

board's accountability to the various constituencies that it serves (Heller, 1978). Because school boards must be able to justify their decision making processes to key stakeholder groups, they must have data that supports their decisions, particularly in regard to supporting the superintendent and renewing his contract (Heller, 1978). Heller (1978) found that school boards come under greater pressure to justify their actions:

As the increasing rapid turnover of superintendents, declining enrollments, scarcity of resources, changes in the public's attitude toward public education, which unfortunately are predicated upon suspicion, and a declining faith in the value of public education (p.5).

All of these attributes come to dominate the conversation surrounding public education. Consequently, evaluations are very much a two-way process between a school board and its superintendent.

While educators have come to expect that the standards of accountability mean being evaluated in the context of a given result, Mayo & McCartney (2004) in their study of 1,125 school superintendents, found that when it comes to superintendents, the evaluatory criteria utilized focused more on personal dispositional characteristics than the "result-based criteria required of the latest accountability movement" (p.19). Further, Mayo & McCartney (2004) found that superintendents would largely not object to evaluations based upon result driven outcomes, but that the current style and modalities of board evaluation of the superintendent rarely allows for such an intentional process to take place.

Mayo & McCartney's (2004) findings built upon the findings of Glass, Bjork, & Brunner (2000), who found in their study of the school superintendency that:

The belief by a significant number of superintendents that they are not being evaluated against criteria in their job descriptions reinforces the notion that the quality of the interpersonal relationships between the superintendent and board members is really what counts (p.61).

The idea that there are flaws in the evaluation process of the school superintendent as it is presently devised, was augured by Candoli, Cullen, & Stufflebeam (1997) when they wrote:

Obvious deficiencies in present superintendent performance evaluations include insufficient focus on job-performance criteria, inadequately trained evaluators, weak evaluation model, and technically inadequate methods. Given the important purposes of superintendent performance evaluations, it is vital to correct these deficiencies (p.xi).

Despite an increased focus on a culture of accountability, including the 1985 regulation that mandated school superintendents be evaluated in New York State, the actual work and methodology necessary to have an effective evaluative process has not yet been thoughtfully devised at the school board-superintendent level on a large scale (Dillon & Halliwell, 1991). Consequently, Dillon & Halliwell (1991) establish in their study of New York State school superintendents and associated board presidents that the greatest dissonance between the parties was around the purpose of conducting board level evaluations of the superintendent. While school board presidents in the study concluded that a key purpose for the evaluation was to improve the instructional leadership of the superintendent, only one-eighth of school superintendents in the study felt that was the primary objective of the evaluative process. They found that school superintendents felt

that the driving objective of the evaluative process was to “strengthen the working relationship with the community and between the board of education and the superintendent” (p.332).

The way to diffuse the dissonance often found in the evaluation process is for the board to focus on accountability through sound policy related to the evaluation of the superintendent of schools (Foldes, 1989). Foldes (1989) contends school boards must devise a methodology that takes ambiguous state level regulations and broadens them to meet key needs of the school district. He argued that if the purpose of superintendent evaluation is to improve student instruction then a board must evaluate a superintendent’s job performance in that domain. The policy must enable a board to figure out the data points that will inform the evaluation, state who will conduct the evaluation, and elicit how to advance the narrative beyond an employment agreement requirement toward a more robust dialog about how the superintendent is doing and how he can improve (Foldes, 1989).

Seeing the superintendent as an individual whose primary job is to improve instructional outcomes for students is a shift beyond the historical models of organizational management that have defined the superintendency. If instructional improvement is to be the driving impetus of a superintendency, managerial objectives must align to the desired outcomes surrounding instructional improvement (Bjork, 1993). To develop such a mindset surrounding the outcomes of the superintendency, the superintendent must work to define such goals with the school board within the given budgetary parameters and priorities, and with the administrative staff of the district itself (Bjork, 1993).

Salley (1980) in his study that examined the job functions of school superintendents, contended that despite the varying demographics, size and corresponding needs of a school district, the job functions of a school district leader remain largely the same. He contends that the prioritization of the various job functions is what varies between districts based on the needs of the district. Consequently, he found that evaluation methodology of the district leader varies and he further argues for a need to have clear understandings of what is to be evaluated and discerning procedures that lead to evaluation systems that are tied to district priorities and not situational outcomes, or the prerogatives of select board members.

The elements needed to ensure an effective performance appraisal are policy, a relevant job description, and a shared understanding of the instrument to be utilized to conduct the evaluation, as the evaluation is a key element of the board-superintendent relationship (Glaub, 1983). An evaluation that is aligned toward annual goals must also be able to address what the board aimed to be accomplished in a given school year, as a solid evaluation process will help the board better discern its own efficacy as well as improve the superintendent's job performance (Glaub, 1983). Evaluations are more about future interactions than past situations, and they have the potential to forge a narrative for how situations and dynamics will play out in the year ahead (Glaub, 1983).

In the document, *Guidelines for Evaluating the Superintendent*, Lewis (1975) posits that the evaluation of the school district superintendent outlines the shared responsibilities of both the board and the district leader. He found best practice indicated that what is to be evaluated should be known well in advance of the evaluation taking place, and that the topical areas for evaluatory review and feedback be informed by the

superintendent to present a more balanced evaluatory tool for all the parties to the evaluation.

Consequently, the purpose of the superintendent's evaluation tends to typically be grounded in the ideas that support improved instructional outcomes for students but is more overtly rooted to the need for the board to evaluate itself, justify its decision-making processes to varied constituencies, and build a systematic process by which it can engage the superintendent in a conversation about his job performance (Dittloff, 1982; Kowalski, 1998; First, 1990).

A superintendent's evaluation is best when there is clear evaluatory criteria set by the local school board, that the criteria are capable of being assessed through the chosen performance review methodology, and when the results of the evaluation are shared between the superintendent and the school board. This generates a mutual understanding regarding where the parties stand with one another (Calzi & Heller, 1989).

Given that the performance attributes and criteria of the superintendent evaluation are not as critical to the evaluatory process as the philosophy that undergirds the process, a foundational philosophy for what the board wishes to accomplish as a result of the evaluation of the superintendent may emerge as a broad overarching statement of purpose (Calzi & Heller, 1989). Consequently, the philosophy supporting the evaluation may develop in the priorities and employment job descriptions devised by a board of education (Calzi & Heller, 1989).

A good evaluation process will afford both parties an opportunity to clarify roles, measure progress, set time-bound goals, and check-in on the status of the relationship between the board and the superintendent; holding that the philosophy behind the purpose



of the evaluation may largely be developed around the board-superintendent relationship (Fowler, 1977).

A major reason for the evaluation of the superintendent is for the school board to reflect upon its goals for the school system and how effectively the superintendent is working toward their completion (Dittloff, 1982). Dittloff (1982) notes the importance of the philosophy behind the evaluation stating, “the process your school system might develop for evaluating the superintendent, is not nearly as important as the philosophical approach you use in conducting the evaluation” (p.41). Accordingly, an additional philosophical element that may set a foundation for the evaluation of the superintendent is board goal setting and accomplishment and the relationship that drives that conversation (Dittloff, 1982).

The philosophy regarding the purpose of superintendent evaluation varies across school districts and amongst school boards. A solid evaluation process affords boards an opportunity to reflect on its own progress, engage their superintendent regarding their performance, and build a case for how future employment negotiations and decisions could be made within a framework of board-superintendent relations (Braddom, 1986). Further, a deliberative evaluation philosophy is rooted in two concurrent ideals: helping the superintendent improve their performance and fostering open and honest communication between the board and its employee. Thus some, but not all school boards utilize the evaluatory process to help the superintendent reflect on his job actions and suggest ways that he may improve in regard to his job performance (Bippus, 1985).

The evaluative process may provide an opportunity for school boards to present their concerns to their superintendent and foster a constructive dialogue before a situation

becomes unsustainable, or empower the superintendent to reflect to the board how he perceives the concerns and challenges raised as a result of the evaluatory methodology and criteria selected (Kibby, 1965).

Eliciting conversations about how an individual is performing, and how the board is achieving its goals with its employee in regard to the district performance outcomes, is an undertaking eschewed by some school boards. These courageous conversations can be rife with political pitfalls particularly when the evaluation leans toward the subjective as opposed to the objective. As school board member elections can often change the makeup of a school board and quickly shift the district goals and group dynamics that interplay in the evaluative process, Ornstein (1990) cautions superintendents as to how the electoral process can upend superintendencies, and argues that superintendents must manage the confluence of needs and attributes that a school community envelopes in order to define a successful superintendency. Indeed as Schein (1996) notes:

Cultures arise in whole occupational communities and that, therefore, parts of organizations are as much a reflection of the occupational backgrounds and experiences of some of their members as they are of their own unique organizational histories (p. 234).

Thus, when a board changes its composition, the culture of the board can shift, thereby furthering the need for ongoing conversation regarding the evaluation process and the ultimate goals and trajectory of a school district.

Historically, school boards provided many reasons as to why they did not conduct an evaluation of the district leader relating to difficulty in maintaining objectivity, ensuring that conflicting value judgments within a local school community do not

consume the process, and the all-encompassing nature of the superintendency itself, thereby making it difficult to effectively evaluate (McCarty, 1971). Clear goals, aligned indicators and outcomes that are mutually agreed upon and then measured, afford a process that is more easily managed when considering the variables that could otherwise cloud the evaluation (McCarty, 1971). Thus, abjuring the philosophical approach and arguing for a more objective one, McCarty (1971) argues that the evaluation process must be driven by an intentional process. The 1985 New York State regulation requiring that school boards evaluate the school superintendent annually was designed to provide that such an evaluation took place across the state (Dillon & Halliwell, 1991).

The philosophy or rationale for conducting an evaluation of a school superintendent ranges from an objective based approach with an evaluation measured against individual goal completion to avoid political machinations to school boards utilizing the process to develop clear goals for the district, assessing internal school board dynamics, providing authentic feedback to the superintendent regarding job performance, appraising the school board-superintendent relationship, and surveying the work of the district with regard to accomplishments and areas still in need of focus (Mayo & McCartney, 2004).

### **Procedures by which Superintendents are Evaluated**

The evaluation process that school districts utilize to assess the professional efficacy of the school superintendent most often falls along a continuum ranging from a checklist to a narrative format (Castallo, 1999; Booth & Glaub 1978). Within this continuum, there is opportunity for politics, personal agendas, and superficiality to dominate the documentation of the superintendent's performance (Mayo & McCartney, 2004). Castallo (1999) finds that a rubric-based approach that sets out clear standards for

performance related to critical topics regarding the superintendent's job performance has the most value in informing the process by which a superintendent is evaluated. However, Castallo (1999) also finds that boards rarely take the time to develop such a systematic methodology when it comes to evaluating the superintendent.

Dickinson (1980) however, outlines that a school board must invest the time to devise a thoughtful evaluation procedure. Dickinson (1980) holds that a school board must make a systematic effort to identify the legal obligations of the superintendent; define the scope of responsibility of the superintendent, evaluate the degree to which the superintendent actually can control those domains, and then build a criteria based evaluation system that allows for authentic feedback based upon a formalized timetable in which the board and the superintendent agree as to how the evaluation process will proceed over the course of a given school year. Indeed the New York State Council of School Superintendents (2014) wrote, "the specifics of the process and the evaluation document tool to be used need to be locally negotiated between the superintendent and school board" (p.2) and the New York State School Boards Association (2015) held that, "decisions regarding both process and instrument should reflect a cooperative effort between the school board and superintendent" (p.2) in outlining a process for evaluating a school superintendent in New York State.

While there is no normative approach toward evaluating a superintendent, it is imperative that there is transparency regarding the purpose for the evaluation, the evaluative tool to be used, and the evidence to be collected, exist on both sides of the table (Roelle & Monks, 1978). It is incumbent upon the superintendent to make sure they take time to orient new board members to the evaluation process at a board meeting,

document efforts and work toward goal completion in board meeting minutes to create a running record of what has been accomplished during the year (Roelle & Monks, 1978). Roelle & Monks (1978) concurred with the findings of Boyd (1966) that there is no one standardized way for a board to evaluate a superintendent and that a board must be mindful regarding the ability of a superintendent to effectively carryout board objectives and goals within the constraints imposed by the financial, political, and staffing limitations of a school district.

Beyond the workaday topics that define a superintendent's job, it is important for school boards to also consider the managerial style of the district's leader (Ackenhead, 1984). This suggests that districts assess both the work and style of the superintendent to ensure that the superintendent has an accurate appraisal of how he was perceived within the parameters of the relationship enjoyed with the board of education (Ackenhead, 1984). Additionally, Ackenhead (1984) stated that the conversations that flow from the analysis of management styles enable a more robust discussion as to how a superintendent can better align his work with the interests and needs of the school board.

Booth & Glaub (1978) state unequivocally that "the most important part of appraisal is to determine precisely what it is that you wish to appraise" (p. 26). They contend that it is important that all parties approach the evaluation with the same understanding of what is to be appraised and how that appraisal will take place. They contend that the process must be aligned to the needs of the school district, must attempt to stay away from subjective rating summaries and checklists and that there must be an opportunity for the school board and the superintendent to build a relationship. Booth & Glaub (1978) outline that in order for any appraisal process to have a chance of truly

fostering a productive dialogue, that the superintendent and the school board spend the time:

1. Getting to know one another;
2. Eliminating minor differences of opinion and petty gripes;
3. Defining the respective roles and responsibilities;
4. Identifying strengths and weaknesses in both behavior and performance (results);
5. Planning improvements;
6. Analyzing results of improvement plans (p. 39).

Booth & Glaub (1978) posit that there is a relational aspect that supports any effective evaluatory procedure and that a procedure must exist in policy and be visited as necessary as situational dynamics change within a district. Banks and Maloney (2007) a school district superintendent and school board president in the State of Washington, in an article for the American Association of School Administrators, found in their work to devise an evaluatory methodology for their school district, that the human dimensional aspects that are interwoven within the procedure development can at times be overlooked or underdeveloped because of the fear that exists in disturbing the board-superintendent relationship.

