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An investigation of the relationship between selected superintendent attributes and instructional leadership practices

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AN INVESTIGATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELECTED SUPERINTENDENT ATTRIBUTES AND INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICES

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APPROVAL OF DISSERTATION

We, the faculty supervising the work of **Leatha Williams**, affirm that the dissertation, *An Investigation of the Relationship Between Selected Superintendent Attributes and Instructional Leadership Practices*, meets the high academic standards for original scholarship and creative work established by the EdD Program in **Leadership Studies** and the College of Education and Professional Development. This work also conforms to the editorial standards of our discipline and the Graduate College of Marshall University. With our signatures, we approve the manuscript for publication.

Dr. Louis Watts Leadership Studies	Committee Chairperson Major	Date
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband, Duane, for all of your support and encouragement. I am deeply thankful to you for being my best friend and inspiring me to accomplish my dreams. I could not have made it through the last few years without your constant faith and support. You are my anchor.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this descriptive, quantitative, survey-based study was to examine the relationship between selected superintendent attributes and their overall instructional leadership practices score calculated from the participants' responses on the *Instructional Leadership Practices Survey*. The study used t-Tests, Chi-Square and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to analyze the relationship between the dependent variable of superintendent leadership practices score and the predictive variables of superintendents' length of tenure in their current district, superintendents' total tenure as a superintendent, superintendents' total experience in education, whether the superintendent was hired from within or from outside of the district, superintendents' instructional leadership perceptions and superintendents' self-reported leadership practices. Findings indicated that superintendent experience in a district, overall superintendent experience, hiring of the superintendent from within or outside of the district, superintendent perceptions of the degree of influence they should have in instructional leadership, and superintendent perceptions of actual leadership practices were not significant in how the superintendents scored themselves on the *Instructional Leadership Practices Survey*. Significance was attained at the $p<0.05$ level for overall experience in education and the instructional leadership practices scores. The question was raised as to the relationship between the instructional leadership scores and West Virginia English/Language Arts and mathematics student assessment results, but insufficient data were available to provide any conclusions. Suggestions for further study and research and limitations of the current study were provided.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

No Child Left Behind (United States Department of Education, 2004) ushered in a focus on teacher quality, instructional leadership, and content certification provisions to support higher levels of student achievement. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) established the expectation that each state must implement high-quality summative academic assessments for reading/language arts, mathematics, and science (United States Department of Education, 2015). According to Rigling, Rooney, and Anderson (2016), ESSA requires states to maintain an accountability system that focuses on student achievement, graduation rates, a ninety-five percent participation rate, and other measures of academic growth and school quality. These stipulations are included to help each state identify schools that are persistently low performing or have underperforming subgroups (West Virginia Department of Education, 2018c).

After the 2016 presidential election, the guard changed at the United States Department of Education with newly appointed Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos. DeVos (2017) stated that she would fully enforce and implement the statutory requirements of ESSA. In January 2018, the West Virginia Department of Education resubmitted a consolidated state accountability plan that addressed and described the academic standards and assessments as outlined in Section 1111(b)(1) of ESSA (West Virginia Department of Education, 2018c). In addition to maintaining a focus on accountability measures, academic standards, and standardized assessments, the state also described strategies for recruiting and retaining effective educators and defined how the state would intervene in low subgroup performance to ensure an equitable education for all students (West Virginia Department of Education, 2018c).

States must continue to focus on recruiting and retaining highly effective educators under the new plan, so it behooves states and districts to understand the relationships that exist between

teachers and student achievement. Belson and Husted (2015) conducted a study that examined the relationship between National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) and student achievement. The authors found that there is a positive relationship between the number of NBCTs in a district and student performance on national assessments such as the National Assessment for Educational Progress (West Virginia Department of Education, 2016a). Darling-Hammond (2000) and Petty, Good, and Handler (2016) found in studies on teacher quality and student achievement that teacher qualifications such as content certification and educational degrees are significantly correlated with student outcomes. These studies also concluded that state policies related to teacher education, licensing, hiring, and professional development are correlated to higher levels of student achievement.

In addition to states and districts understanding the relationships that exist between teacher degree levels and student achievement, states must also understand the relationship between principals and student performance on standardized assessments. Waters and Marzano (2006) in a meta-analysis found a significant correlation of 0.25 (at the $p<.05$ level) between principal leadership and improved student achievement. Osborne-Lampkin, Folsom, and Herrington (2015) found a relationship between principals that were in the middle of their educational career and higher levels of student achievement. There was a correlation of $r = 0.13$ for students that had principals with less than 9 years of experience, but a correlation of $r = 0.35$ between student achievement and principals that had between 9 and 17 years of experience. The researchers also found a positive relationship ranging from $r = 0.19 - 0.29$ between principal instructional leadership practices and student achievement. Among the specific instructional leadership practices identified was principals having a specific vision for student learning. A positive relationship of $r = 0.37$ was identified between promoting high standards and having a

rigorous curriculum for grade 3 English/Language Arts. The researchers went on to discuss findings from three studies that support a relationship between principals requiring the use of data to drive instruction and increased student achievement (p.10). Additionally, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, and Orr (2007) in an eight state study concluded that principals are the key factor in effecting higher outcomes of student achievement in schools of similar student demographics.

Besides research analyzing the relationship between principal practices and student achievement, other research has examined the relationship between superintendent instructional leadership practices and improved student performance. Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) asserted that there is virtually no evidence of an organization turning around without a talented leader to act as a catalyst to change. The researchers also found that superintendents achieve influence over student achievement by fostering shared understandings of the mission and creating performance expectations throughout the district. Leithwood et al. (2004) asserted that superintendents that have the greatest influence over student achievement have a technical understanding of how to align professional development and other resources to improve teaching and learning in the district and are knowledgeable in creating district structures that are malleable to change and collaboration (pp. 20-29). Other research by the American Institutes for Research (2010) concluded that principals are most effective at improving schools when coupled with the support of district leadership. Bottoms and Schmidt-Davis (2010) found that states must build district capacity to build the skills and knowledge of teachers and principals for schools to improve. They further declared that if district leadership remains ineffective, schools will not improve regardless of state efforts at the school level. Therefore, Bottoms and Schmidt-Davis (2010) concluded that it behooves state and local school boards to

investigate the relationships that exists between the superintendent's ability to establish a district vision and set priorities for creating the necessary working conditions to allow principals to improve teacher effectiveness and student achievement.

During the past two decades, several studies have been conducted to investigate the relationship that exists between the superintendent and student achievement. Waters and Marzano in their 2006 meta-analysis considered the relationship of the superintendent's role and student achievement. They found there is a significant correlation of 0.24 (at the $p<.05$ level) between the superintendent's goal-setting process, ability to align board support and district resources to non-negotiable goals and monitoring of those goals to improve overall student achievement. Engel (2015) conducted a study on the qualifications of superintendents that correlated with student achievement and found a significant correlation between the closing of reading gap scores and mathematics achievement scores in relationship to the highest degree earned by the superintendent. Chingos, Whitehurst, and Lindquist (2014) conducted a study in Florida and North Carolina on the influence of the district on student achievement. They concluded that in smaller districts such as those found in North Carolina, district leadership had a great influence on student achievement.

The question that arises is what specific characteristics or qualities of a superintendent affect student achievement. Myers (2011) conducted a research projected titled *Superintendent Length of Tenure and Student Achievement* that found significant relationships between the length of a superintendent's tenure, total years of experience, total number of years in education, total number of students enrolled in the district, the number of students who qualified for free and reduced meal prices and student performance on the Third Grade Kansas Reading Assessment (Myers, 2011). Myers further explained that district size had an influence

on superintendent tenure because district resources are not as plentiful in smaller districts and district populations of less than 50,000 residents tend to offer superintendents less anonymity during times of conflict. Thus, the probability of a change in the superintendent is higher in districts with populations under 50,000. Another study by Chingos, Whitehurst, and Gallaher (2013) also found a relationship between district size and the superintendent's ability to influence student achievement due to financial resources and politics.

Belden Russonello and Stewart (2005) surveyed 813 superintendents in the country to collect data on superintendent perceptions regarding their instructional leadership role and examine current instructional leadership practices in place to support those perceptions. Data from the survey revealed that superintendents perceive their influence over student achievement is related to their ability to act as an instructional leader by establishing a common district language in curriculum, instruction and assessment, creating professional learning structures with teacher leaders and by administering benchmark assessments. Even though 90% of superintendents surveyed perceive these three common practices must be in place to influence student achievement, only 40% of superintendents reported they had support practices in place such as district pacing guides, common use of textbooks, and common language about curriculum and instruction to support the perceptions. Additionally, the survey results showed that only 31% of districts had the teacher-leadership positions to support professional learning to improve student achievement. Belden Russonello and Stewart (2005) also found that at least a third of the superintendents surveyed reported that many of the data usage practices, such as formalized data analysis training and the required use of data to adjust instruction, had been in use for less than three years and were not embedded practices.

Contextual Considerations

With renewed accountability standards outlined in ESSA (United States Department of Education, 2015) and West Virginia's Consolidated State Plan (2018c), the West Virginia Board of Education (WVBE) and local boards of education must also consider the relationship that exists between the superintendent and student achievement. West Virginia continues to lag in student achievement on multiple measures. The College Board (2015) released data that showed the national average for students taking advanced placement exams and scoring a three or higher was 22.4% with West Virginia's average being 10.8%. This information has West Virginia performing in the bottom five states. This lag in student performance is further illustrated by reports from the West Virginia Department of Education (2017) that only 48% of students in grades 3-11 met college and career readiness indicators on the state standardized reading/language arts assessments and only 34% of mathematics students demonstrated mastery of the college and career readiness indicators on the state standardized test for mathematics. In a review of students' post-K12 performance, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (2016a) reported that West Virginia's three year average graduation rate for 2 year public college completion was 11.8% per 100 students and 24.7% per 100 students for the three year average for 4 year public college completion rates with 45.5% graduating within six years (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2016b). Additionally, the United States Census Bureau (2009) found that West Virginia is in the bottom 10 states in terms of high school graduation rates and bottom five states for the number of state residents with a bachelor's degree or higher.

West Virginia's data as outlined above and the renewed emphasis on results-driven accountability (West Virginia Department of Education, 2018c) compel a study on the relationship between selected superintendent attributes and instructional leadership perceptions

and practices. With the submission of the new West Virginia Consolidated State Plan (West Virginia Department of Education, 2018c), each district will be held accountable for student proficiency in reading and mathematics, student growth in reading and mathematics on State benchmark assessments given throughout each school year, improved graduation rates, improved attendance rates and improved discipline rates for out-of-school suspensions. Additionally, West Virginia House Bill 2711 (West Virginia Legislature, 2017b) stated:

> When extraordinary circumstances exist, but do not rise to the level of immediate intervention as described in subsection (n) of this section, the state board may declare a state of emergency in the school system and shall direct designees to provide recommendations within sixty days of appointment for correcting the extraordinary circumstances. When the state board approves the recommendations, they shall be communicated to the county board. If progress in correcting the extraordinary circumstances, as determined by the state board, is not made within six months from the time the county board receives the recommendations, the state board shall intervene in the operation of the school system to cause improvements to be made that will provide assurances that a thorough and efficient system of schools will be provided. This intervention may include, but is not limited to, the following:
> (A) Limiting the authority of the county board in areas that compromise the delivery of a thorough and efficient education to its students as designated by the state board by rule, which may include delegating decision-making authority regarding these matters to the state superintendent who may:
> (B) Declare that the office of the county superintendent is vacant;
> (C) Declare that the positions of personnel who serve at the will and pleasure of the county superintendent as provided in section one, article two, chapter eighteen-a of this code, are vacant, subject to application and reemployment;
> (D) Fill the declared vacancies during the period of intervention; and
> (E) Take any direct action necessary to correct the extraordinary circumstance (pp 25 – 26).

This guidance in West Virginia House Bill 2711 shifts the burden of continuous improvement in all areas back to the district school board and the superintendent. Research by Bottoms and Schmidt-Davis (2010) in a study titled *The Three Essentials: Improving Schools Requires District Vision, District and State Support, and Principal Leadership* found that school improvement and increased student achievement depend on the state's ability to improve district capacity for creating conditions that influence principal effectiveness. This study established the

relationship between district leadership and overall implementation of key leadership practices in the 55 West Virginia school districts thus aligning research on the need for district leadership and the shift in West Virginia law.