As districts prioritize different criteria based on their individualized needs, and because the characteristics of superintendents vary based on their managerial styles and training, boards have devised a multitude of methodologies to assess the efficacy of their superintendent. Ultimately, the evaluation process of the school superintendent is forged by legal mandates tied to accountability standards both at a state and local level.

Boards looking to provide an evidentiary basis for their support of the superintendent, along with a need to look at their own practices, devise evaluatory methodologies tied to a philosophy of what they wish to accomplish by having an

evaluation process in the first place. Consequently, the superintendent's job performance is at times tied to evaluatory characteristics that are more politically expedient than rooted in instructional outcomes for students, and more relationally based, than actually performance driven (Booth & Glaub, 1978).

### **Measuring District Leadership**

How districts evaluate the efficacy of school district leadership is premised upon how the stakeholders view the process and interact with a range of considerations. Laws requiring evaluation, promulgated standards, contractual methodologies, and district beliefs all contribute toward how a district measures the success of its leader. More often than not, however, the evaluation comes down to a tenuous balance of how school boards interpret the superintendent's job description, their own policies, and the goals of the district (Jones, 1981). From these documents four essential domains emerge that boards tend to focus on regarding the evaluation of the school superintendent. The four domains consist of personal characteristics, administrative style, general management skills, and knowledge (Jones, 1981). From these domains various boards undertake the evaluation of a superintendent in a host of different ways, be it a checklist, narrative, or an objective based methodology (Jones, 1981). Consequently, the evaluatory method of a superintendent's evaluation is most often a permutation of the four domains and the three styles of evaluation documents.

The methodology behind evaluating a superintendent's performance is often a blended process consisting of both the formal and informal (Carol, 1972). While the characteristic evaluation usually involves a board of education rendering a decision premised upon the performance of the superintendent regarding goals, there also exists a practice wherein the superintendent either provides his own reflections on his job

performance or renders a self-reflection which the board uses as the evaluatory document (Carol, 1972). The criteria of curriculum development, stakeholder relations, general knowledge of education and educational leadership, longitudinal planning, district management, budget development and implementation, and personal characteristics all are common place elements in an evaluation of a school district leader, that inform the processes selected by a given school district (Carol, 1972).

Booth & Glaub (1978) devised a series of steps that districts and school district leaders could undertake in order to effectively devise a performance appraisal system that best meets the needs of both parties. Their system was devised around a construct that asks school boards to consider why they wish to evaluate the superintendent, to synthesize the criteria they wish to evaluate him on, to clearly define the process the board will undertake in rendering an appraisal on performance, and to consider what they wish to achieve as a result of undergoing the process of evaluating the job performance of the district leader (Booth & Glaub, 1978).

Two critical questions that boards must answer are “what factors the board as a whole considers important in measuring a superintendent’s effectiveness?” and “whether evaluation should be based on performance (results) or behavior (methods used) or some other criteria” (Booth & Glaub, 1978, p. 13). The answers to these questions may drive the evaluation process, however, questions remain as to how often they are efficaciously asked. Carol (1976) found that superintendent evaluations are often organized around what has always been done in a district, premised upon agreements with previous superintendents, and often not revised on a timely basis by board members.



Moving from the broad to the specific in terms of devising compelling goals for a district to advance in the process of evaluation, requires a commitment on the part of the board of education to set clear goals for the work they wish the superintendent of schools to undertake (Fitzwater, 1973). Fitzwater (1973) contends that boards must make a concerted effort to move from the viewpoint of “our board evaluates the superintendent at every meeting, right out in public” (p. 26) toward clear objectives defined by effective actions that are capable of being evaluated.

The efficacy of the model selected begins with the contractual relationship that the superintendent enters into with the board of education. Kowalski (1998) contends that the contract plays a critical role in outlining the responsibilities of the parties regarding evaluation and they play an important role in curtailing the ability of politics and board factions from resetting a process midway through an evaluatory cycle. The contract Kowalski (1998) holds, has the potential for spelling out the evaluatory instrument, the degree to which the job description of the superintendent will inform the evaluation, and the timeline and process for generating an evaluation.

Mayo & McCartney (2004) in their study of 1,125 school superintendents across the United States found, utilizing a survey methodology premised upon the work of Robinson and Bickers (1990) that the employment contract, while a source for criteria used in evaluation, has the potential to indistinctly define the evaluatory criteria. Additionally, they found that the job description is only an effective tool for school boards if they have taken the time to update the description on a routine basis. Their study examined both the effectiveness of the evaluation process and the role that results based performance metrics informed the evaluation of the school superintendent.

Mayo & McCartney (2004) noted that there has yet to be developed a uniformly effective results-based model for evaluating the superintendent of schools stating, “an effective evaluation approach does not exist across the nation. Further, results-based practices are nearly nonexistent. The findings of this study show little evidence that evaluation processes have changed to accommodate the accountability movement” (p.23) and evaluation process remains mired in traditional evaluation practices.

While some efforts have been made by the New York State School Boards Association (2015) and the New York State Council of School Superintendents (2014) to promulgate rubrics for school boards to consider in their evaluations of the superintendent, these documents are not aligned to the *Essential Characteristics of Effective School Leaders* (2001) and are constructed premised upon standards found in other states and national organizations along with input provided from practicing New York State educational leaders. The New York State Council of School Superintendents (2014) (NYSCOSS) template for superintendent evaluation does not contain a single citation referencing research based literature, or studies that supported its development.

The document does list as contributors, practicing school district superintendents and NYSCOSS leadership. The New York State School Boards Association (2015) (NYSSBA) superintendent evaluation document is premised on the standards from the American Association of School Administrators and other non-cited sample evaluation tools.

Table One lists the evaluatory criteria for superintendent evaluations as premised by the New York State School Boards Association (2015), the New York State Council of School Superintendents (2014), and the American Association of School

Administrators (1993). The criteria found for each organization varies slightly from one another but demonstrates consistency in themes around community relations, instructional leadership, and overall management of the school district with regard to resources, and personnel.

Table One

*Listing of Evaluatory Categories for Superintendent Evaluation as Devised by the New York State School Boards Association (NYSSBA), New York State Council of School Superintendents (NYSCOSS), and the American Association of School Administrators (AASA).*

NYSSBA (2015)	NYSCOSS (2014)	AASA (1993)
Vision, Culture, & Instructional Leadership	Relationship with the Board	Leadership and District Culture
Operations, Resource, & Personnel Management	Community Relations	Policy and Governance
Board Governance & Policy	Staff Relationship	Communications and Community Relations
Communication & Community Relations	Business & Finance	Organizational Management
Ethical Leadership	Instructional Leadership	Curriculum Planning and Development
	District Results	Instructional Management
		Human Resources Management
		Values and Ethics of Leadership

Thus, while the job description, employment agreement, and policies regarding evaluation constitute the objective touch-points of a subjective processes, some boards have worked to find ways to expand upon the evaluatory process and move the evaluation

process away from the superintendent himself and towards annual evaluation of the district as a whole (Banks & Maloney, 2007). The question, “has the district (superintendent) operated within the bounds of acceptable behavior for how those results are to be achieved, as described by the community (board)?” (Banks & Maloney, 2007, p.10-11) shifts the focus to broader questions aligned to organizational goals.

This shift toward district goals as opposed to an individual’s given performance also places the role of the school district leader in a more instructionally centered position. Pajak and Glickman (1989) found that if districts are to improve, “what is important is to create district expectations of professional dialogue and support so that educators in all positions in a school system can share in that inventiveness and express that commitment” (p.64). The methodology of measuring superintendent effectiveness such as the one described above, however, is far more the exception than the rule.

This shift toward instructional leadership among New York school superintendents, if it is occurring, is a relatively new phenomenon. In a survey of approximately 700 school superintendents in New York State between May and July of 1985, researchers found that board relations, community relations, and fiscal management, along with general administration of the district, curriculum development, professional development, and human resources management all ranked higher in evaluatory criteria than student academic performance and achievement in criteria used to generate a superintendent evaluation (Ehrenberg, Chaykowski, & Ehrenberg, 1988). The researchers also noted the limited ability of objective measurements to be available to assess these criteria and the challenges that it presents in objectively evaluating a superintendent’s job performance (Ehrenberg, Chaykowski, & Ehrenberg, 1988).

The impetus to evaluate a superintendent effectively must also overcome the lack of desire many school boards have to measure a superintendent's leadership ability. Banks & Maloney (2007) and First (1990) though their ideas are 17 years apart in their publication, both describe the fear and disquieting nature evaluations can bring to a superintendent and school board. First (1990) notes that this is particularly so because the depth and breadth of the superintendent's daily job responsibilities often make it hard to discern objective ways of measuring the success of the superintendent by board members.

Regarding superintendent evaluations, Hawkins (1972) states, "for the most part we have attempted to evaluate traits that are not only subject to a great deal of subjectivity and interpretation, but many of the things we have evaluated may have a low priority in the scheme of things" (p.42). Ultimately, there are elements of politics that infuse the evaluatory experience of the superintendent (Hoyle & Skrla, 1993). The political nature of what represents a pressing concern at the time of the evaluation often challenges the construct of what gets measured in an evaluation (Hoyle & Skrla, 1993). Navigating that political process is a critical component of the relationship forged between the board of education and the superintendent himself (Crowson, 1991).

### **Board-Superintendent Relationship in Evaluations**

A common element evaluated within the superintendent appraisal process is the board-superintendent relationship. This relationship is often contractually defined and outlined in job descriptions, contracts, and established performance metrics; however, it is enhanced by leadership skills, collective understandings, and the ability of a school board to understand the many dimensions that comprise school district leadership.

Volumes have been written about this relationship, but how the board fulfills its role in evaluating superintendent performance may do more to define the board's opportunity for success in this relationship than any other one board activity (Horn, 1996, p.20).

A particular component that adds to the challenge of the relationship is what Kalkhoven (1981) described as the challenge of balancing board members with superintendents in regard to their divergent understandings of the educational system. Kalkhoven (1981) wrote:

By and large, school board members are lay citizens, not trained in the art of evaluation, particularly not evaluation of professional educators. This can become a very intimidating task when one compares his or her own educational credentials with the superintendent's (p.6).

This attribute has at least in part, been recognized by New York State in New York State Education Law 2012-a, which has called for stronger board governance training regarding superintendent and board evaluation. However, research exists as to how general principles of leadership can inform evaluation practices at the school district level.

Stronge (1998) believed that there was a case to be made between leadership in schools and business organizations with regard to the skills necessary to be an effective leader. Further, Richardson, Lane, & Flanigan (1996) found in their study of characteristics of successful principals that teachers and business leaders identified the attributes of being: "honest, competent, forward-looking and inspiring" as being most desired in both education and business leadership (p. 291). Thus, applying general

leadership understandings to the superintendent evaluation process, can support board members in transferring their experiences in their professional domains to their responsibilities in evaluating the district leader.

The nature of the superintendent-board relationship comes down to the degree of candidness each side expects of the other (Fowler, 1977). If the parties are willing to engage each other, maintain open communications, and develop opportunities to collaboratively problem solve, the relationship often leads to a meaningful evaluatory process (Fowler, 1977; Chand, 1984).

When boards operate the evaluative process toward their own objectives in a more clandestine fashion and cultivate a sense of distrust among the parties, that culture fosters “hidden agendas” and breeds secrecy on the part of superintendent regarding his job performance (Foldes, 1989). To some degree this relationship begins well before the contract negotiations begin and is forged in the hiring process, when the board establishes the criteria for the individual they wish to hire to be superintendent (Clear, 1983).

“The effectiveness of evaluation depends, not upon a particular plan or format, but rather upon the degree of mutual interest which exists between the board and superintendent” (Lindgren, 1985, p.16). This “mutual interest” is fostered when a clear effort is made to collaboratively set goals and benchmarks to be included as part of the evaluative process (Eadie, 2003). Swain (1975) contended:

First goals and objectives must be established, along with the methods and criteria for evaluating whether or not the goals and objectives have been attained. Then they must be written, either into policy or the administrator's contract (p.5).

The elements of: candidness, the lack of hidden agendas, and the fostering of a mutual interest in the evaluative process, speak to what Eadie (2003) held when he argued:

At the heart of every truly high-impact school board is a solid board-superintendent working partnership, and one of the most effective ways to keep that partnership healthy and productive is a well-designed process for board evaluation of the superintendent (p. 29).

However, Mitchell (1994) found that superintendents perceive “school boards change the rules on them all the time. They think they are tackling the major problems in their districts; then they find out the boards had different priorities” (p. 32). Balancing this dynamic contained within a board-superintendent relationship when it comes to establishing and then maintaining evaluatory criteria, often becomes a critical component of the evaluatory process (Jones, 1994).

The development of an effective evaluation process is not intuitive to the board-superintendent relationship (Abrams, 1987). Abrams (1987) believed that the impetus to advocate for an objective evaluation fell to the superintendent and was only achieved when the assessment instrument was collaboratively developed with the board and evaluatory criteria has fidelity to a given job description. The individualization of the evaluatory process for each superintendent by each board plays an important role in ensuring that the evaluation is pertinent to the stakeholders to the evaluation (Chand, 1984).

Failure to personalize the evaluation process and documents may leave the superintendent feeling evaluated by criteria that is not pertinent to him/her. Grady &



Bryant (1991) found in their study of school board presidents and their superintendents' handling of critical situations facing their respective school districts found that:

The most frequent cause of tension between a school board and its superintendent has nothing to do with administrivia or ethics and everything to do with human relations. Put simply, poor people skills are the common cause of tense times between superintendents and their boards (p.24).

Tallerico (1989) found that board members and their interactions with the superintendent fall along a continuum that ranges "from passive acquiescence to proactive supportiveness to resistive vigilance" and that these interactions were fostered by "the distinct ways in which information is collected and utilized, and the scope, purpose and degree of board member involvement in school district affairs" (p.218). How a district devises its governance structure, how individual board members perceive their role, how information is disseminated and board members and superintendents interact on the basis of their personal qualities, all coalesce to build essential elements of the board-superintendent dynamic within a district (Tallerico, 1989).

Indeed it is the shared understanding by board members and the superintendent of their respective roles in the governance process that contributes much to the parameters of the relationship (Hayden, 1986). If the roles of the various parties to the evaluation are not clearly understood, and that feeds into the evaluative process, challenges can emerge that may undercut the efficacy of the board-superintendent relationship (Hayden, 1986). However, the clearer the organizational goals are defined by the board of education, and the more time is spent working toward their completion, the more apt the board-superintendent dynamic stays positive (Brodinski, 1983).

### **Literature Review Summary**

The extant literature relating to superintendent evaluations is not highly developed. While a rationale behind evaluation theory is well established, there is not a tremendous amount written about how boards and superintendents should approach the evaluation processes. The efforts in research regarding evaluating the school district superintendent are largely underdeveloped and dated. As such, current thinking, regarding the practical application of alignment of the evaluation process to clearly defined standards, public transparency to the process, and the contemporary purpose for conducting an evaluation of a superintendent, is not well defined. This study attempted to explore those topics in light of the dated literature particularly in the era of accountability and the ongoing conversation about leadership of public education.

Chapter Three provides a description of the methodology utilized to conduct the study and collect findings related to the research questions posed.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

This qualitative study was developed to provide a descriptive content analysis of what information is made accessible to the public regarding school superintendent evaluations in the State of New York. Berelson (1952) defined content analysis as “a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication” (p.18) and contended that:

Content analysis is often done to reveal the purposes, motives, and characteristics of the communicators as they are (presumably) ‘reflected’ in the content; or to identify the (presumable) effects of the content upon the attention, attitudes, or acts of the readers and listeners (p.18-19).

Thus, this research study attempted to identify the common attributes of the evaluation process, in an effort to discern the evaluative characteristics of superintendent performance and their relationship to the New York State *Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective Leadership* (2001).

The purpose of this qualitative study using descriptive content analysis of public documents relating to school superintendent evaluations was to judge the degree of public transparency in the evaluation methodology and procedures of school superintendents of districts with student populations between 700 and 900 students in the State of New York.

The study was designed to look at publicly available documents (superintendent employment contracts, district developed evaluatory methodologies, and district

websites) related to how superintendents are evaluated in school districts of the aforementioned size and explore how these districts are approaching the evaluation of the superintendent and their alignment with the *Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership* (2001), the school leadership standards for the State of New York.

Holsti (1969) notes that, “historically a major impetus toward development of content analysis was a concern for judging literature against certain standards” (p.53). This research study looks at the documents both holistically with regard to the purpose of evaluation, the characteristics of the evaluation, and in relation to the above-named leadership standards.

The study investigated four questions related to the evaluation processes employed by school districts. They were:

1. What are the stated purposes and processes for the evaluation of the school superintendent amongst these districts as stated in superintendent contracts?
2. In what ways are the *Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership* (2001) referenced in the evaluatory methodology and procedures of school superintendents?
3. How do districts/superintendents promote public transparency with regard to the evaluatory criteria in their evaluation?
4. What are the most common elements for evaluation listed in contract language and how do these criteria relate to the literature surrounding superintendent evaluations?

Bogden & Biklen (1992) contend that the evaluation of official school documents in a qualitative research study affords the researcher insight not only into the

public truths that are portended in the documents, but also insight into the context and perspectives of the individuals who devised them. They find that the information the documents provide demonstrate the thinking of the individuals and institutions which created them at a given point in time.

Glaser & Strauss (1967) found that using documents in qualitative research is as valid a way of formulating theory in a research study as both observations and interviews, finding that the use of descriptive content analysis premised upon documents, provides the researcher with an opportunity to present findings in a contextual format. Thus, content analysis in qualitative research studies as defined by Krippendorff (1980), “is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context” (p.21).

Understanding the context in which the documents studied exist is a critical component of the research process. As the evaluation of a school superintendent is a mandated requirement of school boards in New York State, public documents relating to the evaluation of the superintendent are set in the context of considering the performance of the individual within the construct of contractual commitments and board developed methodologies for evaluation.

Acknowledging as Glesne & Peshkin (1992) do that qualitative research is interpretive in nature and additionally by Bogden & Taylor (1975) that document-based research represents the context and information at a singular point in time, empowers the researcher to develop an understanding of the expectations, viewpoints and intent of the individuals who created the documents. Accordingly, a qualitative research study premised upon the analysis of documents enables the researcher to generate a theory by

studying the context in which the documents exist and interpreting them to forge conclusions about the information examined.

### **Research Design**

Gay & Airasian (1996) argued that “qualitative research should indicate the nature of evidence that will be collected and how it will be collected” (p.107). Patton (2002) found that “qualitative methods permit inquiry into selected issues in great depth with careful attention to detail, context and nuance” (p.227). Maxwell (2004) expanded, finding that qualitative research enables a researcher to examine the processes that explain broader outcomes. Patton (2002) also found that the value of the research design derives itself from the researcher’s clarity of purpose in undertaking the study in the first place.

This study examined the publicly available employment contracts of school superintendents, website materials, and evaluatory methodologies as required to be publicly accessible by 8 NYCRR 100.2(o)(1)(vi) which outlines the procedures mutually devised between the local board of education and the district’s given superintendent. By examining the publicly stated purposes for superintendent evaluation; considering whether or not the evaluation methodologies or listed criteria are aligned to adopted standards, looking for commonalities across superintendent evaluation methodologies, and assessing how accessible this information is to the general public, a picture of the current processes utilized in superintendent evaluations in New York State can emerge. Indeed, as Wildemuth (2009) found regarding a research study predicated on documents:

If an appropriate sample can be gathered, this nonreactive approach to data collection can allow the researcher to see some aspects of a situation that could

not be detected through more intrusive data collection methods such as interviews and questionnaires (p. 164).

Bogdan and Biklen (1992) expand on the value of looking at documents during a qualitative study finding that it is incumbent upon the researcher to have “a grasp on the reason the objects were produced and how that affects the form as well as the information potential of what you are surveying” (p. 152). Marshall and Rossman (1989) hold that descriptive research in qualitative studies finds its strength when it helps to explain the context in which an event takes place. They further contend that the quality of the data and the credibility of the study are undergirded by the sample selected.

Because this study was designed to examine publicly available documents relating to the evaluation of school superintendents in New York State, the sample of superintendents selected each work for a school district that has a legal obligation to conduct an evaluation of their performance on an annual basis. Creswell (2014) holds that when a researcher is conducting qualitative research premised upon qualitative documents, it is important to consider them as data which “participants have given attention” (p.192). It is the quality of attention given that helps inform the intent of their design and purpose for their existence.

As this research study undertook to examine the publicly available documentation relating to superintendent evaluation the researcher must, as Glaser & Strauss (1967) posit, begin with a systematic categorization of topics relevant to the area of study. Krippendorff (1980) found that the analysis procedures of a qualitative study involve the “identification and representation of patterns that are noteworthy, statistically significant, or otherwise accounting for or descriptive of the content analysis results” (p.55).

Accordingly, each publicly available document collected was reviewed and coded to examine trends in language usage, evaluation procedures, and alignment to leadership standards devised by the State of New York. Wildemuth (2009) found that, “qualitative content analysis usually uses individual themes as the unit of analysis, rather than the physical linguistic units (e.g., word, sentence, or paragraph) most often used in quantitative analysis” (p.310). As Glesne & Peshkin (1992) state, “your understanding of the phenomena in question grows as you make use of the documents and artifacts that are a part of people’s lives” (p.54).

### **Sample and Sampling Procedures**

The population for this study was school superintendents in the State of New York. The superintendents studied led districts of the student population size of between 700 and 900 students. During the 1994-1995 school-year, New York State had 39 school districts that had between 700 and 900 students enrolling a total of 31,255 students, accounting for 5% of the school districts in the State of New York. By the 2014-2015 school year, the number of districts in New York State enrolling between 700 and 900 students had grown to include 71 districts, enrolling 56,744 total students and almost 10% of the school districts in New York State ("NYSED: IRS: Public School Enrollment,"n.d.). This demographic size district is one of the fastest growing district types in the State of New York.

As patterns related to deindustrialization, an aging population, and limited economic opportunities infuse much of Upstate New York, this size of school district continues to emerge as a more common staple on the educational landscape (New York



State Center for Rural Schools, 2009). These challenges were further expanded upon by the New York State Education Department when it wrote:

Small school districts, particularly those, which are not wealthy, have difficulty providing the breadth of educational programs and variety of opportunities which currently are available in larger districts. If student enrollment drops, the small district must often choose between a reduction in program or an increase in local property taxes (NYSED, 2015).

Thus, because this size of school district is among the fastest growing in the state, the challenges presented in running a small school district are magnified and the characteristics of evaluating these superintendents as a group may provide insight as to how school boards navigate leadership standards in districts of this size, this population of district leaders is worthy of study.

Utilizing the purposive sampling technique of total population sampling, all 71 districts that fall into this demographic district were studied. Because of the number of districts in the sample, utilizing total population sampling enabled the researcher to make generalizations of findings using analysis from all districts in the demographic grouping allowing for more purposeful insights to be developed regarding the various elements that comprise these superintendents' evaluation methodologies (Total population sampling, 2016). While the researcher was able to ascertain the employment agreements and district websites of each of the district superintendents studied, the sample size of superintendents' school district evaluatory methodology documents resulted in 22 district responses.

## **Instrumentation**

Miles & Hubberman (1994) find that highly developed instrumentation when undertaking a qualitative study often “lusts for universality, uniformity, and comparability but qualitative research lives and breathes through seeing the context; it is the particularities that produce the generalities, not the reverse” (p. 35). This research study was predicated upon descriptive content analysis of publicly available documents and the research questions of the study were designed to uncover information that could lead to generalized statements regarding superintendent evaluations in New York State.

A document review of publicly available documents (contracts, website postings related to superintendent evaluations, and the public evaluation procedures required to be available by law) was utilized as the data collection instrument. Bogden & Taylor (1975) note that when a researcher undertakes qualitative research with unsolicited documents, those documents that already exist and are not created for the researcher, the research is “confined to the selection, location, analysis, and presentation of such documents” (p.96). This style of research is particularly aligned to the research design of this study as the study sought to understand the evaluation methodologies of school superintendents in New York school districts, as they are publicly available.

## **Data Collection**

First, a list of the districts with student enrollments between 700 and 900 was developed. Then, the superintendents’ contracts for each of the 71 districts included in the study were collected using a data-base sponsored by the Empire Center, a non-partisan think tank operating out of Albany, New York. Next, a letter was composed asking school district superintendents to provide a copy of their public evaluation

procedures document as required by 8 NYCRR 100.2(o)(1)(vi). The superintendents were provided with a self-addressed stamped envelope along with an email address to aid in the return of such documentation. The letters were sent out once and no additional follow up took place by the researcher with the respondents. The letter sent to the school district superintendents can be found in Appendix D. With a 30% response rate (22 out of 71 districts responding) with no follow up regarding the evaluatory methodology documents, and having a substantive representative sample as a result, the decision not to follow up was done after thoughtful consideration of the impact of “foiling” documents from superintendent colleagues regarding their evaluation methodologies. Finally, the websites of each of the 71 school districts were scanned for any information pertaining to the evaluation of the school superintendent.

By collecting data relating to school superintendent evaluations in this manner, the researcher attempted to determine the public accessibility of information related to the evaluation of the superintendent by seeking data related to evaluations three different ways from each of the 71 school districts studied.

### **Data Analysis**

Utilizing descriptive content analysis, the data collected including all 71 employment agreements, a review of all 71 district websites, and the 22 of 71 district evaluatory methodologies were categorized using a systematic and rigorous approach to answer the research questions (Miles and Hubberman, 1994). The purpose for evaluation was extrapolated from the documents collected, the evaluatory criteria that were revealed in the documents were reviewed and organized and references, direct or indirect to the *Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership* (2001) were examined

and noted as the researcher hand coded the printed documents. After looking at the content analysis findings, a descriptive content analysis regarding overall phenomena found in the document review provided a broader analysis of the overall findings (Bowen, 2009).

Data relating to each of the 71 school districts were coded using an inductive approach, and then collected and maintained in an Excel spreadsheet which permitted the researcher to discover the categories for coding (Creswell, 2014). The topical categories relating to the evaluation of a superintendent that revealed themselves in the document review included: the superintendent's working relationship with board, the alignment of performance to position description, superintendent progress toward goals, measurements against given performance based criteria, areas for improvement, achievement of required duties and responsibilities, general job performance, overall conduct, and mutually established performance criteria. Examples of the contractual language that led to the development of these categories are found in Appendix B. Appendix B provides a representation of the contractual language and how it was coded and organized to inductively develop the topical categories relating to the evaluation of the school superintendent, utilized in this study. Further, the *Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership* (2001) were also maintained in the Excel spreadsheet and the researcher utilized a cross-matrices to align the information contained in the documents to the given standards.

The coding process divided the data collected as it related to each of the research questions of the study. Additionally, the information once properly hand coded, was evaluated to examine trends and frequency of evaluatory terminology, references to

standards, stated purposes for evaluation of the superintendent, and transparent methodologies.

### **Researcher Bias**

A study premised upon descriptive content analysis is limited by the subjectivity of the researcher in accurately coding the information collected through the documents reviewed (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975). The researcher must be careful to accurately code the information they received, have a clear methodology for approaching the organization of the content, and make every effort to utilize the appropriate/current document when conducting their content analysis.

Utilizing publicly available documents produced by the districts studied and relying upon the research driven by literature review, the researcher was careful to avoid bias in the study. Additionally, a researcher must accurately record the participant districts' response to the document request, particularly when undertaking a total population sample for the purposes of conducting the research (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975). The researcher was again careful to do this and reviewed the documents multiple times to ensure that the content was hand coded accurately.

Further, it must be noted that the researcher is a superintendent of a school district in New York State with a student enrollment of 817 students. This information was disclosed to all districts in the letter requesting their superintendent evaluatory methodologies.