With West Virginia's achievement results, the passage of West Virginia House Bill 2711 and conflicts in findings from various studies regarding the influence of the superintendent leadership practices and superintendent demographics on district achievement, it seems advisable to do further research to seek clarification on the relationships that exist between the superintendents' leadership perceptions and experience and district-wide instructional leadership practices. Hanks (2010) conducted a study titled *The Influence of the Superintendent of Schools on Student Academic Performance*, which concluded that there were no significant relationships between increased student achievement and the superintendent establishing collaborative goals and non-negotiables in terms of teaching and learning. Chingos et al. (2014) provided results that showed no significant relationship between superintendent instructional leadership traits, experience within the district, and improved student achievement.

Purpose and Significance

The purpose of this study was to use descriptive, quantitative statistics to analyze the relationships between superintendent experience in a district, total years of experience as superintendent, total years of educational experience, perceptions of the role of the superintendent in instructional leadership and superintendent instructional leadership practices.

Because of the literature that shows district leadership is critical to effective schools, this study is significant as it analyzes the relationship between West Virginia superintendents' tenure, total years of experience as superintendent, total years of experience in education, hiring practices of the district as related to selecting a superintendent from within the district or from

outside the district and instructional leadership perceptions and practices. With the poor performance of West Virginia students on standardized reading and math tests, a study of these relationships may be useful to guide policy makers and local school boards in decisions on employing and retaining school superintendents.

Research Questions

This study examined the relationship between self-reported superintendent instructional leadership perceptions and practices, the experience of the 55 West Virginia district superintendents and district hiring practices for superintendents. The study also examined the influences, if any, between experience in the district, total years of experience as superintendent anywhere, hiring from within or outside of the district, total years of experience in education in relationship to superintendents' perceptions about their role as instructional leader versus their actual instructional leadership practices across schools in their district.

Permission was sought and granted to use part or all of the national survey conducted for *Education Week* by Belden Russonello and Stewart (2005). The study was titled *From the Top: Superintendents on Instructional Leadership*. This survey will gather demographic information on the superintendent including years of experience, total years of educational experience superintendents have as well as collecting the data on superintendents' self-reported perceptions about their instructional leadership role versus their actual instructional leadership practices. Specific research questions guiding this study are:

1. What are West Virginia district superintendents' perceptions of their use of instructional leadership practices?

2. Is there a significant difference in West Virginia district superintendents' instructional leadership practices scores due to years of experience as superintendent in their current district?
3. Is there a significant difference in West Virginia district superintendents' instructional leadership practices scores due to total years of experience as a superintendent?
4. Is there a significant difference in West Virginia district superintendents' instructional leadership practices scores due to total years of experience in education?
5. Is there a significant difference in West Virginia district superintendents' instructional leadership practices scores due to participants' belief about how much of a role they should have in providing direction on curriculum and instruction?
6. Is there a significant difference in West Virginia district superintendents' instructional leadership practices scores due to how much direction participants perceive they actually provide on curriculum and instruction?
7. Is there a significant difference in West Virginia district superintendents' instructional leadership practices scores due to participants being hired from within or outside of the district?
8. Do current state student assessment results suggest that districts are implementing curricular and instructional practices that create high achievement in English/Language Arts and mathematics?

Methods

Data were collected by survey from the 55 district superintendents using the Microsoft Office 365 and a Qualtrics link. Qualtrics is a web-based survey services provided to the staff and students of Marshall University. It allows researchers to securely gather data and analyze

results. The surveys were distributed vial email. This study used Microsoft Office 365 Marshall University student email account to email the survey link, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval letter of the study and consent letter to the 55 West Virginia district superintendents. The results from the Qualtrics survey software were downloaded into an Excel Spreadsheet for analysis in SPSS.

Limitations of Study

Potential limitations of this study include the fact that the results and related findings are tailored to the state of West Virginia by district superintendents. The study also does not correlate the implementation of instructional leadership practices to overall district performance on the West Virginia General Summative Assessment. This decision was made by the researcher, because the county identification of superintendent leadership practices could have had potential political consequences on district superintendents from local school boards. Additionally, the researcher was concerned that district superintendents would either not participate in the survey if they were identified by county or they may inadvertently misrepresent district reality in terms of instructional leadership practices that are embedded. As a result, the researcher decided not to collect county information that could identify the district and connect survey results to the county's performance on the West Virginia General Summative Assessment.

Organization of the Study

The first chapter of this study includes an introduction on how educational purpose and policy have evolved over the last four decades, contextual consideration (providing an analysis of multiple measures of student achievement), purpose and significance of study, overarching research questions, methods and limitations of the study. Chapter 2 provides a summary (historical context of national and state reforms) of the evolution of the superintendent's role,

West Virginia law and policy related to the superintendent, additional sections outlined according to the proposed research questions and a chapter summary. Chapter 3 outlines research methods, defines the variables of the study, identifies the statistical tests that will be used to analyze the data and describes the survey instrument that will be used. Chapter 4 presents the findings for each research question. Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the findings, implications to policy and practices as well as recommendation for additional studies in the future.

Summary

Many studies have been conducted on the relationships between teacher and principal leadership characteristics and student achievement (Belson & Husted, 2015; Engel, 2015; Leithwood et al., 2004; Petty et al., 2016; Osborne-Lampkin et al., 2015; Waters and Marzano, 2006). Additionally, research has also examined the relationship of the superintendent to student achievement (Engel, 2015; Leithwood et al., 2004; Myers, 2011; Waters and Marzano, 2006). With the renewed emphasis on results driven accountability in West Virginia's Consolidated State Plan (2018c) for addressing the Every Student Succeeds Act requirements, expectations are high for all schools to show high levels of student performance as well as demonstrate how all students are receiving a fair, equitable and high quality education as measured by performance on the annual state summative assessment (West Virginia Department of Education, 2018c). This is a quantitative study that examined the relationship between superintendent experience and self-reported instructional leadership perceptions and practices.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In 1981, Terrell Bell was tasked with the responsibility of examining the quality of education in America and reporting the findings and recommendations for educational improvement to President Ronald Reagan (The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Bell's responsibility was to address the widespread national perception that something was wrong with schools in America. The commission spent 18 months evaluating and analyzing factors that influence education in the United States, while also comparing schools and colleges in America to those of other nations. The commission looked at economic, societal and educational changes that were obstacles to America schools achieving excellence in education. Ultimately, the National Commission on Excellence in Education stated in *A Nation at Risk* (1983), "the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a nation and a people." Recommendations from *A Nation at Risk* ushered in a focus on rigorous standards for curricular content, teacher preparation, testing, and a whole child approach to student learning (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development [ASCD]: Policy Points, 2013).

While the national educational landscape was being shaped by *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, the West Virginia educational landscape was also being shaped by the 1984 court ruling in Pauley v. Bailey later to be known as the Recht decision (Justia US Law, 2018). The Recht decision found that West Virginia failed to meet the constitutional requirements of a "thorough and efficient" education (Harris, 2012). Pauley v. Bailey (Justia US Law, 2018) stated that the West Virginia Board of Education had failed to develop standards that define the elements of a thorough and efficient education system in West Virginia as stated in W.Va. Code, 18-9A-22.

The West Virginia Board of Education was charged with developing a *Master Plan for Public Education* (West Virginia Department of Education, 1983) that was subject to the circuit court's approval. Harris (2012) reported that major outcomes of the Recht decision included the state creating a centralized set of quality standards and restructuring school funding. Pauley v. Bailey (Justia US Law, 2018) identified Board Policies 2510 (West Virginia Department of Education, 2018b) and 2322 (West Virginia Department of Education, 2018a) as components of the master plan for educational reform in West Virginia.

Since these landmark reform movements of the 1980s, much research has been done on factors that improve student achievement including looking at the relationship between the superintendent and student achievement. The outcomes of *A Nation at Risk* (The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) and the Recht decision both focused on improved school and district outcomes. This focus on student performance and graduation rates has produced interest in data for examining the relationship between superintendent qualifications, leadership practices and student achievement. Since the Recht decision in 1982, the West Virginia Board of Education, the West Virginia Legislature and the West Virginia School Board Association have outlined superintendent qualifications, responsibilities, standards for professional practice and evaluation criteria for superintendents in the state of West Virginia.

Evolution, Roles and Responsibilities for the Superintendent

According to Bjork, Kowalski, and Browne-Ferrigno (2014) the role of school-district superintendent has evolved and changed since the position was first created in the mid-19th century. The authors assert that the superintendent's role has been influenced by three waves of educational reform reports (a) A *Nation at Risk* (1983), aimed at correcting the perceived educational deficiencies, an effort began in the 1970s and continued through the 2000s, (b) the

publication of *America 2000*, which ultimately lead to the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, and (c) the evolution of these movements to the Every Student Succeeds Act (Rigling et al., 2016)). Bjork, Kowalski, and Browne-Ferrigno (2014) also found these reform reports have shaped national and state policies regarding the role of the superintendent. The superintendent's role has evolved from initially being the organizational manager in the latter part of the 19th century to teacher-scholar at the turn of the 20th century, to democratic-political leader, to applied social scientist, to great communicator and to the present role of chief executive officer and instructional leader. The role of superintendent was eventually conceptualized and defined by two sets of standards: the *Professional Standards for the Superintendency* (Hoyle, 1993) and the *Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium* (ISLLC) *Standards for School Leaders* (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996).

Waters and Marzano (2006) in a meta-analysis called *School District Leadership that Works: The Effect of Superintendent Leadership on Student Achievement* cited four statistically significant findings regarding the superintendent's role and student achievement. Finding 1 established a statistically significant relationship between the superintendent and student achievement. In finding 2 Waters and Marzano (2006) identified five essential superintendent leadership practices that are associated with district-wide improved student achievement. Those responsibilities are: (a) establishing a district vision, (b) establishing non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction, (c) soliciting and securing school board support, (d) establishing and implementing a monitoring process for measuring completion of the goals and allocating resources to support the goals. Finding 3 identified that superintendent tenure is positively correlated with student achievement. Finding 4 established that student achievement increases when the superintendent provides building-level principals with defined autonomy in the

implementation of the district goals, while allowing the principal to lead the school leadership team in developing a plan on how to meet the district-defined goals for learning and instruction.

An additional study by Leithwood et al. (2004) found that superintendent influence over student achievement is fostered by developing an understanding of a shared mission and creating performance expectations throughout the district. They also discovered that superintendents that influence student performance have a technical core knowledge. Elmore (2000) originally defined the technical core as what should be taught and when, defined learning outcomes over a delineated period of time, student groupings for instructional purposes, requirements for demonstrating knowledge and how learning is evaluated overall in each classroom. Leithwood et al. (2004) describe the technical core knowledge of schooling for successful superintendents as, "what is required to improve the quality of teaching and learning--- often 'invoked by the term instructional leadership'" (p.24). The researchers viewed successful superintendents as knowledgeable leaders in creating district structures that are malleable to change and collaboration to support increased performance by administrators and teachers for improved student achievement.

West Virginia and the Superintendent

In 2003 the West Virginia Legislature passed requirements that county boards of education evaluate district superintendents. The West Virginia Board of Education adopted Policy 5309 (West Virginia Department of Education, 2003) that established minimum requirements for the county superintendent's evaluation. The county board must at least require written goals annually, evaluate the superintendent on success in increasing student performance across the county and specifically include an evaluation component that examines the

superintendent's ability to manage low-performing schools. Various elements of the legislation adopted in 2003 are outlined in Chapter 18: Article 4 of West Virginia Code.

Chapter 18: Article 4 of West Virginia Code defines the election and term of the county superintendent, qualifications and health requirements, removal and suspension, compensation, payment of compensation, evaluation, appointment of clerical assistants by the superintendent, acceptable travel expenses, and other duties assigned (West Virginia Legislature, 2017a). Each section of the code outlines various aspects of being county superintendent in West Virginia. For the sake of this research, some parts of the West Virginia Code that defines hiring, qualifications, removal and suspension, and evaluation will be outlined.

West Virginia Code 18-4-1 (West Virginia Legislature, 2017a) defines the appointment terms of a West Virginia (WV hereafter) superintendent as not less than one, but not more than four years at a time. At the end of the four-year term, the superintendent may have a contract renewed for an additional term of one to four years or transfer to any teaching position in the county for which they are qualified and they have seniority.

WV Code 18-4-2 (West Virginia Legislature, 2017a) describes qualifications as holding a professional certificate with an endorsement for superintendent or a first-class permit. Superintendents with a first class permit are only allowed to remain in the position for one year. Individuals with a doctorate, three years of experience in public education or management are granted a permanent administrative certificate and licensed to be a superintendent.