### **Validity and Reliability**

The validity of the study would have been limited if a large number of the superintendent contracts were unavailable or if a large number of school districts did not

provide their procedures as required by law. However, all 71 employment agreements for the respective districts were obtained by the researcher, 22 of 71 or 30% of the evaluatory methodologies were also obtained by the researcher from the respective districts, and the websites of all 71 districts were reviewed as part of the research for this study. There is some limited validity to the study due to the lower response rate of respondents.

Additionally, because the study does not cover all superintendents in the State of New York, the study's findings and conclusions are generalizable only to those districts that fit the demographic criteria of the districts selected. As Babbie (2010) posits:

The concreteness of materials studied in content analysis strengthens the likelihood of reliability. You can always code your data, and then recode the original documents from scratch. And you can repeat the process as many times as you want. In field research, by contrast, there's no way to return to original events that were observed, recorded, and categorized (p.344).

The researcher checked the accuracy of the coding methodology by having another school superintendent in New York State review some of the documents contained in the study and code them to ensure inter-rater reliability in the coding process.

## **Summary**

The methodology of this qualitative study was designed to allow the researcher to collect documents relating to evaluation of superintendents in New York State school districts with a student population between 700 and 900 students. The documents collected all came from the public domain so as to allow the researcher to determine what information regarding superintendent evaluations are publicly available. Additionally, through content analysis, the researcher attempted to answer four research questions, and

thematically evaluate the overall design evaluation process with regard to the *Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership* (2001). Chapter Four provides an analysis of the findings in relation to the research questions posed in the study.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS

#### Introduction

The intent of this qualitative case study from archival material was to evaluate the degree of public transparency in the evaluation methodology and procedures of school superintendents of districts with student populations between 700 and 900 students in the State of New York. The study conducted used descriptive content analysis of superintendent contracts, school district websites, and provided district devised evaluatory methodologies, notes the characteristics and processes involved in the process; and analyzes their alignment to the *Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership* (2001).

The contracts of all 71 superintendents who fit the demographic described above were analyzed for information relating to their evaluation criteria and 71 letters were sent to the same district superintendents with a postage-paid return envelope and email address requesting the evaluatory methodologies utilized in guiding their evaluation process consistent with NYCRR 100.2(o)(1)(vi). Of those 71 letters soliciting the methodologies, the researcher received a response from 22 of the district superintendents constituting a 30% response rate to the request for documents. Further, the websites of all 71 school districts were analyzed for information pertaining to the superintendent's evaluation.

This chapter is organized around the four research questions that ground the study to evaluate the degree of public transparency in the evaluation methodology and procedures of school superintendents of districts with student populations between 700 and 900 students in the State of New York. The questions were:



1. What are the stated purposes and processes for the evaluation of the school superintendent amongst these districts as stated in superintendent contracts?
2. In what ways are the *Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership* (2001) referenced in the evaluatory methodology and procedures of school superintendents?
3. How do superintendents promote public transparency with regard to the evaluatory criteria in their evaluation?
4. What are the most common elements for evaluation listed in contract language and how do these criteria relate to the literature surrounding superintendent evaluations?

The research questions seek to understand the purposes of the superintendent evaluation, how the *Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership* (2001) factor into the evaluatory criteria, the public's ability to understand the criteria of the evaluation and the connection of what is occurring to research based best practices.

### **Descriptive Information**

The 71 school districts in New York State with a student population between 700 and 900 students researched in this study are a mixture of high need rural districts, average need districts, and low need districts as defined by New York State. Of the 71 districts studied, 44 are classified as average need districts, 24 are high need rural districts, and three are low need districts. The districts that fit the demographic criteria for this study are found across New York. Using the regional classification provided by NYSED, 12 districts are found in Central New York, 24 in Eastern New York, three in the Hudson Valley, three on Long Island, and 29 districts are located in Western New

York. A detailed distribution of these school districts with regard to their enrollment, region of the state, and their needs resource capacity is found in Appendix A.

This study examined the language of the 71 superintendent employment agreements and school district websites as they related to superintendent annual evaluations and the responses of 22 of 71 school districts regarding their evaluatory methodologies utilized in evaluating the district leader. The table below outlines the districts, their needs-resource capacity, enrollment, and generalized geographic region analyzed in this study.

Table Two (Districts =71)

*Distribution of School Districts with Student Populations between 700 and 900 Pupils and Their Needs Resource Capacity in New York State*

	Western	Central	Eastern	Hudson	Long Island	Total %
Average N/RC District	21	5	15	2	1	62%
High N/RC: Rural District	8	7	9	0	0	34%
Low N/RC District	0	0	0	1	2	4%
Totals	29	12	24	3	3	

The distribution of these school districts indicates that school districts with student populations between 700 and 900 pupils are predominately found in the upstate region of New York, (Western, Central, and Eastern, New York) and approximately two thirds of

which are average need school districts and one third of which are high needs school districts.

## **Findings**

The findings for the research questions in this study are presented below. For each research question, there is a restatement of the question, a generalized summary of the findings, and then an in-depth analysis as to the evidence that supports each finding.

**Research Question One. What are the stated purposes and processes for the evaluation of the school superintendent amongst these districts as stated in superintendent contracts?** There were four findings that emerged from the data about the purposes and processes for the evaluation of the school district superintendent. Finding one holds that the most commonly stated purposes of the superintendent evaluation are to empower a school board to evaluate the success of the superintendent with regard to their given goals (44 out of 71 contracts or 62%), general job performance (43 out of 71 contracts or 60.5%), and to assess the efficacy of the superintendent's relationship with their school board (40 out of 71 contracts or 53%). A full accounting of the stated purposes for the evaluation of school superintendents can be found in Table Three.

The second finding is that the evaluation process is a cycle supported by a goal development process between the board of education and the superintendent just over 49% of the time, with the majority of goal development processes taking place between August and December of each year. An accounting of the months of the school year in which a goals conference takes place is found in Table Four.

Finding three is that the evaluation cycle is supported by a mid-year evaluation conference between the superintendent and the school board 25% of the time (18 of the 71 contracts) and finding four is that the evaluation cycle concludes with a final evaluation conference 99% of the time or in 70 of 71 contracts studied. The timing of the final evaluation conference is found in Table Five.

***Finding One: The most commonly stated purposes of the superintendent evaluation are to empower a school board to evaluate the success of the superintendent with regard to their given goals (44 out of 71 districts or 62%), job performance (43 out of 71 districts or 60.5%) and to assess the efficacy of the superintendent's relationship with their school board (40 out of 71 contracts or 53%).*** Within the 71 contracts analyzed for the purposes of this study to identify the stated purposes for the evaluation of the school superintendent, three major themes emerged as the most frequent reasons for a school board to evaluate the district leader. These included: Superintendent success with regard to mutually agreed upon performance criteria found in 62% of the contracts studied; the general performance of the superintendent found in 60.5% of the contracts analyzed; and the working relationship between the superintendent and the board of education noted in 53% of the contracts that comprised this study. While some district superintendent employment contracts may have mentioned multiple categories and other employment contracts mentioned none, the numbers provided represent the total number of times those categories were referenced by all contracts of the 71 districts in the study.

The most often stated purpose in the superintendents' contracts was their success with regard to mutually agreed upon performance criteria. This language was found in 44 of the 71 contracts that comprised the study. Such language stating the process for

which mutual agreement regarding performance goals would be derived by a school board and a school superintendent was found in statements such as:

The Superintendent shall provide to the Board a written statement of annual goals and objectives which the Superintendent intends to concentrate on during the upcoming school year. The Board shall review said goals and objectives and if the Board concurs with the Superintendent's written state of goals and objectives, the Board's concurrence will be noted on said written statement via execution by the Board President. If the Board does not agree with the Superintendent's written statement of goals and objectives, it shall meet with the Superintendent to form mutually acceptable goals and objectives (District #11).

In other contracts, the statements regarding the mutually derived goals and objectives had language which read, "the evaluation shall be based on written goals and performance criteria developed in consultation between the Board and Superintendent, which shall be reviewed and updated during July and August of each year" (District #12), or "the evaluation shall be based upon performance criteria mutually agreed up by the parties" (District #3).

In no instance, did a contract included in this study explicitly state the mutually agreed upon performance criteria, only that such criteria would be created by mutual collaboration in 44 of the 71 districts represented by the contracts included in the study.

The next most frequent purpose for the evaluation of the superintendent included a review of the general performance of the superintendent. Language regarding this purpose was found in 43 (60.5%) of the contracts studied. References to "general performance" were found in statements such as:

The Board shall base its evaluation upon the Superintendent's performance and progress towards the goals and objectives established by the Superintendent and Board as set forth above, as well as the general performance of the superintendent in carrying out his required duties and responsibilities (District #38), and with contractual language stating:

“the Board shall devote at least a portion of one meeting during the month of July in each year of the Superintendent's employment by the District to an evaluation in executive session of his performance and working relationship with the Board” (District #48).

The third most frequently stated purpose in the contracts studied for conducting an evaluation of the superintendent was to assess the working relationship between the board of education and the superintendent. This purpose was explicitly mentioned in 40 of the 71 contracts (56%) that comprised this study. Contract language that included this provision included language read:

The Board shall also devote at least a portion of one meeting during the month of December of each year during the Superintendent's employment by the District to a general discussion in Executive Session between the Board and the Superintendent with respect to his performance and his working relationship with the Board” (District #1).

Other districts made the discussion of the working relationship between the board and the superintendent a time bound exercise by stating:

No later than June 1, in each year of the initial term of this Agreement, or any extended term thereof, the Board shall evaluate the performance of the

Superintendent in writing and shall, within thirty (30) days after each evaluation, devote a portion or all of one meeting to a discussion of the working relationships between the Superintendent of Schools and the Board (District #4).

Additional purposes for conducting an evaluation of the Superintendent that emerged using inductive logic during a review of the contract documents include assessing: progress toward completing individual superintendent goals (found in 7 out of 71 contracts), performance toward accomplishing school district goals (found in 6 out of 71 contracts), performance compared to school district superintendent job descriptions (found in 5 of 71 contracts), the superintendent's performance regarding required duties and responsibilities (found in 4 of 71 contracts), performance when measured against performance based criteria (found in 3 of 71 contracts), areas for improvement (found in 3 of 71 contracts), and the overall conduct of the superintendent (found in 1 of 71 contracts). Table Three outlines the purposes for conducting a superintendent evaluation by contract language. Again, while some district superintendent employment contracts may have mentioned multiple categories and other employment contracts mentioned none, the numbers provided represent the total number of times those categories were referenced by all contracts of the 71 districts in the study. Certainly, some employment contracts had far more developed language than others with regard to the annual evaluation of the school superintendent. With regard to the numbers in Table Three, if 44 districts reported that, "superintendent success with regard to mutually agreed upon performance criteria" was a basis for the evaluation that means 27 districts did not reference that criterion at all.

Table Three

*The Purposes of a Superintendent Evaluation by Contract Language*

<i>To Evaluate</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage %</i>
Superintendent Success with Regard to Mutually Agreed Upon Performance Criteria	44	62
General Performance of the Superintendent	43	60.5
The Working Relationship between the Superintendent and the Board of Education	40	53
Progress toward Completing Individual Superintendent Goals	7	9.8
Performance toward Accomplishing School District Goals	6	8.4
Performance Compared to School District Superintendent Job Description	5	7
The Superintendent's Performance Regarding Required Duties and Responsibilities	4	5.6
Performance When Measured Against Performance Based Criteria	3	4.2
Areas for Improvement	3	4.2
The Overall Conduct of the Superintendent	1	1.4

*\*Some of the contracts mentioned multiple categories.*

***Finding Two: Goals and performance criteria drive the elements of the evaluation processes in 44 of 71 (62%) contracts, however, how the goals and performance criteria are established and subsequent ownership of the goals and the development of the criteria used to undergird evaluation can vary from being board directed, superintendent directed, or arrived at mutually.*** To determine the process by which the evaluation of the school superintendent takes place, a review of the 71 contracts included in this study indicated that while the process used to establish the goals and develop the criteria for evaluation was not explained in 36 out of 71 contracts



studied, it was provided for in the remaining 35 contracts studied. The process varied from being board directed 2 out of 71 times, to superintendent directed 7 out of 71 times, to being derived by mutual collaboration between the board of education and superintendent 26 out of 71 times.

Contract language defined the process by which these performance objectives and goals are to be developed. Of the contracts studied, 36 of 71 (50.7%) are silent as to how the goals and performance criteria are derived. In contrast, 35 of the 71 (49.2%) contracts evaluated for this study provided for a process to be developed between the board of education and the superintendent for the purposes of establishing the performance criteria for the evaluation and articulating the explicit goals the superintendent will work on during the course of a given school year. However, as noted in Table Three, superintendents in this demographic grouping are evaluated with regard to their success with mutually agreed performance criteria in 44 of 71 instances. This suggests a process may exist in nine districts to define a set of performance criterion that is not explicitly defined in contractual language. This number is the difference between the number of districts that evaluate a superintendent on mutually agreed performance criteria (44) and the number of districts that have a contractually defined process for doing so (35). The study of the process related to goal and performance criteria development found in the 35 of 71 contracts that provided for an evaluation process, revealed three distinct methodologies for how goals and performance objectives were developed.

The Board of Education develops goals and provides them to the superintendent in two out of 35 contractual mentions or 5.7% of the time. This process is evidenced by contract language such as:

The Board, at its option, may devote at least a portion of one meeting in or about the month of March in each year of the Superintendent's employment by the District to the development of a list of goals for the District for the ensuing year. A written memorandum summarizing the goals shall be provided to the Board by the Superintendent subsequent to such discussion and the Superintendent shall attempt to effectuate those goals (District #42).

An example of the contractual language in which the Superintendent develops individual goals and provides them to the Board of Education is found seven out of 35 contractual mentions or 20% of the time in statements such as:

On or before September 1 of each school year of this Agreement, the Superintendent shall provide to the Board a written statement of the annual goals and objectives which the Superintendent intends to concentrate on during the upcoming school year (District #38).

In other contracts, the Board and Superintendent collaboratively develop and arrive at goals and performance criteria. This was the case in 26 out of 35 contracts or in 74% of the contracts that specified a process. This process is explained in employment contracts by statements such as, "the board shall devote at least a portion of one meeting prior to September 1 of each school year of the Superintendent's employment by the District to the cooperative development of a list of District goals for the ensuing school

year” (District #27). These findings demonstrate that school boards take multiple approaches to the process by which the criteria utilized in the evaluation is derived.

The goals devised as a result of this process did not have to be exclusively aligned with larger district goals as this requirement was only found in six of the 71 contracts with specific language stating, “the evaluation and assessment shall be reasonably related to the position descriptions of the Superintendent and the goals and objectives of the District in the year in question” (District #39) and “the evaluation shall be based upon written performance criteria and specific, data-based District goals established by the Board and shall continue year-to-year unless changed in writing” (District #63).

Further, no matter which methodology the district selected to create the goals and performance criteria utilized to support the evaluation of the superintendent, the timing of the goals conference varies across the districts studied with 16 of the 35 goal setting meetings taking place in the month of September, seven in October, one in November, one in February, one in March, four in June, two in July, and three in August. The timing of the goal conference among the 35 districts that specifically reference a process out of the 71 contracts studied is displayed in Table Three. While no contract specifically referenced why the goal conferences take place in the month provided, one could reasonably assume that the months mentioned allow for goal setting for a coming school year and not a school year currently in progress.

Table Four (Total Contracts= 35)

*Timing of Superintendent Goal Conferences*

Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Unk.
0	1	1	0	0	4	2	3	16	7	1	0	0

***Finding Three: One quarter (25%) of the contracts explicitly included a mid-year review of the superintendent's performance.*** The evaluation process for 25%, or 18 of the 71 contracts included in this study, included a mid-year opportunity for the superintendents to engage the board of education in a review of their individual performance. The remaining 53 contracts in the study were again silent as to whether or not such a process takes place in their districts with regard to the superintendent. The mid-year review process affords the board an opportunity to provide the superintendent with ongoing feedback. Contract language includes statements such as:

In or about the month of January of each year, the Board will conduct a mid-year assessment of the Superintendent's progress toward achieving the goals and criteria. The Superintendent will be notified, in writing, of any changes or modifications which the Board desires and the Superintendent shall concentrate on those areas (District #56).

Other districts speak to the mid-year review process as a more discrete conversation regarding overall job performance, "The Board shall devote a portion of its regular meeting in October and February in each year, during an executive session, for discussion with the Superintendent regarding her job performance" (District # 59). Further, District #3 states, "The Board shall also devote a portion of a meeting, by no later than December 31<sup>st</sup> of each year, to a mid-term informal evaluation of her performance." District #11 by contrast states, "The Board may use the mid-year assessment and the end of the year evaluation to inform the Superintendent of any concerns it may have or any concerns it has received from others." Thus, the mid-year evaluation process is utilized by those school boards that elect to engage in such a

process, to provide feedback, update on goal performance, discuss concerns, and informally engage in a dialogue about how the superintendent is performing during the school year.

Of the 18 of 71 districts whose contract explicitly provided for a mid-year review of their superintendent as part of the evaluation process, the mid-year review timespan for evaluation ran from the months of November with three conferences to December with six, January with four, February with four, and one conference simply contractually assured with no given timeline for it to take place provided. While it is possible that additional mid-year reviews could occur as a result of language in evaluation methodology documents, this research question focused exclusively on superintendent contractual language.

***Finding Four: A final evaluation conference was included in 70 of the 71 contracts reviewed.*** The process of the evaluation of superintendent concludes with a final evaluation conference with contractual provisions found for such a conference in 70 of 71 contracts included in this study. Only District #2 provided no information in the employment contract of the superintendent regarding how the annual goals, objectives, and evaluation would be completed. The process of the final evaluation generally provides an opportunity for boards to reflect on the superintendent's efforts toward completing mutually agreed upon goals, assess his general performance, and evaluate the quality of their working relationship with the district leader.

The final evaluation process is created both as a matter of legal statute:

The Board shall devote at least a portion of one meeting during the month of December in the first year of the Superintendent's employment by the District to

an evaluation of his performance and his working relationship with the Board and in accordance with the regulations of the Commissioner of Education (District #35)

and because a school board recognizes, “its responsibilities and the benefit of a fair and complete assessment tool for reviewing the Superintendent” (District #15).

The final evaluation process is often defined in contract language that holds that the evaluation is premised upon general performance, the working relationship with the Board, or predetermined goals and performance criteria as demonstrated in Finding One. This is evidenced by language in contracts stating:

The Board shall devote at least a portion of one meeting in or about the month of March in each year of the Superintendent’s employment by the District to an evaluation in executive session of her performance and working relationship with the Board (District #42)

or “the evaluation shall be based on written goals and performance criteria previously developed between the Board and the Superintendent” (District# 61).

Contractually, the final evaluation conference takes place throughout a given year. Of the 71 contracts evaluated, 70 specifically referenced the final evaluation process/conference, six districts provided no set month for such a process to take place, and one contract was completely silent on the evaluation process in its entirety. The timing of the conference is displayed in Table Five. The timing of the final evaluation process may in some cases coincide with the end of the calendar year as opposed to a school year, or the anniversary of employment with a school district as evidenced by Table Five.

Table Five (Total Contracts=70)

*Timing of Final Evaluation Conferences*

Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Unk.
2	5	13	8	12	18	4	0	0	0	0	2	6

Only one contract reviewed (District #2) contained no provision for superintendent evaluation and subsequently the timing of their evaluatory conference is unknown. The timing of the conferences is largely split between before the end of a school year and those taking place post the end of the school year.

Further, the end of year evaluation process is not always undertaken at the impetus of the board of education, but rather, the onus for initiating the process is placed upon the superintendent via a contractual obligation to remind the board that they have a duty to evaluate the superintendent within a given time frame. This requirement was found in four of the 71 contracts studied. District #17's superintendent employment agreement reads, "The superintendent shall notify the Board of Education on or before March 1 of each year of the contract of the Board's obligation to evaluate the Superintendent." Additionally, District #4 holds in the contract that, "the superintendent will remind the Board in May of each year that an evaluation shall take place during the succeeding month." District #33's Board of Education will only conduct an evaluation of the superintendent if the superintendent reminds the board, "the Board of Education shall evaluate the Superintendent in writing during February of each year, provided the Superintendent gives notice of this provision by January 15<sup>th</sup>." Language of this nature was found in four of the contracts studied.

**Research Question Two: In what ways are the *Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership* (2001) referenced in the evaluatory methodology and**

**procedures of school superintendents?** The data revealed two findings relating to the incorporation of the *Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership* (2001) into the evaluatory methodology and procedures of school superintendents. Finding one was that the *Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership* (2001) were not referenced in any of the evaluation methodologies and procedures. Finding two indicates that there is no formal evaluation regarding managing and leading change as a formal stand-alone criterion for superintendent evaluation.

Of the 71 school districts solicited to provide copies of the evaluatory methodology and procedural documents related to the annual evaluation of the superintendent as required to be made available to the public under 8 NYCRR 100.2(o)(1)(vi), 22 districts provided the requested documentation. No districts from the Hudson and Long Island region responded to the request for documents resulting in a regional limitation to the study with regard to the district evaluation methodology document. Using content analysis, no evaluatory methodology document contained any specifically reference to the *Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership* (2001).



Table Six (Districts =22)

*Distribution of School Districts with Student Populations between 700 and 900 Pupils and Their Needs Resource Capacity in New York State that Responded to the Request for Evaluatory Methodologies.*

	Western	Central	Eastern	Hudson	Long Island	Total %
Average N/RC District	5	5	6	0	0	73 %
High N/RC: Rural District	0	4	2	0	0	27 %
Low N/RC District	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Totals	5	9	8	0	0	100%

While none of the evaluatory methodology and procedural documents reviewed in this study explicitly referenced the *Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership* (2001), criteria contained within the leadership standards was found in the stated purposes of the superintendent's evaluation as found in the methodology and procedural documents provided by 22 of the 71 school districts. A crosswalk between the *Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership* (2001) and the evaluatory criteria as identified by school districts for school superintendents in the evaluatory methodology and procedural documents is found in Table Seven.

***Finding One: None of the 22 evaluation methodology and evaluation documents explicitly referenced the Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership (2001).*** Utilizing content analysis, the 22 evaluation methodology and procedural documents provided by the districts were evaluated looking for any

connection either implicitly or explicitly to the *Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership* (2001). Using inductive approach to the documents, performance criteria were coded from the documents and then aligned to the leadership standards. These documents outline not only the process, but how evaluation ratings are created, narratives compiled, and ultimate judgments regarding performance are rendered.

Though none of the 22 evaluation methodology and procedural documents provided by the school districts explicitly referenced the *Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership* (2001), many of the evaluatory criteria utilized by boards of education when assessing superintendent performance amongst these districts utilizing the given methodologies and procedures are implicitly correlated with the *Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership* (2001). A crosswalk between the standards and a count the number of mentions of implicitly aligned evaluatory criteria found in the 22 evaluatory methodology and procedural documents received demonstrates areas where similarities exist between the standards and evaluatory elements.

The numbers of identifications of evaluatory criteria are double counted in Table Seven. In other words, if ethical leadership was mentioned in five of the 22 evaluatory documents studied, and ethical leadership supported two of the nine elements of the *Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership* (2001), the same five mentions were recorded under both elements.

Examining the data from the 22 evaluatory methodology and procedural documents relating to school superintendent evaluation the areas of communication,

effective leadership, vision, and collaboration, and staff development, and accountability feature heavily in the evaluation process.

Table Seven

*Standards and Evaluatory Criteria Crosswalk*

<i>Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership (2001)</i>	<i>Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership (2001) Sub-Headings by Standard</i>	<i>Corresponding Evaluatory Criteria as Identified by School Districts for School Superintendents and the Number of Mentions Found in 22 Evaluatory Methodology and Procedural Documents</i>
Leaders know and understand what it means and what it takes to be a leader.	identifying important goals, motivating and enabling others, devoting human and other resources to achievement	Planning and Goals (3), Use of Data in Decision Making (2), Budget Development/ Resource Allocation (14)
Leaders have a vision for schools that they constantly share and promote.	having a vision of the ideal, articulating the vision to any audience, building upon and sustaining the vision preceding them	Vision (3), Culture and Leadership/District Culture (5), Enthusiasm (1), Planning and Goals (3), Commitment to District Values (1)
Leaders communicate clearly and effectively	communicating effectively in writing and presenting, providing a confident and capable response to hard questions in public, questioning for understanding	Public Relations and Communications/ School-Community Relations (18), Speech and Voice (2), Job Knowledge (1)
Leaders collaborate and cooperate with others.	communicating high expectations, providing accurate information to foster understanding, maintaining trust and confidence, seeking support and assistance through building partnerships and securing resources, sharing credit for success and accomplishment, managing change through effective relationships with school boards	Board-Superintendent Relationship (11), Inter-Governmental Relations (2), Employee Relations (17), Board Governance (6)
Leaders persevere and take the “long view.”	building institutions that endure, staying the course, maintaining focus, overcoming resistance creating capacity within an organization	5 Year District-Wide Plan /Planning, Preparing and Implementing Policy (5), Values (1)
Leaders support, develop, and nurture staff.	setting a high standard of ethical behavior, inviting diverse, alternative perspectives, encouraging initiative, innovation and collaboration, demonstrating a strong work ethic, supporting continuous personal and professional growth for staff, recognizing individual staff talent and celebrating their accomplishments recruiting, promoting and mentoring potential leaders	Ethical Leadership (5), Personnel Supervision and Evaluation/Human Resources Management/Relations with Staff (17), Personnel and Staff Development (6)

Table Seven Continued

*Standards and Evaluatory Criteria Crosswalk*

<i>Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership</i> (2001)	<i>Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership</i> (2001) Sub-Headings by Standard	Corresponding Evaluatory Criteria as Identified by School Districts for School Superintendents and the Number of Mentions Found in 22 Evaluatory Methodology and Procedural Documents
Leaders hold themselves and others responsible and accountable.	inculcating comprehensive planning to improve the organization, utilizing data as a foundation for planning and decision making, managing human resources with respect, responsibility and accountability, managing physical and capital resources effectively and efficiently understanding good pedagogy and knowing effective classroom practice	Ethical Leadership (5), Organizational Management (4), Instructional Leadership (10), Accountability/Educational Direction (2), Use of Data in Decision Making (2), Planning (3), Student Achievement (1), Health and Vitality/Appearance (6)
Leaders never stop learning and honing their skills.	introspection and reflection, questioning and listening, knowing current research and best practice in education and other fields, continuous self- improvement and learning, maintaining balance in personal and professional lives	Professional Knowledge (1), Professional Development (1), Personal Development (6), Professional Growth (6), Self-Reflection (3)
Leaders have the courage to take informed risks.	embracing informed, planned change, garnering support for change efforts, courageously promoting success of all students	Attention to Detail (1), Problem Solving (1)

***Finding Two: No document examined related to the methodology and evaluation of the superintendent explicitly mentioned change as a stand-alone criterion.*** Notably absent from the performance criteria found in the evaluatory methodology and procedural documents, but embedded in the standards is a focus on leading and managing organizational change. The standards state that leaders, “embrace informed, planned change and recognize that everyone may not support change” (*Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership*, 2001). Thus, in an era of change in public education, its characteristics, qualities, and administration are not a primary focus of the evaluatory process amongst these districts.

**Research Question Three: How do superintendents promote public transparency with regard to the evaluatory criteria in their evaluation?** Utilizing content analysis of the 71 employment contracts of school superintendents and the 22 evaluatory methodology and procedural documents provided by school districts, three findings emerged from the data. Finding one was that no mention was made in the documents about how or if information relating to the evaluation of the school superintendent would be made publicly available. Finding two demonstrated that the evaluation is conducted during a board meeting, reduce to writing, often in executive session and its disclosure is limited by confidentiality agreements. Finding three revealed after a review of the 71 school district websites that no district publicly posts the evaluation forms, the methodology utilized in the evaluation, or the criteria used to complete the evaluation on their district website and only 3 out of 71 superintendents posted their goals on their district's websites.