WV Code 18-4-3 (West Virginia Legislature, 2017a), identifies the conditions in which the county board of education may remove the county superintendent. Reasons include misconduct, insubordination, incompetence, and neglect of duty or immorality. As part of the removal language, the board must provide the superintendent written notice and a forum for the

superintendent to respond to the charges within 10 days of the notice. In addition to provisions of WV Code 18-4-3, the superintendent is also held accountable by WV Code 61-10-15, also known as Pecuniary Interest, which outlines unlawful behavior in terms of awarding family members contracts, services or supplies in which they have voice, interest, influence or control over. If the superintendent is found guilty of violating West Virginia Code 61-10-15, he or she faces fines from $50 to $500, jail time up to a year, immediate removal from their position and revocation of certification.

West Virginia Code 18-4-6 (West Virginia Legislature, 2017a) establishes the evaluation process for a WV county Superintendent and WV Code 18-4-10 (West Virginia Legislature, 2017a) outlines the duties of the superintendent. The evaluation process requires written goals and a component based on the ability of the superintendent to improve student achievement with a focus on low performing schools. Others areas that may be included are community relations, finance, and management of curricular standards. Another requirement of the evaluation is evaluating the ability of the superintendent to improve student performance. While WV Code 18-4-6 primarily focuses on leadership elements of the superintendent position, WV 18-4-10 appears to focus on management aspects of personnel recommendations to the board, assignment, transfer, suspension or promotion of service and professional staff in the district. Other items defined under this section of code include attending board meetings, temporary closure of schools and serving as secretary of the board.

West Virginia Policy 5800: Standards for Professional Practice for West Virginia Superintendents, Principals and Teachers Leaders (West Virginia Department of Education, 2016b) defines and describes nine common standards that outline leadership qualities that contribute to the transformation of school systems. Each standard is built on the foundations that

the superintendent will have a pervasive focus and understanding of student learning and will be able to orchestrate improvement in low performing schools. As chief instructional leader and executive fiscal officer the superintendent possesses the ability to collaborate with the county board of education, community leaders, and district leadership to ensure the organization is outcomes driven. The operating premises of Policy 5800 (West Virginia Department of Education, 2016b) goes on to establish that a superintendent not only establishes district structures that are of the highest quality, but that the district also has differentiated levels of support to assist each school with continuous improvement.

The nine standards for professional practice for county superintendents in West Virginia are (West Virginia Department of Education, 2016b):

1. Demonstrates Interpersonal and Collaborative Skills,
2. Creates a Clear and Focused Learning Mission,
3. Facilitates Rigorous Curriculum, Engaging Instruction and Balanced Assessments,
4. Builds and Sustains a Positive Learning Climate and Cohesive Culture,
5. Promotes Continual Professional Growth and Attracts and Retains Quality Staff,
6. Acts as Student Advocate and Creates Support System for Student Success,
7. Manages Operations and Promotes Learning,
8. Connects to Family and the Larger Community, and
9. Effects Continuous Improvement (West Virginia Department of Education, 2016b).

The overarching premise of the county superintendent position is that superintendents are multifaceted leaders who have a high level of technical knowledge and possess the relationship skills to be agents of change to foster environments and build partnerships for student success in each district school.

During 2004, the West Virginia School Boards Association and the West Virginia Association of School Administrators (WVSBA) met to develop a Model Superintendent Performance Evaluation Form to operationalize requirements outlined in law code from 2004 and policy for superintendent evaluation (West Virginia School Boards Association, n.d.).

The *Superintendent Performance Evaluation Form* consists of a chart with the performance ratings of exceeds standards, meets standards, and does not meet standards as well as a comments section. If the local school board marks the superintendent as not meeting standards, a comment is required. The chart is divided into nine categories that align with West Virginia State Policy 5800. The first two categories are Success in improving student achievement generally and success in improving student achievement specifically through the management and administration of low performing schools. These two categories are required by West Virginia state statute (West Virginia School Boards Association, n.d.).

Superintendent Tenure and Student Achievement

The American Association of School Administrators (2017) found in a 2006 national study that the mean tenure of a superintendent is five to six years and the average turnover rate for a superintendent is 14% to 16% percent nationwide. They also reported that 6% of the nation's school districts account for more than 53% of the nation's student population, while 35% of the nation's school districts have under 600 students total in the district population.

The Council of the Great City Schools (2010) representing 14% of the nation's students and approximately a third of the nation's percent needy population reported that the average tenure for an urban superintendent was 3.64 years with 29% of the surveyed urban superintendents having five or more years of experience. The council also reported that 63% had been in office between one and five years and nine percent had been in office less than a year. Of

the urban superintendents that participated in the survey 91% had worked in K-12 public education prior to being named a superintendent in one of the urban districts surveyed (Council of the Great City Schools, 2010).

In 2014 the Council of the Great City Schools prepared another report on the demographics of superintendents in member districts and found that the average tenure was 3.18 years with 21% of superintendent having been in office for five or more years. The council also reported that 57% of superintendents had been in office for one to five years with 23% having less than a year of experience. Of the superintendents surveyed 92% had worked in K-12 prior to becoming superintendent (Council of the Great City Schools, 2014). These districts in 2014 accounted for 20 to 40% of the nation's low income students and 40% of the English language learners.

Johnson, Huffman, Madden, and Shope (2011) conducted a 10 year study examining the relationships between rural status by region, superintendent tenure and student achievement. They found that districts with no superintendent turnover had the higher accountability index as compared to districts with two or more superintendent turnovers (Simpson, 2013). Johnson et al. (2011) concluded that as tenure increased the student achievement accountability index improved showing a relationship between superintendent tenure and student achievement. Waters and Marzano (2006), in a meta-analysis, found a statistically significant relationship of 0.19 at the .05 level of significance between superintendent tenure and student achievement, which indicates there is a positive relationship between length of superintendent tenure and improving district achievement.

Simpson (2013) conducted a study that examined the relationship between superintendent tenure and student achievement in rural Appalachian Kentucky school districts. She concluded

that a statistically significant relationship existed between length of superintendent tenure and positive change in student achievement. The research findings showed a relationship between five or more years of experience in the same school district and achievement score growth.

Plotts and Gutmore (2014) examined the relationship between superintendent tenure, longevity and continuity in lower socioeconomic New Jersey school districts as measured by student achievement on the New Jersey state summative assessment. The study concluded that free lunch, attendance and experience in New Jersey showed significance at the .05 level to improved student achievement. Plotts and Gutmore (2014) also found that as the percentage of students that qualified for free and reduced lunch increased, overall student scores on the 3rd Grade summative assessment decreased. Conversely, the study also found that the percent needy factor was offset and student achievement increased with longevity and continuity of the superintendent in the district.

Parker-Chenaille (2012) conducted a study on the relationship of superintendent tenure on the 8th grade ELA New York summative assessment scores and found that longevity influenced student achievement. The researcher found that superintendents with tenure of one to six years of experience and hired from within the district had student performance improved by 10.8% more than superintendents that were hired from outside the district. For districts with superintendents with seven to ten years of experience that were hired within the district, student achievement improved by 15.74% more than with superintendents hired outside the district. Parker-Chenaille (2012) continued to compare longevity of internal hires with external hires. The research found that internal hires with seven to ten years of experience improved student achievement by 25.07 % more than superintendents with the same amount of experience, but hired externally.

Myers (2011) found in a study of 295 Kansas school districts that there is a significant relationship of .046 at the .05 level between length of superintendent tenure and student achievement on the 2008 Third Grade Kansas Reading Assessment. Additionally, he concluded that there was a significant relationship of .016 at the .05 level between student performance and total years of experience as a superintendent. Conversely, Myers did not find a significant relationship at the 0.05 level when using multiple backwards regressions regarding the district assessed value per pupil or the total number of years a superintendent had in education.

Influence of Superintendent Leadership Practices and Student Achievement

Bjork et al. (2014) noted that the role of the district superintendent has evolved over time from being just managers, to chief executive officers, to instructional leaders to school improvement specialists. Bjork et al. found that the evolution of the role of the superintendent is a result of widespread concern over the past three decades regarding the overall quality of education. Additionally, they found that the increased awareness of the importance of school and district leadership (Leithwood et al., 2004; Waters & Marzano, 2006) was instrumental in launching and sustaining educational change for improved student outcomes and global competitiveness.

Waters and Marzano (2006) found a statistically significant correlation of 0.24 between the superintendent and student achievement in their meta-analysis study. The study outlined five responsibilities that effective superintendents focus on in order to improve student achievement with the central idea being they must develop a shared vision and mission, establish non-negotiable goals, align resources to support the goals and monitor progression towards accomplishing the established goals.

Waters and Marzano (2006) outlined the five district-level leadership characteristics that had a statistically significant relationship with increasing student achievement. The first is collaborative goal-setting that includes principals, school board members and central office staff. Waters and Marzano established principals are key stakeholders and communicators in articulating the county direction and aligning the schools' goals with the county goals. Next, Waters and Marzano found that effective superintendents establish non-negotiable goals that must be acted upon in classroom instruction and student achievement. They also concluded that effective superintendents work with the local school board to align resources to support principals and teachers acquiring the knowledge, skills and competences necessary to meeting the leadership and classroom instructional expectations. Once expectations are established and resources aligned, the effective superintendent establishes a system for monitoring progression towards the goals.

Leithwood et al. (2004) conducted a review of research on how leadership influences student learning. This review concluded that among school-related factors that affect student learning, leadership is second only to the quality of classroom instruction and leadership has the greatest influence when more difficult circumstances exist. Leithwood et al. (2004) stated, "…there is virtually no documented instances of troubled schools being turned around without intervention by a powerful leader. Many other factors may contribute to such turnarounds, but leadership is the catalyst" (p.17). The results of their study concluded that leadership capacity is essential to school improvement and improving student learning.

Another study by Leithwood and Prestine (2002) identified three superintendent leadership practices that build district-wide capacity for improving students' achievement. The first practice is the superintendent must assist district staff in connecting state reforms with shifts

in classroom teaching and learning practices. Next the superintendent must utilize assessments to monitor and regulate the alignment between the required shifts and the district's progress towards meeting those shifts. Leithwood and Prestine (2002) indicated this can create dilemmas and even conflict as the staff are adjusting to alignment of the written, taught and assessed curriculum. Once assessments have captured the attention of the district and created possible conflicts that must be resolved between the taught and assessed curriculum, the superintendent must provide the professional development opportunities to help administrators and teachers deal with such conflicts and develop the necessary skills to meet demands of the shifts.

The Southern Regional Education Board conducted a study to examine the role of district leadership in developing conditions that allow principals to increase teacher effectiveness and improve student performance in selected middle and high schools. The study found that states and districts matter in building leadership capacity for improving student achievement. In the report *Three Essentials: Improving Schools Requires District Vision, District and State Support for District Leadership* by Bottoms and Schmidt-Davis (2010), the authors found that district leadership and local school board members are significant in providing principals with the working conditions that are necessary to lead improvement efforts. Bottoms and Schmidt-Davis concluded that states must work with district leadership if reform efforts are going to build capacity and be sustainable to improve student achievement.

Bottoms and Schmidt-Davis (2010) defined the essential jobs of the district as articulating a strategic vision by working with a variety of stakeholders, focusing on aligning policies and allocating resources to align with the strategic vision, and developing tools and processes to empower principals in focusing instruction on the college and career readiness standards. Additionally, Bottoms and Schmidt-Davis (2010) identified seven strategies that

districts can utilize to empower principals with school improvement and increasing student achievement. Among the district strategies that are important to supporting student achievement through principal empowerment are developing a shared vision with high expectations for all groups of students and district collaboration with principals and school leadership teams in the development of strategic plans that are aligned. These strategies identified by the SREB are also aligned with other research by Waters and Marzano (2006), Leithwood and Prestine (2002), and Leithwood et al. (2004) and superintendent perceptions of key district instructional leadership practices as identified in the *Education Week* survey by Belden Russonello and Stewart (2005).

Belden Russonello and Stewart (2005) surveyed 813 superintendents from around the country to examine superintendent perceptions regarding their role as instructional leaders and the practices they believed they used to influence improved student achievement. The survey questions were divided into the three categories of establishing a common language, professional learning within the district, and using data to monitor and improve instruction of students. The study concluded that 90% of superintendents surveyed believe they should have a significant role in providing curricular and instructional leadership, and 85% of superintendents surveyed believed they are fulfilling this role as instructional leaders. Ninety-three percent of superintendents surveyed reported they have data analysis processes in their districts and 92% reported they believe a common curriculum is important to improving student achievement, while 80% of superintendents reported they had developed a common core curriculum for implementation. Additionally, 90% of superintendents stated that instruction is monitored by principal walkthroughs.