***Finding One: There was no explicit mention in the documents or websites reviewed of any information relating to the sharing or public presentation of the evaluation findings or the evaluatory criteria utilized by a board of education at a school board meeting or public forum.*** In an effort to find evidence of how school superintendents promote public transparency with regard to their evaluatory criteria, content analysis of 71 school district websites, 71 superintendent employment contracts, and 22 evaluatory methodology and procedural documents revealed that there was no explicit mention in the documents or websites reviewed of any information relating to the sharing or public presentation of the evaluation findings or the criteria utilized by a board of education at a school board meeting or public forum.

While the Commissioner's Regulation 8 NYCRR 100.2(o)(1)(vi) mandates that the methodology utilized for the evaluation of the superintendent be made publicly available each school year, New York State Public Officers' Law, Article Seven, § 105 notes that a school board may enter executive session to discuss "the medical, financial, credit or employment history of a particular person or corporation, or matters leading to the appointment, employment, promotion, demotion, discipline, suspension, dismissal or removal of a particular person or corporation" ("Committee on open government, open meetings law," n.d.). Also, the New York State Council of School Superintendents notes in its guidance documents for superintendents regarding their evaluations that only the evaluatory criteria, goals, and job descriptions along with the overall composite rating by a board of education are subject to public disclosure if asked for by an individual. The subjective analysis remains confidential (The Council's Superintendent Model Evaluation, 2014).

Accordingly, even though 23% (16 out of 71) of the superintendent contracts failed to provide language specifying a contractual requirement for an executive session to study the working performance of the school superintendent and 56% (40 out of 71) of the contracts examined explicitly mentioned that the evaluations are confidential, elements of the laws of New York State work to ensure that the vast majority of the material and processes involved in the superintendent evaluation process is done outside of public scrutiny and remains unavailable.

***Finding Two: Of all 71 contracts, 67 provide that the final evaluation occurs during a board meeting, with 64 mandating a written document be developed as a result of the process, with 55 districts explicitly providing a right to have such a***

*meeting take place in executive session, and the outcome protected by an explicit confidentiality agreement between the board and superintendent in 40 of the 71 districts.* Content analysis of the contracts of the superintendents studied to look for areas in which the public might be invited into or given information relating to the evaluation process, indicated four recurring themes regarding how the evaluation was to be performed by a board of education. The four themes that emerged using an inductive approach toward the 71 employment contracts are that: the final evaluation takes place during a school board meeting (67 out of 71 contracts or 94.3%), that the evaluation is contractually often placed in writing (64 out of 71 contracts or 90.1%), that superintendents often have the contractual right to have the evaluation occur in executive session (55 out of 71 contracts or 77.4%) and there is an expectation of confidentiality of the evaluation existing between the superintendent and school board members (40 out of 71 contracts or 56.3%).

The most prevalent theme found in 67 out of 71 superintendent employment contracts was that superintendents had a contractual provision to have their evaluation take place during a portion of a school board meeting at least annually. This was often defined in language such as:

The Board shall devote at least a portion of one meeting during May of each year of the Superintendent's employment by the District, or more often in its discretion, to an evaluation in executive session of his performance and his working relationship with the Board (District #50).

The second most common theme found in 64 out of 71 superintendent employment contracts was that superintendents were entitled to have the school board's

evaluation of them reduced to writing and placed in their personnel file, with contractual language such as, “the Board shall evaluate and assess, in writing, the performance of the Superintendent at least once per year during the term of this agreement” (District #51). However, only 55 out of 71 district leaders had the explicit contractual right to have that meeting take place during an executive session.

Finally the fourth most evident theme relating to the evaluation was that once the evaluation was produced, it was contractually obligated to be held in confidential status by board members in 40 out of 71 instances in contractual language such as, “the performance evaluation shall be kept confidential by Board Members and becomes part of the Superintendent’s personnel file” (District #40).

***Finding Three: Three out of 71 districts had the superintendent’s goals posted on the district website, and no districts had any information about the superintendent’s evaluation process or forms posted on their respective websites.*** A review of the 71 district websites for the districts contained in this study looking for information relating to the transparency of the evaluation of the superintendent revealed that while many of the district websites contained references to board goals and objectives for the school year, only three school districts (Districts #3, #9, #56) explicitly post the contractual goals for the superintendent for the given year on their website providing their stakeholder groups with an understanding of the district leader’s longitudinal objectives for a given year. No superintendent or boards of education posted the evaluation, the evaluation forms, the methodology utilized in the evaluation, or the criteria used to complete the evaluation on their district websites. This is in contrast to the online



accessibility of the Annual Professional Performance Review materials relating to a given district's teachers and administrative staff.

**Research Question Four: What are the most common elements for evaluation listed in contract language and how do these criteria relate to the literature surrounding superintendent evaluations?** Finding one was that in 43 of the 71 districts (60%), a collaborative discussion about leadership goals and performance were found in the superintendent contract language. A second finding revealed that instructional leadership is not mentioned as a stand-alone attribute a single time in the annual review section of the superintendents' contracts studied. Finding three demonstrated that none of the 71 contracts or 22 methodologies studied contained a rubric that explained the evaluation criteria board members were asked to assess.

The top three most common elements for evaluation listed amongst the seventy-one contracts examined were: superintendent success with regard to mutually agreed upon performance criteria (62%), the general performance of the superintendent (60.5%), and the working relationship between the superintendent of schools and the board of education (53%) as noted in Table 3. While the working relationship with the board remains a prominent focus of the evaluation being explicitly mentioned in 40 contracts, it is indeed the success with mutually agreed upon performance criteria with 44 mentions in the contract language that is the most common element driving the evaluation process between these school boards and their superintendent. These findings are correlated to the literature surrounding superintendent evaluations (Mayo & McCarty, 2004; Fowler, 1977).

***Finding One: In 43 of the 71 districts (60%), a collaborative discussion about leadership goals and performance criteria was explicitly stated in the superintendent contracts.*** The idea of mutual collaboration and transparency between the board of education and its superintendent in developing and understanding these performance criteria is a strong theme in the literature (Mayo & McCarty, 2004; Fowler, 1977; Calzi & Heller, 1989). Such practices ensure clarity going into the evaluative process and help foster a dialogue about what how progress will be measured. However, only about 60% of the contracts studied contained a provision for such a conversation to take place to build a narrative around leadership goals and performance criteria. Language relating to the collaborative process in developing leadership goals and agreed upon performance criteria featured in contract language such as: “an evaluation instrument was developed for these purposes jointly by the Board and the superintendent on or before October 1, 2011” (District #45), and:

By October 1<sup>st</sup> of each year of the term of this Agreement, the Board, in consultation with the Superintendent, shall establish goals and criteria for the purpose of evaluating the Superintendent’s performance, and shall present the goals and criteria in written form to the Superintendent (District#46).

Topical headings of attributes evaluated by boards of education, such as “general performance,” remain a typical subject for evaluation in 43 out of 71 contracts or about 60% of the contracts studied (Table 3) and the extant literature regarding them (Jones, 1981; Hawkins, 1972; Crowson, 1991). This was demonstrated in language such as:

The Board shall devote at least a portion of one meeting during either February or March in each year of the Superintendent’s employment by the District to an

evaluation in executive session of her performance and her working relationship with the board (District #30).

And in contractual agreements that read:

The Board shall devote at least a portion of two meetings, one mid-year and one end of year of the Superintendent's employment by the District to an evaluation in executive session of the Superintendent's performance and working relationship with the Board (District #18).

***Finding Two: Instructional Leadership is not mentioned a single time in the annual review section of a single superintendent contract studied.*** While instructional leadership and improving student learning outcomes features heavily in the literature as a primary purpose driving the evaluation process (Bjork, 1993; Kowalski, 2005), instructional leadership is not mentioned a single time in the annual review section of a single contract studied. Indeed, this study of evaluatory criteria did not find a strong instructional leadership emphasis in the evaluation of superintendents with boards eschewing addressing that topic for managerial tasks, and other leadership performance attributes such as human resources, vision, communication, and personal and professional self-development. As found in the evaluatory methodologies of District #57 with evaluation categories of “relationship with board, community relationships, business and finance, and personal qualities” and District #40 with categories for rating including, “planning, goals, and mission, budget and finance, curriculum and instruction, operations management, personnel, community relations, preparing and implementing policies, personal and professional qualities, and professional growth” instructional leadership as evidenced by student achievement and learning outcomes does not find a clear home in

the criteria listed. While it could be argued that “curriculum and instruction” could encompass instructional leadership, no methodology made reference to the superintendent’s role in improving student instructional outcomes, connecting the superintendent’s performance to student achievement results, or evaluating the amount of time the superintendent spent formally or informally evaluating the instructional environment of the district.

***Finding Three: None of the contracts or methodologies evaluated in this study contained a rubric that delineates and explains the evaluation criteria and how they were to be derived by the evaluator.*** As the literature speaks to the importance of measuring leadership (*Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership*, 2001), no contract provided an explanation as to how that would be accomplished outside of a discussion that would take place during at least one board meeting a year in executive session. While some methodologies suggested a rating scale, with scaling of board member responses to performance criteria along a Likert scale from a one to four (District #12; District #9), others contained a rating schema in which board members consider a performance criterion and then rate the superintendent’s performance utilizing terms such as unsatisfactory, satisfactory, and commendable (District #7); highly effective, effective, developing and ineffective (District #10); outstanding, meets expectations and needs improvement (District #8). However, none of the methodologies received by the researcher, and none of the contracts studied, contained a rubric as the literature suggests (Castallo, 1999) as a best practice that would compellingly define what each of the terms and ratings mean in the context of a superintendent evaluation and thereby limit evaluatory subjectivity in selecting particular ratings.

## Summary

Findings in response to the research questions indicate that overall superintendent job performance and the quality of the superintendent's relationship with the board remain the driving factors behind the purpose for the evaluation of the superintendent. The process that leads to this ultimate evaluation begins with a general conversation relating to the superintendent's goals for a given school year for about half of the superintendents studied, this is followed up with a mid-year conversation with the board for about 25% of superintendents, and a final evaluation conference which can take place over the course of a school year with at least 66% of them taking place prior to the month of June.

Further, the study found that the educational leadership standards found in the *Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership* (2001) are not referenced in the evaluation process and that the element of change leadership does not feature in the evaluation process. Additionally, the findings indicate that public transparency as it relates to the evaluation of the superintendent is highly limited, and remains largely undefined in the public arena.

The findings also demonstrated a disconnect between the literature and practice with regard to defined practice rubrics to undergird superintendent performance evaluation and the need to place a focus on the area of instructional leadership and the role of the superintendent in fomenting an instructional focus to his work.

Chapter Five will contain a summary of the findings of this research study, conclusions and recommendations for policy and practice as well as future research on the topic of superintendent evaluation process.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study from archival material was to evaluate the degree of public transparency in the evaluation methodology and procedures of school superintendents of districts with student populations between 700 and 900 students in the State of New York. In an effort to discover how these school superintendents were evaluated utilizing publicly available information regarding the process, research questions were developed to guide the study.

The research study attempted to ascertain the stated purposes and processes for the evaluation of the school superintendent amongst these districts in superintendent contracts; in what ways were the *Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership* (2001) referenced in the evaluatory methodology and procedures of school superintendents; how superintendents promote public transparency with regard to the evaluatory criteria in their evaluation; and what the most common elements for evaluation listed in contract language are related to the literature surrounding superintendent evaluations. The research questions addressed in this study were:

1. What are the stated purposes and processes for the evaluation of the school superintendent amongst these districts as stated in superintendent contracts?
2. In what ways are the *Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership* (2001) referenced in the evaluatory methodology and procedures of school superintendents?

3. How do superintendents promote public transparency with regard to the evaluatory criteria in their evaluation?
4. What are the most common elements for evaluation listed in contract language and how do these criteria relate to the literature surrounding superintendent evaluations?

To conduct this study, utilizing descriptive content analysis, the data collected to answer the research questions posed included all 71 superintendent employment agreements, a review of all 71 district websites, and 22 of 71 district provided evaluatory methodologies and processes related to the evaluation of the school superintendent.

### **Summary of Findings**

A summary of the findings for this research study conducted using descriptive content analysis are presented below; there are four findings for research question one, two findings for research question two, three findings for research question three, and three findings for research question four.

**Research Question One: What are the stated purposes and processes for the evaluation of the school superintendent amongst these districts as stated in superintendent contracts?** There were four findings that emerged from the data reviewed relative to research question one. While districts had multiple purposes and processes regarding the evaluation of the school superintendent, some general trends could be found in the data.

***Finding One: The most commonly stated purposes of the superintendent evaluation are to empower a school board to evaluate the success of the superintendent with regard to their given goals (44 out of 71 districts or 62%) and job performance (43***

*out of 71 districts or 60.5%) and to assess the efficacy of the superintendent's relationship with their school board (40 out of 71 or 53%).* The most common intent for evaluation of the school superintendent involve the school board measuring a superintendent's success in completing a given goal, followed by their overall job performance, and then assessing the quality of the relationship that exists between the school board and the superintendent.

*Finding Two: The process used to establish the goals and develop the criteria for evaluation was not explained in 36 out of 71 contracts studied, and was provided for in the remaining 35 contracts studied. The process varied from being board directed 2 out of 71 times, to superintendent directed 7 out of 71 times, to being derived by mutual collaboration between the board of education and superintendent 26 out of 71 times.* How performance goals are set and performance metrics agreed to, range from being board directed, to superintendent initiated, to being derived as a result of a collaborative process involving both the board of education and the superintendent of schools.

*Finding Three: One quarter (25%) of the contracts studied explicitly included a mid-year review of the superintendent's performance.* This review process when included as part of the evaluative process enables a board of education to bring forward concerns regarding performance, to check in with the superintendent regarding the efficacy of their relationship, and affords the superintendent an opportunity to both give and receive feedback around goals and their completion.

*Finding Four: A final evaluation conference was included in 70 of the 71 contracts reviewed.* The final evaluation conference was the most formally significant



way a school board engaged the superintendent in a discussion about their given job performance.

**Research Question Two: In what ways are the *Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership* (2001) referenced in the evaluatory methodology and procedures of school superintendents?** While these standards define the educational characteristics related to superintendent certification programs in New York State, they are not explicitly mentioned or referenced in the superintendent evaluation processes or purposes of the 71 school districts covered in this study.

***Finding One: None of the 22 evaluation methodology and evaluation documents explicitly referenced the Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership (2001).*** The *Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership* (2001) were not referenced in a single evaluation methodology or evaluatory document provided by the responding school districts to the researcher's request for such documents. While the *Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership* (2001) were not utilized as a rubric, a philosophical underpinning of any evaluation, or a basis for creating the tool for any document studied, there were correlations between what the standards promote as effective leadership attributes and the criteria ultimately utilized by the school boards in their evaluation of the superintendent.

***Finding Two: No document examined explicitly mentioned change as a stand-alone criterion.*** The *Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership* (2001) were designed in an effort to acknowledge the role that managing and fomenting change plays in effective leadership of schools. However, not one document reviewed for this study mentioned change as a criterion for superintendent evaluation.

**Research Question Three: How do superintendents promote public transparency with regard to the evaluatory criteria in their evaluation?** The evaluation criteria utilized for school superintendent evaluation has the potential to be outlined in four public domains: the employment agreement of the school superintendent; a district's evaluation methodology document developed pursuant to 8 NYCRR 100.2(o)(1)(vi); a school district's website; and at school board meetings where the evaluation criteria and processes could potentially be discussed.

*Finding One: There was no explicit mention in the documents or websites reviewed of any information relating to the sharing or public presentation of the evaluation findings or the criteria utilized by a board of education at a school board meeting or public forum.* The onus for finding information relating to the evaluation of the school superintendent is placed upon individual citizens to undertake for themselves. No website or contract studied, or district provided methodology provided any indication that the evaluation findings or the criteria utilized by the board for the evaluation were ever presented in a public forum.

*Finding Two: Of all 71 contracts, 67 provide that the final evaluation occurs during a board meeting, with 64 mandating a written document be developed as a result of the process, with 55 districts explicitly providing a right to have such a meeting take place in executive session, and the outcome protected by an explicit confidentiality agreement between the board and superintendent in 40 of the 71 districts.* Confidentiality of the superintendent evaluatory process is often defined by employment agreements. While the majority of evaluations are reduced to writing, the

subjective analysis found in narratives, and individual criterion ratings developed as a result of the process are not subject to public disclosure.

***Finding Three: Three out of 71 districts had the superintendent's goals posted on the district website, and no districts had any information about the superintendent's evaluation process or forms posted on their respective websites.*** A review of the 71 websites of the school districts contained in this study revealed that only three superintendents posted their annual goals and no district leader had posted any information related to their evaluations on their websites.

**Research Question Four: What are the most common elements for evaluation listed in contract language and how do these criteria relate to the literature surrounding superintendent evaluations?** The literature surrounding superintendent evaluation is not highly developed. While there has been some current research surrounding the topic, most of the literature is dated and not highly generalizable to contemporary issues facing school superintendents.

***Finding One: In 43 of the 71 districts (60%), a collaborative discussion about leadership goals and performance criteria was explicitly stated in the superintendent contracts.*** The idea of mutual goal setting and sustaining a relationship premised upon shared expectations between the school board and the superintendent of schools is a concept found in the literature relating to superintendent evaluations from the 1970's to present day (Mayo & McCarty, 2004; Fowler, 1977; Calzi & Heller, 1989).

***Finding Two: Instructional Leadership is not mentioned a single time in the annual review section of a single superintendent contract studied.*** The review of the 71 employment agreements of the superintendents employed by districts in this study found

not a single mention of student achievement as being a factor in the annual review section of the contract. Student learning and achievement features strongly in the literature as a major component of what should comprise the evaluation of a school district leader (Bjork, 1993; Kowalski, 2005).

***Finding Three: None of the contracts or methodologies evaluated in this study contained a rubric that delineates and explains the evaluation criteria and how they were to be derived by the evaluator.*** No methodology document and none of the employment contracts reviewed in this study contained descriptors of what would make a superintendent highly effective or ineffective to aid the board in their analysis of the superintendent during the evaluation process, allowing for subjectivity to enter the rating process. This, according to the literature could be limited by having an informed rubric beyond a simple rating scale that is often utilized in the evaluation processes (Castallo, 1999).

## **Conclusions**

This study has resulted in four conclusions regarding superintendent evaluations and public transparency in the evaluatory process.

**Conclusion One: The lack of governmental initiative to more explicitly define the evaluation of school superintendents contributes to the large variability found in the purposes and processes for evaluation.** Since New York State established the requirement for school boards to evaluate the superintendent in 1985 (Dillon & Halliwell, 1991), the explicit work to effectuate that regulation beyond a requirement into a more theory based evaluatory framework has not produced a universal tool that districts have elected to utilize. While some organizational efforts have been undertaken by the New

York State Council of School Superintendents and the New York State School Board Association to devise their own methodologies, they are not rooted in the New York State leadership standards as defined by the *Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership* (2001) nor do they provide a research basis for the criteria that they selected to evaluate in the respective documents.

Consequently, because of a lack of governmental initiative on a statewide level to further define the superintendent evaluation beyond the requirement that school boards simply do so, individual school districts have been left to define their own methodologies, processes, performance criteria and objectives resulting in disparate approaches across the school districts studied. Further, because each local district devises its own approach to the superintendent evaluation, local school board elections, board-superintendent relationships and subjective factors resulting from poorly defined evaluatory tools, often can influence the process.

Further, the lack of a normative protocol regarding superintendent evaluation has led to some school leaders receiving feedback throughout a given a school year via a collaborative goals conversation, a mid-year review, and a final evaluation conference, and other superintendents receiving simply a written document at the conclusion of the year based on loosely defined performance criteria. The lack of focus on key indicators and mandates for boards to discuss the leadership attributes like those found in the *Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership* (2001) can create a pro-forma evaluatory process for the top school leader when those for teachers and school principals are highly spelled out in statute and law.

**Conclusion Two: A standards' based approach utilizing the *Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership* (2001) toward superintendent evaluation has not been articulated for this level of leadership.** While the preparation programs leading to superintendent certification in New York State are closely aligned to the *Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership* (2001), the evaluation process once individuals become superintendents is not. As a result, there is a disconnect between the standards based practices of preparation programs, and the resultant performance expectations once employed.

The lack of a codified set of standards for school districts to utilize in regard to superintendent-evaluation has also resulted in a non-standardized approach toward the evaluation of school leaders. The lack of an integrated set of performance standards as a part of the evaluation process could make it easy for a superintendent to enjoy a great relationship with a board of education, not actually address major the challenges facing a district and still earn a strong evaluation resulting from goal completion of administrative tasks and not genuine leadership toward broad initiatives designed to enhance student achievement. Further, since the summative performance rating of the overall evaluation is publicly accessible, comparisons between districts' ratings for superintendents on their evaluation would be difficult to correlate because the criteria, metrics, and rubric utilized by boards of education to conduct evaluations varies widely.

**Conclusion Three: The process and criteria of superintendent evaluation is not transparent to the various stakeholder groups of a school district.** The evaluation process and the criteria utilized to effectuate it, is not transparent to the public. An

individual would have to gain access to employment agreements, the district devised evaluatory methodology, scour a district website, and FOIL the overall composite rating to begin to understand what elements comprise the process and they would still only gather a surface level understanding of what truly feeds into process of evaluating the school superintendent.

The lack of transparency coupled with a lack of codified standards related to the evaluation represents a markedly different tactic toward evaluation than those devised for teachers and principals in New York State. Consequently, the top leadership of the district is subjected to a very different process regarding their job performance than their subordinates and their evaluations are based on measures, largely unknown to the general public, regarding topics beyond student growth and achievement. While there is nothing that precludes a superintendent from publicly posting their evaluation tool on a website, or presenting their evaluation, or sharing their goals in a public format; that level of thinking regarding transparency of the process has not become an acculturated element of the process across the districts studied.

**Conclusion Four: The literature surrounding superintendent evaluation is dated and not aligned to contemporary issues in education.** Most of the literature focuses on very broad topics and represents thinking of practitioners both current and retired, more so than the work of codified educational researchers. The literature produced by academic research is limited and has not been updated to reflect evaluating school superintendents in regard to initiatives around the Common Core, technology integration, mergers and consolidations, college and career readiness, change theory, and student equity goals. Thus, the literature that exists to guide boards and superintendents

in improving their evaluation process does not offer a wealth of innovative approaches regarding how to build a process that sustains professional growth and recognizes the current challenges school superintendents are facing in their work.

## **Recommendations**

Four recommendations emerging from this study for improving the degree of public transparency and the process of superintendent evaluation are outlined below. Two recommendations relate to policy improvements and two recommendations relate to organizational practice.

**Recommendations for Policy.** To begin the process to synergistically create a toolbox for school boards and superintendents to consider when developing their methodologies for evaluation and to provide greater transparency to the public regarding the criteria utilized for superintendent evaluation by boards of education, policy recommendations are outlined below. The policy recommendations are designed to encourage school boards and school superintendents to at least engage in a conversation on a regular basis, form a basis of understanding for the evaluation, consider evidenced based practices, and be transparent with one another and the public regarding the tool utilized to arrive at a summative conclusion of performance for a given school year.

***Recommendation One: District superintendent evaluation methodologies should be filed with NYSED on an annualized basis.*** The wide disparity found amongst the evaluation methodologies for school superintendents as provided by 22 school districts in this study, demonstrate that there is no uniformity of expectations regarding what content and information this publicly available document should contain. A standardized template that would be submitted to the State of New York, similar to that



devised for the APPR of teachers and school principals, would operate at the district level to foster conversations about what elements are important to the evaluation process, how districts would work to complete the evaluation, and provide researchers with a repository of information to help improve the evaluation process in years to come. Research around superintendent evaluation needs to become more current than its present form. To conduct meaningful research on this topic, there first must be a way to cogently devise what currently exists, the philosophy behind it, and how that process is working. Because of the confidentiality involved in the process and the lack of governmental impetus to require more information be disclosed in clear and concrete formats, this is a particularly challenging area of research.

Further, by having to send an official evaluation methodology document to NYSED, the boards of education would have to approve those documents in public session, thereby opening a window for public insight into the evaluatory process.

***Recommendation Two: New York State should approve research based rubrics that school boards could consider for use in conducting superintendent evaluations aligned to approved state school leadership standards.*** State standards, namely the formally adopted *Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership* (2001), should feature in the evaluation instrument. If standards exist, but are not referenced, discussed, and evaluated against in terms of professional practice, the utility of the standards themselves become questionable. Research based rubrics could be devised premised upon these standards that would build momentum between the pre-service educational experiences of district leadership, institutions of higher education, and actual practices once employed. Further by having normed and research driven rubrics for

boards to consider when evaluating the superintendent, the focuses of the evaluation could shift toward more concrete subjects beyond the broad ambiguity of topics that currently exists in the publicly available information and documents.

The State of New York has approved rubrics for the evaluation of principals and teachers that speak to research driven attributes of effective performance (NYSED: Great Teachers and Leaders: Practice Rubrics, 2016). Such rubrics could be devised for the top educational leader of the school district as well. By having a range of options for boards to consider, time could be spent building a framework approach toward clearly defined competency levels, thereby reducing the amount of subjectivity that exists in the overall evaluative process.

In creating research based rubrics for evaluation, there is the possibility of not devising a document that entirely meets the need of conditions within various school districts. Often situations can emerge in districts that are particular to a local event, and school boards could be given a lens to examine these in the context of a researched based instrument, should one be devised or approved by NYSED.

**Recommendations for Practice.** Forging a process to improve professional practice is at once both exhilarating and daunting. For school district leaders, subjecting their evaluation methodology to public scrutiny is fraught with unknown variables, however in an age where teacher and principal annual professional performance review materials are a matter of public record in New York State, it is becoming increasingly difficult for district leaders to obscure their process from the public. Further, by being transparent and having school boards devise a process that can weather public comment and examination, their decisions and rationales support the thinking of Heller (1978) that

the purpose of evaluation of the superintendent is to be able to support items like raises, contract renewals, and other board decisions relating to the employment of the school superintendent to the general public.

***Recommendation One: Public transparency should be a component of the superintendent's evaluation process.*** Leadership requires transparency. This is true both for the school board and the superintendent. While the narrative portions of evaluations for school employees are protected from disclosure by statute, the forms, processes, agreements, and summative ratings relating to the evaluations are not. These items should not exist in separate areas and should not be available to the public only after extensive research to find them. If a school superintendent is not being evaluated on student performance, or budgetary prowess, then a school community should know the criterion that is being utilized. Bjork (1993) contended that student performance should play a critical role in the evaluation of the superintendent. Indeed, teachers and principals are evaluated on the growth of their students and superintendent leadership should be explored to demonstrate ways in which the instructional leader of the district has aided in the improvement of student outcomes.

Such information would help build understanding about district goals and circumstances, and public disclosure could limit surprises for all parties if at the time of the evaluation attempts to evaluate other criteria attempt to pervade the process. School boards should thoughtfully devise a methodology for evaluating the superintendent in compliance with 8 NYCRR 100.2(o)(1)(vi) and share it with their communities.