While Belden Russonello and Stewart (2005) found that superintendents' were generally positive about their role as district leaders and their ability in improving student achievement,

there were some discrepancies between superintendent beliefs and district practices. For example, while 90% of superintendents reported that walkthroughs are utilized only, 51% of surveyed superintendents reported they believed principal walkthroughs have an effect on student achievement. Additionally, while 74% of superintendents rated benchmarks assessment implementation as a key district leadership initiative for improving student achievement, the survey found only 60% require the adjustment of classroom instruction based on the benchmark assessment results. While 93% of superintendents surveyed reported that formal training was provided on how to analyze and utilize data from student assessment, 40% reported the practice had been in place less than three years.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to provide a historical overview from literature and state-related settings to school reform and accountability in West Virginia as defined by the courts and code for superintendents. A portion of this chapter is dedicated to examining how West Virginia state law and policy have defined the roles, responsibilities and evaluation criteria for district superintendents. Once this background and context were established, the goal was to provide an appropriate outline of previous studies related to the following research questions:

1. What are West Virginia district superintendents' perceptions of their use of instructional leadership practices?
2. Is there a significant difference in West Virginia district superintendents' instructional leadership practices scores due to years of experience as superintendent in their current district?
3. Is there a significant difference in West Virginia district superintendents' instructional leadership practices scores due to total years of experience as a superintendent?

4. Is there a significant difference in West Virginia district superintendents' instructional leadership practices scores due to total years of experience in education?
5. Is there a significant difference in West Virginia district superintendents' instructional leadership practices scores due to participants' belief about how much of a role they should have in providing direction on curriculum and instruction?
6. Is there a significant difference in West Virginia district superintendents' instructional leadership practices scores due to how much direction participants perceive they actually provide on curriculum and instruction?
7. Is there a significant difference in West Virginia district superintendents' instructional leadership practices scores due to participants being hired from within or outside of the district?
8. Do current state student assessment results suggest that districts are implementing curricular and instructional practices that create high achievement in English/Language Arts and mathematics?

With the continued federal demand that states submit accountability plans that outline how they are assuring all students are receiving a fair, equitable and high quality education for all students, it is important to understand superintendent leadership in the context of the state of West Virginia. This chapter builds background knowledge from other studies to support the need for examining the role of the superintendent and significance between instructional leadership perceptions versus instructional leadership practices. It is also important to understand if there is a significant relationship between superintendent tenure in a district, overall tenure as a superintendent anywhere, tenure in education and superintendents' self-report instructional leadership practices, as those practices are found in the literature to be related to student

achievement. Each of the superintendent attributes will be examined for a relationship with the superintendents' overall leadership score on the *Instructional Leadership Practices Survey*.

The purpose of this study was to collect and examine data on superintendent attributes such as various types of experiences in district and education, being hired from within or outside the district and look for relationships between those attributes and self-reported instructional leadership practices. This study also reviewed state student assessment results for evidence that districts are implementing the curricular and instructional practices that superintendents' self-reported on the *Instructional Leadership Practices Survey*.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Introduction

The purpose of this descriptive, quantitative, survey-based study was to examine the relationship between selected superintendent attributes and overall instructional leadership practices scores calculated from participants' responses on the *Instructional Leadership Practices Survey*. The study utilized Chi-Square, t-Tests and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to analyze the relationship between the dependent variable of superintendent instructional leadership practices score and the predictive variables of the superintendent's length of tenure in their current district, the superintendent's total years of experience as superintendent, the superintendent's total years of experience in education, whether the superintendent was hired from within the district or from outside the district, superintendents' perceptions of their instructional leadership role, and their self-reported instructional leadership practices.

Creswell (2009) defines variables as characteristics or attributes that can be measured or observed. These characteristics or attributes also differ in the population that is being studied. Among the variables that will be used in this study are dependent and independent. Creswell defines each of the variables as follows:

- Independent variables – are those that cause, influence or affect the outcome of the study.
- Dependent variables – are those influenced by the independent variable and can also be referred to as the outcomes or the effects variables.

Population

The participants of this study were the 55 West Virginia county superintendents. Counties that had a new superintendent for the 2016-2017 school year were disqualified from the

study based on question two of the study, because the final question of the study related to student performance on the 2016-2017 West Virginia General Summative Assessment Data, the last year that West Virginia participated in the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium. This data set will be utilized rather than the 2017-2018 data because those data sets would not be made public until after the superintendents had been surveyed.

State Population Demographics

According to the United States Census Bureau (2017) the total population of the State of West Virginia in 2017 was approximately 1.8 million with 5.4% of the population being under the age of 5 and 20.4% being under the age of 18. At least 85% of people 25 or older have a high school diploma with 19.6% having a bachelor's degree. From 2012-2016 the median household income was $42,644 with a per capita income of $24,002 and 19.1% of the state living in poverty. The number of people per square mile in 2010 was 77.1.

West Virginia District Leadership Demographics

There were no public longevity or experience demographics on the WVDE ZOOMWV Data Dashboard related to superintendent or principal demographics in the state of West Virginia nor did the West Virginia Center for Professional Development or the West Virginia School Board Association have any public longevity or experience demographics in terms of principal or superintendent leadership.

Research Design

This study will investigate the effect of superintendent tenure in West Virginia counties, overall superintendent tenure as a superintendent anywhere, total years of educational tenure, district hiring practices for superintendents, and perceptions of superintendents of their role as instructional leaders as these attributes affect superintendent instructional leadership practices on

the dependent variable of an overall self-reported instructional leadership practices score. Studies have been completed in Kansas (Myers, 2011), Kentucky (Simpson, 2013), Wisconsin (Engel, 2015) and New Jersey (Plotts and Gutmore, 2014) that examine the relationship between superintendent experience, total years of experience as superintendent, total years of educational experience and the relationship to student achievement on state assessments in those states named. Additionally, studies have been completed by Leithwood and Prestine (2002), Waters and Marzano (2006), Leithwood et al. (2004), Bottoms and Schmidt-Davis (2010) and Bjork et al. (2014) to examine the relationship between superintendent leadership practices and student achievement. The final research question will examine overall state student performance in accordance with what superintendents believe is in place in the state of West Virginia based on the self-reported *Instructional Leadership Practices Score.*

Instrument Development

Permission to use the Belden Russonello and Stewart 2005 *Education Week* survey, *From the Top: Superintendents on Instructional Leadership* was received. The purpose of this survey in 2005 was to collect data on what superintendents perceived their role to be as instructional leaders and examine practices in the district that were in place to support those perceptions. This information aligns with the research questions on instructional leadership practices for this study. The survey was reviewed by a group of panelists and revisions made based on their comments. Additionally, revisions were made to accurately collect superintendent demographic data to support other research questions in this study. Survey categories included common language, curriculum and program implementation throughout the district, creating a system for growing professional learning and data-driven decisions to improve teaching and learning.

The survey included 31 total questions. Part I of the survey included 4 general questions about superintendent demographics related to experience. Question 5 was a question about superintendents' perceptions about how much instructional leadership they should have versus question 6, which collected data about how much of an instructional leadership role they actually have, given issues and other priorities facing the district.

Questions 7 through 31 were close-ended questions that asked participants to self-report instructional leadership practices that are embedded in the districts for improving student achievement. These were yes or no response questions. This is a modification to the *Education Week* survey that used yes or no branching questions to take into consideration that same questions may not apply to all participants; however, this study was seeking to determine if the practices were or were not in place. An additional modification was made to the original survey to include a numerical value to the survey responses. The scale will be as follows: 1 = yes and 0 = no.

Data Collection and Reliability

Each of the 55 West Virginia County superintendents received the survey via email. A cover letter was included in the email to the superintendents that explained the purpose of the research, how the research would be used and the time period they had to complete the survey. The survey was developed using Qualtrics. Survey results were downloaded into a Microsoft Excel Worksheet for importing into the SPSS.

Data regarding student achievement were collected from the WVDE ZOOMWV Data Dashboard for the 2016-2017 school year. Each year the WVDE of education validates all student achievement data. Data are then published and can be found on the WVDE ZOOMWV Data Dashboard.

Data Analysis

The data from the survey were organized according to the eight research questions in order to determine which independent variable had a statistically significant relationship to superintendents' instructional leadership practices score. To analyze the data, the researcher used Chi-Square, t-Tests and one-way ANOVA.

Chi-Square is a nonparametric inferential statistic that allows the researcher to determine if the distribution of the data is equivalent to the theorized distribution (Cronk, pp. 93-100, 2012). The t-Test is a robust statistic that allows the researcher to perform a series of calculations to obtain the probability of a significant relationship between the dependent variable of superintendent instructional leadership practices score and the predictive variables of superintendent tenure, total years of experience as superintendent, total years of experience in education and being hired from within or outside the district (Cronk, pp. 57-64, 2012). The ANOVA is an adaptable statistic that determines the portion of variability attributed to several independent variables. This test allowed the researcher to compare the single dependent variable of superintendents' instructional leadership practices score to multiple independent variables identified in the survey regarding superintendents' experiences and hiring to instructional leadership practices. The ANOVA was selected for this portion of the research to avoid inflation of results from running multiple t-Tests to determine differences in the effects of each instructional leadership practice (Cronk, pp. 65-85, 2012).

Summary

This chapter described the research design as quantitative using a one-time survey to collect data on superintendent tenure, total years of experience as superintendent, total years of experience in education, hiring practices of the district for superintendents, superintendents'

view of their role as an instructional leader and a self-reported instructional leadership practices score. The calculated instructional leadership practices score was identified as the dependent variable in the study. The researcher also explained the data collection process and the statistical analysis that were utilized to examine relationships between each of the variables and data collected in the survey.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between selected West Virginia superintendent attributes and superintendents' beliefs about instructional practices that may indicate the effectiveness of superintendents in providing instructional leadership to school systems in the state. The specific attributes included tenure of superintendents in a system, the overall experience of the superintendents in education and the total number of years of experience in the superintendent's role. In addition, the study asked superintendents for their perceptions of how much influence they should have on providing curricular and instructional leadership for their districts and how much influence they believe they actually did have in these matters. The study also asked if the superintendent has been hired within or outside the school district. The final part of the study was a series of 24 questions related to curricular and instructional practices in the superintendents' districts. The results are organized by data collection and findings for each of the research questions.

Data Collection

In July, 2017, a request was sent to Belden Russonello Strategists to request permission to utilize all or parts of the survey from their 2005 report "*From the Top: Superintendents on Instructional Leadership*" printed in *Education Week.* Permission was granted by Nancy Belden.

Survey questions from the Belden survey were used, with modifications, to develop a survey with 31 questions for this study. A peer review was conducted utilizing a committee of four assistant superintendents from across the state of West Virginia as well as an assistant state superintendent at the West Virginia Department of Education. Comments and suggestions were taken from the peer review for readability, grammar and length. Some adjustments to wording

were made based on the peer review. The proposed survey was submitted to the Institutional Review Board at Marshall University for approval.

The survey was put into Qualtrics and a survey link was generated and included in an email to the 55 West Virginia county superintendents. The survey request was sent out four times to the district level superintendents using Office 365 email. Forty responses to the survey were collected with 7 responses missing some or all information. Therefore, 33 usable surveys were obtained.

Demographic Results

Total Years of Superintendent Experience in a West Virginia School District

The first demographic information gathered pertained to how long superintendents had been serving in their current county of employment. The issue of tenure has been tied to various aspects of effective of instructional leadership demonstrated by superintendents (Myers, 2011 and Parker-Chenaille, 2012).

Experience as a superintendent in a West Virginia school district was measured in categories based on the years that superintendents had served in their present district. These descriptive statistics are represented in Table 1.

Table 1

Years of West Virginia Superintendent Experience in the Same District

Years of Experience in Current District	n	%
One year or less	11	29.73
Two to four years	14	37.84
Five to eight years	8	21.62
Nine or more years	4	10.81

Total Years of Superintendent Experience

It was also considered useful to know the total number of years respondents had been superintendent in any school district. The variety of experiences gained in different settings may be a factor in the overall effectiveness of a superintendent (Waters and Marzano, 2006; Myers, 2011; Plotts & Gutmore, 2014).

Total years of experience was measured in categories based on years of experience in or out of the state of West Virginia. These descriptive statistics are shown in Table 2.

Table 2.

Total Years of West Virginia Superintendent Experience

Total Years of Experience	*n*	*%*
Four years or less	19	57.58
Five to eight years	8	24.24
Nine to twelve years	2	6.06
13 or more years	4	12.12

Total Years of Experience in Education

The study also considered superintendents' total years of experience in any professional position. The diversity of experiences gained by serving as a teacher, principal or district office staff prior to being a superintendent may be a factor in the overall effectiveness of the superintendent (Simpson, 2013).

Total years of experience in education in any position was measured in categories based on a range of years. These descriptive statistics are represented in Table 3.

Table 3

Total Overall Experience in Education in Any Position

Total years of experience in education	n	%
Four Years or Less	0	0
Five to eight years	1	3.03
Nine to twelve years	2	6.06
13 or more years	30	90.91

Role of Superintendent in Curriculum and Instruction

Two questions were asked to gain information about the perceptions of superintendents regarding their role in providing direction in curriculum and instruction in their counties. The first question asked the respondents to indicate their perception of how much of a role superintendents should have. The results of this question are found in Table 4. As the table shows, 84.85% believed superintendents should play a large role in such matters, while none believed the superintendent should have a small or nonexistent role.

Table 4

Perceptions of the Role a Superintendent Should Have in Providing Direction in Curriculum and Instruction

Level of the Role of Superintendent Should Have	n	%
Large role	25	84.85
Some role	5	15.15
Small role	0	0.00
No role at all	0	0.00

The second question regarding perceptions of the superintendent's role asked superintendents to indicate what role they believed they actually do have in providing direction in their counties in curriculum and instruction. The results for this question are found in Table 5. While no superintendent indicated providing little or no direction, the results were nearly evenly divided between a great deal of direction and some direction.

Table 5

Perceptions of the Role the Superintendent Has in Providing Direction in Curriculum and Instruction

Perceptions of Level of Role Actually Has	n	%
A great deal	17	51.52
Some	16	48.48
Little	0	0.00
No direction	0	0.00

Hired Within or Outside the District

The survey asked respondents to indicate if they had been hired as superintendent in their current district from within that district or from outside the district. Twenty-one superintendents indicated they had been hired from within the district (63.63%), while 12 answered they had been hired from outside the district (36.36%).

Instructional Leadership Practices

Twenty-four questions in the survey asked superintendents to indicate whether certain instructional practices had been implemented in their districts. These questions have been grouped by the researcher into 10 categories based on the common instructional tasks associated with each question.

Common Curriculum

Seven questions asked superintendents whether a common curriculum had been established in their districts for various subject areas. The superintendents either indicated that this was true (yes) or not true (no). In 7 of the 8 curriculum areas, 30 superintendents answered yes (90.9%), while 3 answered no (9.1%). In one area (mathematics in elementary schools) 29 answered yes (87.9%) and 4 answered no (12.1). The results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6

District Establishment of Common Curriculum in Subject Areas

Subject Area	Yes		No	
	n	%	n	%
Common Curriculum in Schools	30	90.9	3	9.1
English/Language Arts in Elementary Schools	30	90.9	3	9.1
Mathematics in Elementary Schools	29	87.9	4	12.1
English/Language Arts in Middle Schools	30	90.9	3	9.1
Mathematics in Middle Schools	30	90.9	3	9.1
English/Language Arts in High Schools	30	90.9	3	9.1
Mathematics in High Schools	30	90.9	3	9.1

Curriculum Aligned to the College and Career Readiness Standards

The survey asked superintendents to indicate if the common curriculum in English Language Arts and mathematics has been aligned to the College and Career Readiness Standards. Thirty-one indicated English Language Arts and mathematics curriculum had been aligned with College and Career Readiness Standards (93.9%), while 2 answered their districts had not aligned the common curriculums in English Language Arts and mathematics (6.1%) to College and Career Readiness Standards.

Pacing Guides

Superintendents were also asked to indicate if their district had district-wide pacing guides that showed teachers what content to cover and where they should be each week in English Language Arts and mathematics. The results were nearly evenly divided between those who had pacing guides and those who did not have pacing guides for both subjects. The results of those questions are indicated in Table 7.

Table 7

Pacing Guides

Pacing Guides	Yes		No	
	n	%	n	%
English Language Arts	16	48.5	17	51.5
Mathematics	17	51.5	16	40.0

Use of Common Textbooks

The survey asked respondents to indicate if their district required teachers to use the same textbook across the district for English Language Arts and mathematics. Twenty-three indicated that teachers use the same textbook for reading across the district (69.7%), while twenty-five indicated that the same mathematics textbook was used across the district (75.8%).

Use of Walkthroughs

The survey also requested superintendents to specify if their district used instructional walkthroughs for observing teachers in the classroom for the purpose of improving instruction. All 33 respondents indicated that instructional walkthroughs are used in their districts for the purpose of improving instruction (100%).

Use of Assessments

Three questions were asked to gain information about district-wide assessment practices. The first question asked respondents to indicate if their district used benchmark assessments periodically throughout the year. Thirty-three superintendents indicated that benchmark assessments that are not end-of-unit tests from publishers of textbooks are used periodically throughout the school year (100%). The second question asked superintendents to indicate if district assessments were linked to College and Career Readiness Standards. Thirty-two superintendents indicated their district assessments were linked to College and Career Readiness Standards (97.0%), while one superintendent indicated assessments in their district were not linked to College and Career Readiness Standards (3.0%). The final question on assessment practices asked superintendents if district-wide assessments were created by teachers. Four superintendents indicated their district-wide assessments were created by teachers (12.1%), while twenty-nine responded that teachers did not create their district-wide assessments (87.9%). The results are indicated in Table 8.

Table 8

Use of Assessments

Use of Assessments	Yes		No	
	n	%	n	%
Benchmark Assessments	33	100.0	0	0.00
Assessments Linked to Standards	32	97.0	1	2.5
District-wide Assessments are Created by Teachers	4	12.1	29	87.9

Use of Data for Instruction

The survey also asked superintendents three questions regarding use of data to improve instruction. The first question asked if the district required principals and teachers to adjust instruction based on the results of district-wide assessments. Thirty-one superintendents indicated their district did require principals and teachers to adjust instruction based on district-wide assessment results (93.9%). The next question asked respondents to indicate if their district provided formal training for principals and teachers on how to analyze and use student performance data. Thirty-one district superintendents specified their district did provide formal training on analyzing and using student performance data (93.9%). The final question asked superintendents to indicate if their district provided training to principals and teachers on analyzing student performance data down to the individual students and classroom. Thirty-one percent of superintendents responded their district did provide training on drilling data down to the individual student and classroom for improving student achievement (93.9). The results are found in Table 9.

Table 9

Use of Data for Instruction

Use of Data for Instruction	Yes		No	
	n	%	n	%
Adjust Instruction Based in District-wide Benchmark Assessments	31	93.9	2	6.1
Formalized Training for using Student Performance Data	31	93.9	2	6.1
Analyzing Data Down to Individual Student and Classroom	31	93.9	2	6.1

Use of Teacher Induction Program, Coaching and Common Planning

Three survey questions pertained to teacher induction programs, coaching and common planning. Twenty-five superintendents (75.8%) indicated their district had formal district-wide teacher induction programs. Only 12 superintendents (36.4%) indicated they used teacher leaders who were freed from classroom duties to coach other teachers in instructional matters, while 21 (63.6%) indicated they do not do this. Twenty-seven (81.8%) responded affirmatively to the question about providing common planning times for teachers in a grade or subject to meet and talk about instruction. The results are shown in Table 10.

Table 10

Use of Teacher Induction Program, Coaching and Common Planning

Use of Teacher Induction Program, Coaching and Common Planning	Yes		No	
	n	%	n	%
Teacher Induction Program (TIP)	25	62.5	8	24.2
Coaching	12	36.4	21	63.6
Planning	27	81.8	6	18.2

School Improvement Plan and Goals

The survey asked respondents to indicate if they had a district-wide process for drafting school improvement plans and if their districts limit professional development for teachers to the focus of the district's or school's student improvement goals. Thirty superintendents indicated they do have a district-wide process for drafting a school improvement plan (90.9%), while nineteen indicated they did not limit professional development for teachers to the focus of the district's or school's student improvement goals (57.6%).

After examining the demographic data, the researcher next sought to determine how the data related to research questions for the study. The next section provides the results for each research question.

Research Questions

Research Question 1: What are West Virginia district superintendents' perceptions of their use of instructional leadership practices?

Descriptive statistics and a Chi Square inferential statistic were used to analyze data for Research Question 1. Participants self-reported a leadership practices score in the mid-range with a high percentage of scores found for scores 17, 19, 20 and 21. See Table 11 for details. For almost every instructional leadership practice, significance was obtained from the Chi Square as participants responded they do perform most of the instructional leadership practices. However for the instructional leadership practice of district-wide assessments were created by teachers in the district, most participants responded no. Other practices that did not show significance were district-wide pacing guides for E/LA and mathematics, district use of teacher-leader positions in which teachers are freed from duties to coach other teachers and the limiting of professional development to the focus of the district's or school's student improvement goals. See Table 12 for details.

Table 11

Instructional Leadership Practices Score

Overall Instructional Leadership Score Out of Maximum Points of 24	Leadership Score Frequency Distribution	
	Number of Participants	Percent of Participants
8.00	1	3.0
10.00	2	6.0
16.00	2	6.0
17.00	4	12.0
18.00	2	6.0
19.00	5	15.0
20.00	5	15.2
21.00	6	18.2
22.00	3	9.1
23.00	2	6.0
24.00	1	3.0

Table 12

Chi-Square Results for Instructional Leadership Practice Responses per Leadership Survey Items

District Instructional Leadership Practices	Yes	No	Chi-Square Probability Attained
Common district-wide curriculum across all schools	30	3	.000 *
Common E/LA curriculum in elementary schools across the district	30	3	.000 *
Common mathematics curriculum in all schools across the district	29	4	.000 *
Common E/LA curriculum in all middle schools across the district	30	3	.000 *
Common mathematics curriculum in all middle schools across the district	30	3	.000 *
Common E/LA curriculum in all high schools across the district	30	3	.000 *
Common curriculum aligned with College and Career Readiness state standards	31	2	.000 *
District-wide pacing guides are in place that show teachers what content to cover and where they should be each week in E/LA	16	17	.862
District-wide pacing guides are in place that show teachers what content to cover and where they should be each week in mathematics	17	16	.862
Requires schools across the district to use the same reading textbooks	23	10	.024 *
Requires schools across the district to use the same mathematics textbooks	25	8	.003 *
District uses instructional walkthroughs in which teachers are observed in the classroom for the purpose of improving student instruction	33	0	SPSS could not compute due to 0 responses in the NO cell
Not including standardized state assessments or end-of-unit assessments from the textbook publishers, the district has district-wide assessments sometimes called benchmark assessments are used periodically throughout the school year	33	0	SPSS could not compute due to 0 responses in the NO cell
District-wide assessments are linked to College and Career Readiness standards	32	1	.000 *

Table 12 continued

Chi-Square Results for Instructional Leadership Practice Responses per Leadership Survey Items

District Instructional Leadership Practices	Yes	No	Chi-Square Probability Attained
District-wide assessments are created by teachers in the district	4	29	.000 *
Principals and teachers adjust instruction based on the results of district-wide benchmark assessments	31	2	.000 *
Formal training is provided to principals and teachers on how to analyze and use student performance data	31	2	.000 *
Training is provided to principals and teachers on data analysis down to the individual students and classroom results	31	2	.000 *
District has a formalized new teacher induction program (TIP) that is used with all new teachers	25	8	.003 *
District uses common planning time so that teachers at each grade level or in each subject with the school can meet to talk about instruction during the workday	27	6	.000 *
District uses a district-wide standard process for drafting school improvement plans	30	3	.000 *
District limits professional development for teachers to the focus of the district's and school's student improvement goals	14	19	.384

* Significance attained at the $p<0.05$ level

Research Question 2: Is there a significant difference in West Virginia district superintendents' scores due to years of experience as superintendent in their current district?

An ANOVA was performed to analyze the data for Research Question 2. No significance was attained for this test noting that instructional leadership practices scores were not significantly different due to participants' years of superintendent experience in their current district. Results are indicated in Table 13.

Table 13

ANOVA Results for Instructional Leadership Practices Scores Due to Years of Superintendent Experience in Current District

Years of superintendent experience in current district	Number of Participants	Mean Leadership Score	ANOVA Obtained Value	ANOVA Level of Significance Attained
1 year or less	9	16.0	2.885	.053
2 to 4 years	13	20.0		
5 to 8 years	7	19.9		
9 or more years	4	19.5		

* Significance attained at the $p<0.05$ level

Research Question 3: Is there a significant difference in West Virginia district superintendents' instructional leadership practices scores due to total years of experience as a superintendent?

An ANOVA was performed to analyze the data for Research Question 3. No significance was attained for this test noting that the instructional leadership practices scores were not significantly different due to participants' total years of experience in education. The results for this analysis are found in Table 14.