***Recommendation Two: Boards of Education need to thoughtfully devise a process for evaluating a school district superintendent.*** With most of the contracts

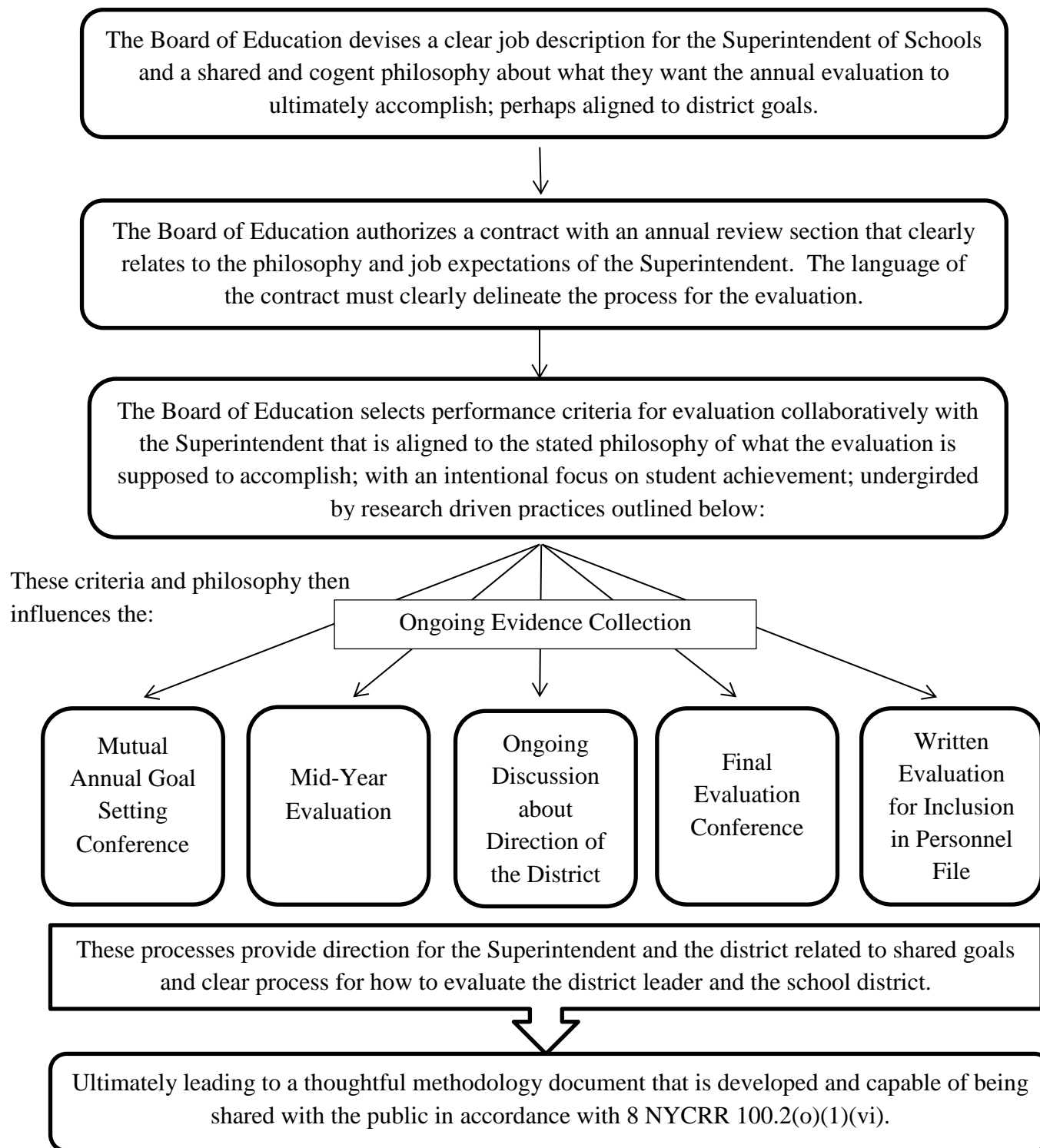
being written by a school district's attorney, a lack of research based rubrics available, and the language regarding the process for evaluation of the superintendent not being very specific, unless a Board of Education has an established process to consider the evaluation of the superintendent on a philosophical level, the work that is necessary to provide for a meaningful process is never fully developed by a board. Thus, the evaluation becomes something that is pro-forma that is done at the end of a school year, and not something that has been considered as a way of fomenting growth both on the part of the superintendent and the board itself.

Further, as local elections and occurrences can transform a board and its direction, having a review cycle to ensure that all board members understand the philosophy that undergirds the superintendent evaluation is critical to ensuring that all board members are operating with a similar framework as they approach the feedback portion of the evaluation cycle. Acknowledging also that superintendents have the potential to grow in their professional capacity, revisiting the philosophical underpinnings of the evaluation over time ensures that the process does not remain static and emerges as a relevant and helpful tool for the superintendent.

Figure 1 suggests a process for boards to consider as they begin to undertake the work of devising a methodology and process for evaluating their superintendent.

Figure 1

*A suggested process for school boards to consider in devising a methodology for evaluating the school superintendent.*



Key to implementing the strategy outlined in Figure 1 is for school boards and superintendents to consider how they will effectively collect evidence demonstrating completion of goals, whether or not there is a desire to have the district goals become the direct goals of the superintendent, and whether the superintendent should have their own goals exclusive of those the district. These are largely local decisions. As district goals could take multiple years to come to fruition, individual goals could represent a subset of the longitudinal goal to be accomplished in a given year. Additionally, ideas about how to measure goal completion are also a challenge to be decided as a result of the conversation and process proposed in Figure 1; completed or not, evidence of progress or growth, an actual number and success being data driven, anecdotally evaluation, are all ways that goal completion or success could be examined. There is no one correct way, simply a process to move the conversation from theoretical to the practical based on district needs.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

There are three recommendations for further study that emerge from this research study. The first recommendation is that a future qualitative study be undertaken utilizing interviews with school board members of these districts to investigate what they believe is the intent of the evaluation of the superintendent and assess their beliefs regarding public transparency to the evaluation process. This study could examine their beliefs regarding school district leadership and how they align with standards driven evaluation.

The second recommendation for further study is to conduct a study utilizing the FOIL laws to analyze the summative ratings of the superintendents in this cohort group and cross reference them with the tool the district utilize to derive their rating of the

superintendent. This study could examine how the tool developed and utilized by a board of education impacts the performance rating of a superintendent. A study of this nature could help answer the question of which type of evaluation process and tool is more favorable to a district leader in performance ratings than another.

The third recommendation is that more extensive research be conducted to update the literature surrounding school superintendent evaluation to incorporate more contemporary topics surrounding educational leadership, equity goals, technology integration, change management, school district mergers and consolidations, college and career readiness, change theory, and how those topics could be effectively evaluated by boards of education.

Further, literature should be developed to consider how board culture is devised and sustained and how that culture impacts the evaluation of the school district superintendent. This research could focus on general leadership philosophies of school board members, how board members' passion and drive to be on the school board impact their thinking regarding the evaluation of the superintendent, and how changes to board leadership impact board culture and ultimately the success of a school district leader.

## **Summary**

The purpose of this research study was to evaluate the degree of public transparency in the evaluation methodology and procedures of school superintendents of districts with student populations between 700 and 900 students in the State of New York. What emerged was that the process is predicated on dated research; is not aligned with the formalized standards of the *Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership* (2001); that the process lacks transparency despite some limited regulations

supporting public disclosure of the process; and that the criteria utilized in the evaluations is not reflective of contemporary trends, but rather tied to ambiguous subject headings and relational aspects between the superintendent of school and their board of education. This study aids in the literature surrounding superintendent evaluations and calls for additional research to be done to support and improve the process as it is currently implemented.



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## Appendix A

*Detailed Distribution of School Districts with Student Populations between 700 and 900 Pupils and Their Needs Resource Capacity in New York State*

School District	Needs/Resource Capacity	Enrollment*	Region
District #1	Average N/RC District	700	Western
District #2	Average N/RC District	700	Long Island
District #3	High N/RC: Rural District	710	Central
District #4	High N/RC: Rural District	710	Central
District #5	Average N/RC District	710	Western
District #6	Average N/RC District	720	Eastern
District #7	High N/RC: Rural District	730	Western
District #8	High N/RC: Rural District	730	Eastern
District #9	Low N/RC District	730	Long Island
District #10	Average N/RC District	730	Western
District #11	Average N/RC District	740	Hudson Valley
District #12	Average N/RC District	740	Western
District #13	High N/RC: Rural District	740	Eastern
District#14	High N/RC: Rural District	740	Central
District #15	High N/RC: Rural District	740	Central
District #16	Average N/RC District	740	Eastern
District #17	High N/RC: Rural District	750	Western
District #18	Average N/RC District	750	Eastern
District #19	High N/RC: Rural District	750	Central
District #20	High N/RC: Rural District	750	Eastern

District #21	Average N/RC District	750	Eastern
District #22	High N/RC: Rural District	760	Eastern
District #23	High N/RC: Rural District	760	Eastern
District #24	Average N/RC District	760	Eastern
District #25	Average N/RC District	760	Eastern
District #26	High N/RC: Rural District	770	Eastern
District #27	Average N/RC District	770	Western
District #28	Average N/RC District	780	Western
District #29	High N/RC: Rural District	780	Western
District #30	High N/RC: Rural District	790	Eastern
District #31	High N/RC: Rural District	790	Western
District #32	High N/RC: Rural District	800	Eastern
District #33	High N/RC: Rural District	800	Western
District #34	Average N/RC District	800	Eastern
District #35	Average N/RC District	800	Central
District #36	Average N/RC District	800	Western
District #37	Average N/RC District	810	Central
District #38	High N/RC: Rural District	810	Western
District #39	Average N/RC District	810	Eastern
District #40	Average N/RC District	810	Western
District #41	Average N/RC Districts	810	Western
District #42	High N/RC: Rural District	810	Eastern
District #43	High N/RC: Rural District	810	Western

District #44	Average N/RC Districts	820	Central
District #45	Average N/RC Districts	820	Western
District #46	Average N/RC District	820	Eastern
District #47	Average N/RC District	830	Western
District #48	Low N/RC District	830	Long Island
District #49	Average N/RC District	830	Western
District #50	Average N/RC District	840	Western
District #51	Average N/RC District	840	Hudson Valley
District #52	Average N/RC District	840	Central
District #53	Average N/RC District	850	Western
District #54	High N/RC: Rural District	850	Central
District #55	Average N/RC District	850	Eastern
District #56	Low N/RC District	850	Hudson Valley
District #57	High N/RC: Rural District	860	Central
District #58	Average N/RC District	860	Eastern
District #59	High N/RC: Rural District	860	Western
District #60	Average N/RC District	870	Western
District #61	Average N/RC District	870	Western
District #62	High N/RC: Rural District	870	Central
District #63	Average N/RC District	870	Eastern
District #64	Average N/RC District	880	Eastern
District #65	Average N/RC Districts	880	Western
District #66	Average N/RC District	890	Eastern

District #67	Average N/RC District	890	Western
District #68	Average N/RC District	890	Eastern
District #69	Average N/RC District	890	Western
District #70	Average N/RC District	890	Western
District #71	Average N/RC District	890	Western

*\* Enrollment Rounded to Nearest 10<sup>th</sup> to Preserve Anonymity of School District*

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## Appendix B

### *Topical Categories Relating to the Evaluation of the Superintendent as noted in Employment Contracts*

Category Name	Examples of Language By Category
The superintendent's working relationship with board	"The Board shall devote at least one portion of a meeting during the months of October and February to an evaluation in executive session of his performance and his working relationship with the Board" (District #20).
Superintendent progress toward goals	"The parties shall meet annually at a mutually agreeable time...to evaluate the superintendent including previous goals" (District #31).
Areas for improvement	"The evaluation shall include recommendations as to areas of improvement in all instances where the Board deems performance to be needing improvement" (District #7).
General job performance	"The Board shall base its evaluation of the Superintendent's performance and progress toward the goals and objectives established by the Superintendent and the Board as set forth above, as well as on the general performance of the superintendent in carrying out his/her required duties and responsibilities" (District #5).
Mutually established performance criteria	"The evaluation shall be based upon performance criteria mutually established by the Board and the Superintendent" (District#13).
The alignment of performance to position description	"This evaluation shall be reasonably related to the position description of the Superintendent" (District #23).
Measurements against given performance based criteria	"This evaluation of the Superintendent shall review the goals and objectives set previously and the Superintendent's success in meeting the goals and objectives for that year" (District #19).
Achievement of required duties and responsibilities	"The Board shall base its evaluation upon the Superintendent's performance and progress...in carrying out his required duties and responsibilities" (District #11).
Overall conduct	"The Superintendent shall be evaluated by the Board based on his overall conduct and activities while acclimating to the District" (District #1).

**Appendix C***IRB Approval Letter*

November 23, 2016

RE: IRB PROJECT 518-2016-2017

Researchers,

This project, "New York State School Superintendent Evaluations: Measures and Public Accessibility," is exempt from IRB review. Under federal regulations, because there are no living human participants, and the information is publicly available, it does not require review. You may begin your research project now.

Sincerely,

Francesca Durand, PhD  
Chair, IRB



## Appendix D

### *Letter Sent to Superintendents Requesting Evaluatory Procedures*



#### UNION SPRINGS CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

239 Cayuga St., Union Springs, NY 13160

Jarett S. Powers  
Superintendent of Schools

Tel: (315) 889-4100  
Fax: (315) 889-4108

January 2017

My name is Jarett Powers and I am the Superintendent of Schools of the Union Springs Central School District in Union Springs, NY, and a doctoral candidate in educational leadership at the Esteves School of Education at the Sage Colleges. I am conducting a qualitative study that examines the methodology, characteristics, and procedures available to the general public regarding school superintendent evaluations in New York State of districts with student enrollments between 700 and 900 students. I am looking to see if the publicly available documentation about how school superintendents are evaluated is aligned to the *Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership*.

The Commissioner's Regulation (8 NYCRR 100.2(o)(1)(vi)) states that the "governing body of each school district shall annually review the performance of the superintendent of schools according to procedures developed by such body in consultation with the superintendent. Such procedures shall be filed in the district office and available for review by any individual no later than September 10th of each year."

I am writing to you today to ask for a copy of that evaluation procedures document if it exists in your district. I am enclosing a self-addressed stamped envelope in the hopes that you can mail it to me. If email works better, please email me at [powerj5@sage.edu](mailto:powerj5@sage.edu). If no such document exists in your district, please be as so kind as let me know that as well. As a fellow superintendent, I know that time is limited and that just because a regulation exists, it doesn't always mean things happen. Please know that your return of any information will be kept confidential and all research findings will only be presented in aggregate form.

Thank you for any help that you can provide to me as I complete my research, I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Jarett Powers