Table 14

ANOVA Results for Instructional Leadership Practices Score Due to Total Years of Superintendent Experience Anywhere

Total years of superintendent experience anywhere	Number of Participants	Mean Leadership Score	ANOVA Obtained Value	ANOVA Level of Significance Attained
4 years or less	19	17.8	1.198	.328
5 to 8 years	8	20.3		
9 to 12 years	2	20.0		
13 or more years	4	20.3		

* Significance attained at the $p<0.05$ level.

Research Question 4: Is there a significant difference in West Virginia district superintendents' instructional leadership practices scores due to total years of experience in education?

An ANOVA was performed to analyze the data for Research Question 4. Significance was attained for this test noting that the instructional leadership practices scores were significantly different due to participants' total years of experience in education. Results for this data are illustrated in Table 15.

Table 15

ANOVA Results for Instructional Leadership Practices Score Due to Total Years of Experience in Education

Total years of experience in education	Number of Participants	Mean Leadership Score	ANOVA Obtained Value	ANOVA Level of Significance Attained
4 years or less	0	---	6.524	.004 *
5 to 8 years	1	8.0		
9 to 12 years	2	17.0		
13 or more years	30	19.3		

* Significance attained at the $p<0.05$ level

Post hoc tests were not performed for this ANOVA analysis because at least one group had fewer than two cases.

Research Question 5: Is there a significant difference in West Virginia district superintendents' instructional leadership practices scores due to participants' beliefs about how much of a role they should have in providing direction on curriculum and instruction?

An Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was performed to analyze the data for Research Question 5. No significance was attained for this test noting that instructional leadership practices scores were not significantly different due to participants' beliefs about how much of a role they should have in providing direction on curriculum and instruction. Analysis of results are found in Table 16.

Table 16

ANOVA Results for Instructional Leadership Practices Scores Due to Superintendents' Beliefs about How Much of a Role They Should Provide for Curriculum and Instruction

How much of a role in providing direction on curriculum and instruction	Number of Participants	Mean Leadership Score	ANOVA Obtained Value	ANOVA Level of Significance Attained
Large role	28	18.7	.144	.707
Some role	5	19.4		
Small role	0	---		
No role at all	0	---		

* Significance attained at the $p<0.05$ level

Post hoc tests were not performed for this ANOVA analysis because there were fewer than three groups with responses.

Research Question 6: Is there a significant difference in West Virginia district superintendents' instructional leadership practices scores due to how much direction participants perceive they actually provide on curriculum and instruction?

An ANOVA was performed to analyze the data for Research Question 6. No significance was attained for this test noting that instructional leadership practices scores were not significantly different due to how much direction participants perceive they actually provide on curriculum and instruction. Results are indicated in Table 17.

Table 17

ANOVA Results for Instructional Leadership Practices Scores Due to How Much Direction Participants Perceive They Actually Provide on Curriculum and Instruction

How much direction provided on curriculum and instruction	Number of Participants	Mean Leadership Score	ANOVA Obtained Value	ANOVA Level of Significance Attained
A great deal of direction	17	19.1	.327	.571
Some direction	16	18.4		
Little direction	0	---		
No direction	0	---		

* Significance attained at the $p<0.05$ level

Post hoc tests were not performed for this ANOVA analysis because there were fewer than three groups with responses.

Research Question 7: Is there a significant difference in West Virginia district superintendents' instructional leadership practices scores due to participants being hired from within or outside of the district.

A t-Test was performed to analyze the data for Research Question 7. No significance was attained for this test noting that instruction leadership practices scores were not significantly different due to participants being hired within or outside of the district. Data analysis results are indicated in Table 18.

Table 18

t-Test Results for Instructional Leadership Practices Score Due to Participants Being Hired Within or Outside the District

Hired within or outside the district in which participants are employed	Number of Participants	Mean Leadership Score	t-Test Obtained Value	t-Test Level of Significance Attained
Hired within	21	19.0	.469	.642
Hired outside	12	18.4		

* Significance attained at the $p<0.05$ level

Research Question 8. Do current state student assessment results suggest that districts are implementing curricular and instructional practices that create high achievement in English/Language Arts and mathematics?

After gathering data from superintendents about their self-reported implementation of research-supported curriculum and instructional leadership practices, the researcher chose to examine current state summative assessment results to determine if those results reflect the use of such practices. It must be noted that no direct relationship between the self-reported practices and the assessment results can be determined as the superintendents were not asked to reveal the county in which they were employed. The only available data were the summative results for the entire state. Therefore, the results found can only be used in a general way to reflect the level of achievement in West Virginia schools and based on research indicating the role of leaders in supporting and promoting student achievement, to ask the question of whether superintendent leadership is contributing to high achievement. The research cannot determine if the self-reported practices are actually being used or the degree to which they are being employed. And, noting that individual county results cannot be used and only 33 of the 55 counties are represented in the survey results, it is important to state that this question is intended to provide a

basis for further research which would include individual county results tied to the *Instructional Leadership Practices* survey or other instrument.

During the 2016-2017 school year all West Virginia students in grades 3-8 and 11 participated in a computer adaptive summative assessment for reading and mathematics. An analysis of state data shows that 66% of students were not proficient in mathematics and 52% of students were not proficient in reading. Data are represented below in Figure 1 a graph obtained from the West Virginia Department of Education's ZOOMWV public data portal.

State Assessment Results

Note: Performance at "Level 1" and "Level 2" is not proficient.
Performance at "Level 3" and above is proficient.

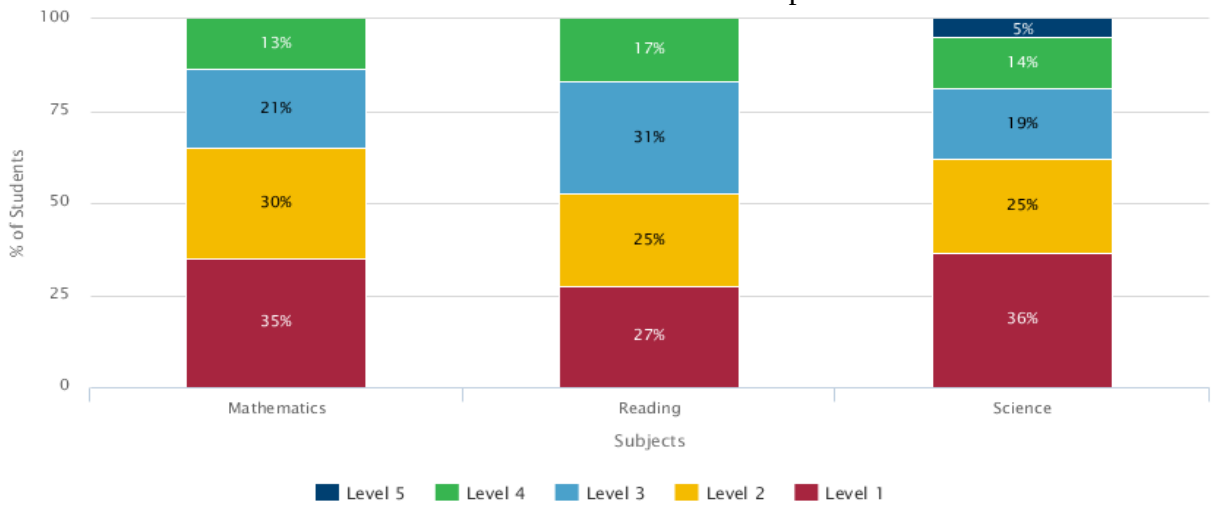

Figure 1: State Assessment Results

Source: West Virginia Department of Education (2017). [Chart illustrating student performance on the West Virginia General Summative Assessment for mathematics, reading and science]. ZOOMWV data dashboard: State assessment results. Retrieved from https://zoomwv.k12.wv.us/Dashboard/portalHome.jsp

Summary

Descriptive statistics, Chi Square inferential statistics, ANOVAs and t-Tests were utilized to analyze data for the research questions in this study. Descriptive statistics showed that 60.7%

of superintendents surveyed had an instructional leadership practices score of 17, 19, 20, or 21, which means that most superintendents were implementing most of the 24 instructional leadership practices. The survey collected information on superintendent tenure, total experience, whether superintendents were hired from within or outside of the district and perceptions of the degree of the role superintendents should have in curriculum and instructional practices and the actual role they believe they had as well as the implementation of 24 instructional leadership practices. Superintendents were asked to respond either yes or no on each of the 24 instructional leadership practices questions, to indicate if the practice was embedded in their district or not embedded district-wide.

The study did not find any significance for research questions based on years of experience as superintendents in their current district, years of experience as superintendents in any district, perception of how much instructional leadership they should be providing, actual leadership they were providing on each of the instructional leadership practices, being hired from within or outside their current district, and the participants' overall instructional leadership score on the *Instructional Leadership Practices Survey*. Significance was found between the participants' total years of experience and their overall score on the *Instructional Leadership Practices Survey*.

While the majority of the participants did respond that most of the instructional leadership practices were in place in their district, the state overall summative assessment results showed low performance for reading and mathematics for all districts in grades 3-8 and 11 on the West Virginia General Summative Assessment. Chapter 5 will explore possible explanations for the results of this study and topics for future studies.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter includes the purpose, procedures and methods used in the study. A summary of the findings and conclusions is organized by the eight research questions. This chapter ends with implications of the study, recommendations for future studies, and overall concluding remarks by the researcher.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to examine certain superintendent attributes in relationship to an overall self-reported instructional leadership practices score. The study used data on superintendent attributes related to experience in their present West Virginia school district, overall experience as a superintendent regardless of location, total educational experience and if the superintendents were hired from within or outside of the district in which they are presently employed. The study used West Virginia superintendents for their perceptions about their role as an instructional leader as well as actual practices that are in place as a result of their instructional leadership. Finally, the study used the current state student assessment results for suggested evidence that districts are implementing curricular and instructional practices that create high achievement in English/Language Arts and mathematics for the state of West Virginia.

Research Questions

The following eight research questions were used to guide the study:

1. What are West Virginia district superintendents' perceptions of their use of instructional leadership practices?
2. Is there a significant difference in West Virginia district superintendents' instructional leadership practices scores due to years of experience as superintendent in their current district?

3. Is there a significant difference in West Virginia district superintendents' instructional leadership practices scores due to total years of experience as a superintendent?
4. Is there a significant difference in West Virginia district superintendents' instructional leadership practices scores due to total years of experience in education?
5. Is there a significant difference in West Virginia district superintendents' instructional leadership practices scores due to participants' belief about how much of a role they should have in providing direction on curriculum and instruction?
6. Is there a significant difference in West Virginia district superintendents' instructional leadership practices scores due to how much direction participants perceive they actually provide on curriculum and instruction?
7. Is there a significant difference in West Virginia district superintendents' instructional leadership practices scores due to participants being hired from within or outside of the district?
8. Do current state student assessment results suggest that districts are implementing curricular and instructional practices that create high achievement in English/Language Arts and mathematics?

Procedures

This study was completed using quantitative methods. A two-part survey was developed in Qualtrics and sent out to the 55 West Virginia district superintendents via Office 365 e-mail. The survey included 31 questions that were adapted from the Belden Russonello and Stewart (2005) study *From the Top: Superintendents on Instructional Leadership*. The first section of the survey contained seven questions for collecting data on superintendent experience, perceptions about how much of a leadership role they believed they should have, perceptions about their

actual practices as an instructional leader given the issues and priorities facing their district, and if they were hired from within or from outside their present district.

The second section of the survey contained 24 questions related to instructional leadership practices. Superintendents were asked to mark "Yes" if the instructional leadership practice was in place and "No" if the instructional leadership practice was not in place in the district. Each survey was analyzed for the number of yes answers and the number of no answers in section two of the survey. When a superintendent answered that an instructional leadership practice was in place in their district, a score of one point was recorded for that survey question. No points were awarded if the instructional leadership practice was not in place. Each survey was analyzed and an overall instructional leadership score was tallied for each participant based on the number of points awarded as a result. The maximum instructional leadership practice score possible was 24.

The study utilized Chi-Square, t-Tests and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to analyze the relationships between the dependent variable of superintendent instructional leadership practices scores and the predictive variables of the superintendent's length of tenure in their current district, the superintendent's total years of experience as superintendent, the superintendent's total years of experience in education, whether the superintendent was hired from within the district or from outside the district and superintendent's perceptions of their instructional leadership role.

Summary of Findings and Conclusions

The data collected and analyzed for this study support the following findings and conclusions.

Research Question 1: What are the West Virginia district superintendents' perceptions of their use of instructional leadership practices?

Overall, the finding is that 90.9 % of participants from the study believe they are implementing 16 to 24 of the instructional leadership practices. Only two superintendents had a self-reported instructional leadership score of less than 16.

A Chi-Square inferential statistic was used to analyze data for Research Question 1. The findings concluded that there was significance at the $p<0.05$ level for all the instructional leadership practices with the exception of: (a) district-wide pacing guides being in place that show teachers where they should be each week for English/Language Arts and mathematics (b) the district using teacher-leader positions in each school through in which a teacher is freed from classroom duties to coach other teachers and (c) the districts are not limiting professional development for teachers to the focus of the district's and school's student achievement goals.

Furthermore, two additional instructional leadership practices had no significance at the $p<0.05$ level, because SPSS could not compute due to 0 responses in the NO cells. These were: "The district uses instructional walkthroughs in which teachers are observed in the classroom for the purpose of improving student achievement." and "Does your district administer its own district-wide assessments, sometimes called benchmark assessments, periodically throughout the school year?"

In a deeper analysis of each instructional leadership practice that had significance, one instructional leadership practice that showed significance at the $p<0.05$ level was "District-wide assessments are created by teachers in the district." This is the only survey item for which the negative responses were greater than the positive ones. Twenty-nine of the participants indicated that this instructional leadership practice was not in place in their district. For all the other

instructional leadership practices that had a significance at the $p<0.05$ level, the majority of participants respond that the instructional leadership practice was in place in their district.

Waters and Marzano (2006) found five district-level leadership practices that had a statistically significant correlation at the $p<0.05$ to student academic achievement. Those practices are, "the goal-setting process, non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction, broad alignment with support of district goals, monitoring the goals for achievement and instruction, and the use of resources to support the goals for achievement and instruction" (p.11). The researcher utilized these findings from Waters and Marzano and the finding from this study to conclude that West Virginia district superintendents are not implementing some key instructional leadership practices which correlate to student academic achievement. Those practices are "District-wide assessments are created by teachers to align with curriculum and instructional targets." and "The district limits professional development for teachers to the focus of the district's and school's student achievement goals."

Research Question 2: Is there a significant difference in a West Virginia district superintendents' instructional leadership practices scores due to years of experience in their current district?

Of the 33 study participants, nine had less than a year of experience in their present district, 13 had two or more years of experience in their present district, seven had five to eight years of experience and four had nine or more years of experience in their present district. An ANOVA was used to perform an analysis of the relationship between years of experience as a West Virginia district superintendent in their present district and their overall instructional leadership practices score. No significance was attained for this test indicating that the

instructional leadership practices scores were not significantly different due to the participants' years of experience as superintendent in their present district.

Research Question 3: Is there a significant difference in West Virginia district superintendents' instructional leadership practices scores due to total years of experience as a superintendent?

Of the 33 participants surveyed for this study, 19 had less than four years total experience as a superintendent anywhere. Eight of the participants had five to eight overall years of experience as a superintendent, two had nine to 12 years of experience and just four had 13 or more total years of experience as a superintendent anywhere. An ANOVA was used to analyze the data for Research Question 3. No significance was attained for this test indicating that the instructional leadership practices scores were not significantly different due to the participants' total years of experience as a superintendent.

Research Question 4: Is there a significant difference in West Virginia district superintendents' instructional leadership practices scores due to total years of experience in education?

Of the 33 participants surveyed, zero had four or less years of experience, one had five to eight years of experience, two had nine to 12 years of experience with 30 having 13 or more years of experience in education in any position, which included teaching, building level administrator, central office or superintendent experience.

An ANOVA was used to perform an analysis between a West Virginia district superintendent's total years of experience in education and their instructional leadership practices score. A significance of 0.004 was attained at the $p<0.05$ level showing that the instructional

leadership practices scores were significantly different due to participants' total years of experience in education.

Upon deeper analysis of the data from the previous two questions regarding superintendent experience in their present district or in any district, numbers were significantly reversed. For research question one, 87.8% of the 33 participants in the study had eight or less years of experience as superintendent in their present district. For research question two, 81.8% had eight or less year of overall experience as superintendent anywhere as compared to research question three where less than one percent of the participants surveyed had less than 13 years of experience in education. Based on these numbers and superintendent contract specifications from West Virginia Code 18-4-1 (West Virginia Legislature, 2017a), one could generalize that most superintendents in West Virginia move into the position of superintendent at the end of their careers. Should a similar study be conducted in the future, data should be collected on the age demographics of West Virginia district superintendents and in how many districts in the state of West Virginia a district superintendent has been employed as superintendent. This information would serve as additional information in understanding if most superintendents are at the end of their careers when moving into the position and how many superintendents are hired from other districts within West Virginia versus superintendents with experience outside the state of West Virginia.

Research Question 5: Is there a significant difference in West Virginia district superintendents' instructional leadership practices scores due to participants' beliefs about how much of a role they should have in providing direction on curriculum and instruction?

An ANOVA was used to analyze the relationship between superintendents' beliefs about how much of a role they should have in providing direction on curriculum and instruction and

their instructional leadership practices score. No significance was attained for this test noting that the instructional leadership practices scores were not significantly different due to participants' beliefs about how much of a role they should have in providing direction on curriculum and instruction. Of the 33 participants surveyed, 84.8% believe they should have a large leadership role in curriculum and instructional leadership decisions in their districts with no superintendents believing they should have a small role or no role in instructional leadership.

Research Question 6: Is there a significant difference in West Virginia district superintendents' instructional leadership practices scores due to how much direction participants perceive they actually provide on curriculum and instruction?

An ANOVA was used to analyze the relationship between superintendents' instructional leadership practices scores and how much instructional leadership they actually provide on curriculum and instruction. No significant relationship was attained for this test. Upon deeper analysis of data between the superintendents' perceptions of what their role should be versus what their instructional leadership role actually is, given the other issues and priorities facing the district, there was a difference between superintendents' perceptions versus the actual superintendent practices. While 84.8% of participants responded they should have a large role in curriculum and instructional leadership in the district only 51.5% are actually given a great deal of control of direction on curriculum and instructional leadership in their district. This is a difference of 33.3% between what they believe their role should be contrasted to their perceptions of their actual role in their districts.

Research Question 7: Is there a significant difference in West Virginia district superintendents' instructional leadership practices scores due to participants being hired from within or outside of the district?

A t-Test was used for analysis of the data for research question 7. No significance was attained for this test suggesting that the instructional leadership practices scores were not significantly different for participants being hired from within versus outside of the district. Of the superintendents in the study, 63.6% were hired from within the district.

Research Question 8: Do current state student assessment results suggest that districts are implementing curricular and instructional practices that create high achievement in English/Language Arts and mathematics?

In order to determine if the West Virginia student summative assessment results suggested that districts are implementing instructional leadership practices, the researcher collected the following chart with state assessment achievement results from the West Virginia Department of Education's ZOOMWV Data Dashboard (West Virginia Department of Education, 2017).

During the 2016-2017 school year all West Virginia students in grades 3-8 and 11 participated in the West Virginia General Summative Assessment (WVGSA), which is a computer adaptive assessment for reading and mathematics in grades 3-8 and 11. Those results are represented in Figure 2, below a graphic from the West Virginia Department of Education.

State Assessment Results

Note: Performance at “Level 1” and “Level 2” is not proficient.
Performance at “Level 3” and above is proficient.

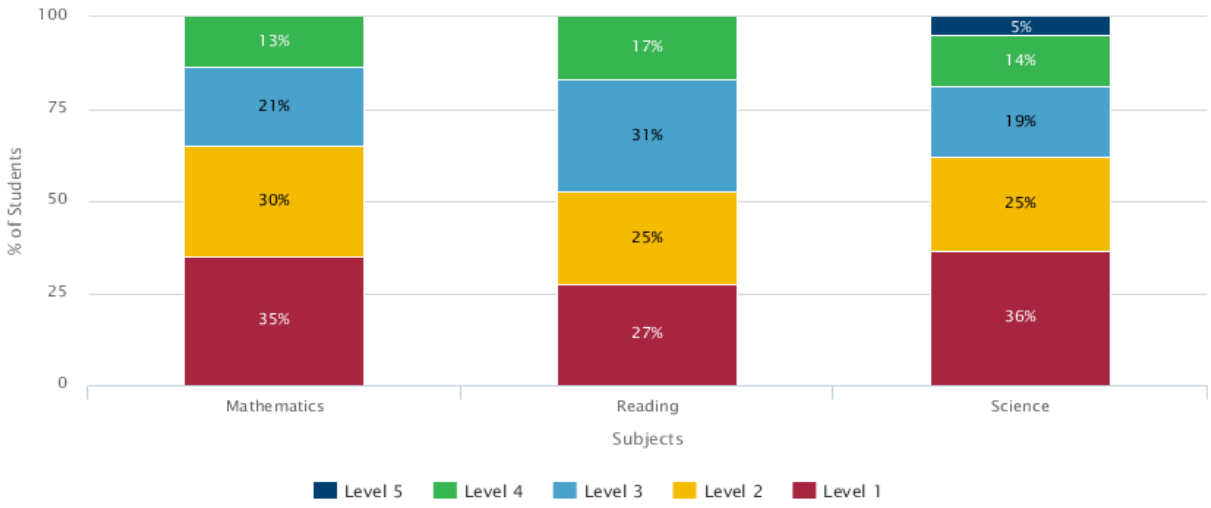

Figure 2: State Assessment Results

Source: West Virginia Department of Education (2017). [Chart illustrating student performance on the West Virginia General Summative Assessment for mathematics, reading and science]. ZOOMWV data dashboard: State assessment summary. Retrieved from https://zoomwv.k12.wv.us/Dashboard/portalHome.jsp

An analysis of state data showed that 35% of students were proficient in mathematics on the state summative assessment, and 48% of students were proficient on the reading. Data represented above in the graph were obtained from the West Virginia Department of Education’s ZOOMWV Data Dashboard (2017) public data portal. The summative assessment data allows the researcher to question whether districts are actually implementing the instructional leadership practices or whether they are effectively implementing the instructional leadership practices.

Discussion and Implications

The following discussion and implications are organized into three sections. Section 1 will focus on the relationship of each superintendent attribute to their instructional leadership practices score. Section 2 will discuss the possible disconnection between superintendent self-

reported instructional leadership practices scores and student performance on the West Virginia General Summative Assessment (WVGSA). Section 3 will discuss implications for future research to better understand the relationship between superintendent experience, instructional leadership practices and student achievement on the WVGSA.

Superintendent Experience Attributes and Instructional Leadership Practices

In other studies that examined the relationship between student achievement on state summative assessment scores and superintendent tenure a significant relationship was found (Myers, 2011, Plotts and Gutmore, 2014, and Waters and Marzano, 2006). For research question two, the ANOVA results did approach significance with a score of 0.053 at the $p<0.05$ level, though significance was not attained. The lack of significance may be due to the high percentage (67%) of superintendents in the study with tenure of fewer than 4 years. Parker-Chenaille (2012) found that in rural New York districts there was a greater increase in proficiency rates for superintendents that had seven to ten years of experience as compared to superintendents that had one to six years of tenure.

When considering the possible influence of superintendents' total years of experience as a superintendent anywhere, the researcher found no significant relationship. The findings in this study indicated that overall superintendent experience anywhere did not relate in any significant way to West Virginia district superintendents' current instructional leadership practices. It should be noted that no information was collected on whether additional experience outside of the current district was in state or out of state experience. Parker-Chenaille (2012) did find in a study that New York superintendents replaced by internal superintendents increased student achievement more than external hires. The researcher for that study did not note if that was an

observation based on internal hires from within the district or internal hires from within the state, which was not noted in this study as well.

A significant relationship was attained for research question four that examined the relationship between total years of experience in education and West Virginia superintendents' self-reported instructional leadership practices scores. It should also be noted that the vast majority of superintendents (91%) had 13 or more years of total experience in education. It may be inferred that these are veteran educators who have a great deal of knowledge and experience which could be connected to instructional leadership practices and student achievement. Though the study did not gather information specifically related to previous roles served in education or if those roles where served in the state of West Virginia or another state, such experiences may provide further explanation for these data findings.

No relationships were found between the two questions related to superintendents' perceptions versus practices about their role in providing direction on instructional leadership. While the data did show there were some differences between what they perceived their role to be and what level of leadership they were actually providing, no conclusions could be drawn.

Disconnect between Superintendent Self-Reported Instructional Leadership Practices and Student Performance on the West Virginia General Summative Assessment

The researcher utilized a survey to collect information from superintendents related to experience attributes and instructional leadership perceptions versus actual instructional leadership practices of West Virginia school district superintendents. The researcher further examined if state summative assessment results suggest that districts are implementing curricular and instructional leadership practices that create high levels of achievement in English/Language Arts and mathematics. Results for student performance data indicated that students are not

performing at high levels on the state summative assessment (West Virginia Department of Education, 2017). The lack of high levels of performance leaves the researcher questioning what barriers might exist to explain this disconnect between superintendents' self-reported instructional leadership practices and student performance. Possible questions to explore this disconnect between reported leadership practices and overall student performance on the state summative assessment could be:

- What key practices from other studies are or are not being implemented based on the data collected from West Virginia district superintendents?
- Could there be superintendent misconceptions about the level of implementation of the instructional leadership practices in their districts?

Implications for Future Research

Overall, the intent of this study was to examine relationships between years of experience in a West Virginia district, total years of superintendent experience anywhere, total years of experience in education, perceptions about how much of a role West Virginia district superintendents believe they should have in providing direction on instructional leadership practices versus how much they are actually involved in providing instructional leadership and whether being hired from within or outside of the district have any significance on the superintendents' overall self-reported instructional leadership practice score. The researcher was seeking to better understand what individual leadership practices were in place in West Virginia and if certain superintendent attributes had a relationship to the overall instructional leadership practices score.

In a study titled *From the Top: Superintendents on Instructional Leadership* by Belden Russonello and Stewart (2005), 813 superintendent participants were surveyed across the United

States to examine instructional leadership at the district level. The instructional leadership survey was developed by Belden Russonello and Stewart through a qualitative process where the researchers conducted extensive phone interviews to develop a survey for use in the study. Essentially superintendents defined instructional leadership practices that were key from their perspective and then superintendents in the United States were surveyed to see how many districts were implementing the instructional leadership practices.

That questionnaire was modified and utilized for this study to get the instructional leadership practices scores. The researcher for this study wanted to gain a deeper understanding of how many key instructional leadership practices as identified by superintendents were in place in districts in West Virginia.

While this study examined the relationship between experience in a district, overall experience as a superintendent anywhere, total educational experience and hiring from within or outside of the district, it did not analyze the relationship between specific district tenure, overall tenure as a superintendent anywhere and student performance on the state standardized assessment as was done in other key studies. Nor did this study do an analysis of each individual instructional leadership practice with each individual county's performance on the WVGSA.

Additionally, the Waters and Marzano (2006) study identified the superintendent's ability to align all resources including professional development as a key instructional leadership practice to higher levels of student academic achievement. This ability of superintendents to align resources with improvement goals was also identified by superintendents for the Belden Russonello and Stewart (2005) research as a key instructional leadership practice. This study revealed that 57.5% of West Virginia district superintendents do not limit professional development to the focus of the district's and school's improvement goals. This study also

reveals that 51.5% of participants for this study stated their district does not have district-wide pacing guides for E/LA, 48.4% of superintendents surveyed answered their district does not have district-wide pacing guides for mathematics and 87.8% of West Virginia district superintendents surveyed answered that teachers in their district have not created district-wide assessments. Again, these are all key instructional leadership practices that were identified in the 2005 *Education Week* study (Belden Russonello & Stewart, 2005), but have been identified as not being in place in West Virginia districts by West Virginia district superintendents.

Additionally, after further reflection on the design of this study, there were no questions to gather information on how long instructional leadership practices had been in place in districts or if they were an embedded norm for curricular and instructional leadership practices. Nor did this study collect information from superintendents in terms of their understanding or training on each of the instructional leadership practices. This information would have been helpful in understanding the disconnection between the instructional leadership survey results and overall student performance on the state summative assessment.

Summary

The results from this study showed that West Virginia district superintendents believe they are implementing most of the instructional leadership practices identified in the *Instructional Leadership Practices Survey*. The data showed that West Virginia district superintendents are not implementing the instructional leadership practices of narrowing the focus of professional development to the goals identified for the district's or school's improvement, the districts do not have pacing guides in place for E/LA or mathematics nor do the districts have district-wide assessments created by teachers in the district.

When it came to superintendent attributes associated with tenure and a significant relationship to superintendents' self-reported instructional leadership practices score, there were no significant relationships between the years of experience superintendents had in their present district, total years of experience as superintendent anywhere and superintendents' self-reported instructional leadership practices scores. There was a significance of .004 attained at the $p<0.05$ level for total years of experience in education and superintendents' self-reported instructional leadership practices score. Post hoc tests were not performed for the ANOVA analysis, because at least one group had fewer than two cases.

Furthermore the study did not find a significant difference in West Virginia superintendents' instructional leadership practices scores and how much direction participants perceived they should have or how much direction participants perceived they actually provided on curriculum and instruction. Nor did the study find a significant difference in West Virginia instructional leadership practices scores and being hired from within or outside of the district that they are presently employed in as superintendent.

The final research question for the study sought to analyze state student assessment results for a suggestion that districts are implementing curricular and instructional practices that create high achievement in English/Language Arts and mathematics. The current state assessment results do not show high levels of student achievement in E/LA or mathematics.

Limitations

Results from this study were limited by:

1. Only 33 of the 55 West Virginia district superintendents participated in the study.
2. The study did not connect district superintendents' survey results to district student achievement on the West Virginia General Summative Assessment.

3. Superintendents self-reported their instructional leadership practices and no formal investigation was done to examine district artifacts as evidence.
4. The superintendents were not asked if all their experience as a superintendent was within the state of West Virginia.
5. Superintendents were not asked to clarify how many years of their total experience in education was contributed to by teaching experience versus other leadership experiences in education.
6. Superintendents were not asked any clarification questions on how much of their teaching experience or other leadership experience was in the state of West Virginia versus that of another state.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study investigated the relationship between various West Virginia district superintendent attributes related to tenure, perceptions about what the superintendents' leadership role should be in the district and district hiring practices for the superintendents compared to superintendents' self-reported instructional leadership practices scores. The study would have been more robust in nature had West Virginia superintendents' tenure in a district, overall tenure as a superintendent anywhere, overall educational experience, perceptions versus actual practices and hiring from within or outside the district been compared to the West Virginia General Summative Assessment results. Additionally, dimension could have been added to the study by investigating the relationship between the self-reported instructional leadership practices score to student academic achievement on the West Virginia General Summative Assessment. It would also be a recommendation of the researcher for future studies to

investigate, if tenure as a superintendent has any influence when investigating the effects of moderators such as poverty and district size on student achievement.

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APPENDIX A: INSTRUCTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER

Office of Research Integrity
Institutional Review Board
One John Marshall Drive
Huntington, WV 25755

FWA 00002704

IRB1 #00002205
IRB2 #00003206

February 20, 2018

Louis Watts, Ed.D.
Leadership Studies

RE: IRBNet ID# 1196527-1
At: Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral)

Dear Dr. Watts:

Protocol Title:	[1196527-1] An Investigation of the Relationship Between Selected Superintendent Attributes and Student Achievement In West Virginia	
Site Location:	MUGC	
Submission Type:	New Project	APPROVED
Review Type:	Exempt	

In accordance with 45CFR46.101(b)(2), the above study was granted Exempted approval today by the Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral) Designee. No further submission (or closure) is required for an Exempt study **unless** there is an amendment to the study. All amendments (including the addition of research staff) must be submitted and approved by the IRB Chair/Designee.

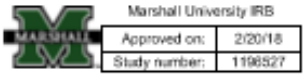
This study is for student Leatha Williams.

If you have any questions, please contact the Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral) Coordinator Bruce Day, ThD, CIP at 304-696-4303 or day50@marshall.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

APPENDIX B: SURVEY CONSENT LETTER

Survey Consent Letter

February 11, 2018



Dear Superintendent of Schools,

You are cordially invited to participate in a research project designed to gain insight into the relationships that exist between West Virginia superintendent's tenure in a district, total years of experience as superintendent, total years of experience in education, self-reported instructional leadership practices and student achievement on the West Virginia General Summative Assessment in grades four and eight for reading and mathematics.

The survey has 31 total questions divided into two sections. The first section is based on superintendent experience attributes and the second section is based on instructional leadership practices. The survey questions for this study are modified from an *Education Week* survey. Participation in the survey should take no more than 15 minutes and is completely voluntary. Your replies will remain anonymous and no IP addresses will be collected. Please do not include your name on any section of the survey. By completing the survey, you are giving your consent to use your answers. This survey has been approved by the Marshall University Institutional Review Board (IRB). There are no known risks to taking the survey.

The results of the survey will be used in my dissertation entitled *An Investigation of the Relationships between Selected Superintendent Attributes and Student Achievement in West Virginia*. In addition, results will be published with my dissertation results.

Please contact the Marshall University Office of Research Integrity at (304) 696-4303, if you have any questions about your rights as a research participant. If you have other questions, please contact Dr. Louis Watts (Principal Investigator) at (304) 756-9603 or Leatha Williams (Co-Investigator) at (681) 220-2014.

Please use the following link to access and complete the survey: _____

I would like to extend my sincere appreciate for your participation in the survey. Please feel free to print a copy of this letter for your records.

Sincerely,

Leatha G. Williams
Director of Technology, Assessment and
Food Service at Braxton County Schools,
Co-investigator

APPENDIX C: STUDY SURVEY

Superintendent Experience and Instructional Leadership Survey

Hello, my name is Leatha Williams and I am a doctoral student at Marshall University. I am examining the relationship between superintendent experience, superintendent instructional leadership practices and student achievement. The results of this survey will be used and published in my dissertation

Section 1: Questions about experience: Please respond to each of the following questions:

1. How many years have you been the superintendent in the district you are in now?

   - o One year or less
   - o Two to four years
   - o Five to eight years
   - o Nine or more years

2. Were you the superintendent in another district during the 2016 – 2017 school year?

   - o Yes
   - o No

3. How many years total have you been superintendent?

   - o Four years or less
   - o Five to eight years
   - o Nine to twelve years
   - o 13 or more years

4. How many total years of experience do you have in education (include teaching experience, administrative experience, central office experience and superintendent experience)?
   - o Four years or less
   - o Five to eight years of experience
   - o Nine to twelve years of experience
   - o 13 or more years of experience

5. In your own opinion, how much of a role should the superintendent have in providing direction on curriculum and instruction for the schools in the district?
   - o Large role
   - o Some
   - o A small role
   - o No role at all

6. Given all the issues and priorities facing the district, would you say that you currently provide a great deal, some, little or no direction on curriculum and instruction for the schools in your

district?

- A great deal
- Some
- Little
- No direction

7. Were you hired from within the district that you are presently employed or were you hired from outside of district (meaning you worked in another county or state prior to your job as superintendent)?
   - Yes, I was hired from within the district
   - No, I worked outside of the district

Part II: This section of the survey is about specific practices that are in place in your district. Please respond to each of the following survey questions with either a yes or no:

8. Has your district established common curriculum in schools across the district?
   - Yes
   - No

9. Has your district established a common curriculum for English Language Arts in elementary schools?
   - Yes
   - No

10. Has your district established a common curriculum for mathematics in elementary schools?
    - Yes
    - No

11. Has your district established a common curriculum for English Language Arts in middle schools?
    - Yes
    - No

12. Has your district established a common curriculum for mathematics in middle schools?
    - Yes
    - No

13. Has your district established a common curriculum for English Language Arts in high schools?
    - Yes
    - No

14. Has your district established a common curriculum for mathematics in high schools?
    - Yes
    - No

15. Is the common curriculum aligned with College and Career Readiness state standards?
    - Yes
    - No

16. Does your district have district-wide pacing guides that show teachers what content to cover and where they should be each week in English Language Arts?
    - Yes
    - No

17. Does your district have district-wide pacing guides that show teachers what content to cover and where they should be each week in mathematics?
    - Yes
    - No

18. Does your district require schools across the district to use the same reading textbooks?
    - Yes
    - No

19. Does your district require schools across the district to use the same mathematics textbook?
    - Yes
    - No

20. Not including observations for teacher evaluations, does your district use instructional walkthroughs in which teachers are observed in the classroom, for the purposes of improving student instruction?
    - Yes
    - No

21. Not including standardized state tests or end-of-unit tests from textbook publishers, does your district administer its own district-wide assessments, sometimes called benchmark assessments, periodically throughout the school year?
    - Yes
    - No

22. Are the district-wide assessments linked to the College and Career Readiness state standards?
    - Yes
    - No

23. Were the district-wide assessments created by teachers in the district?
    - Yes
    - No

24. Does your district require that principals and teachers adjust instruction based on the results of district-wide benchmark assessments?
    - Yes
    - No

25. Does your district provide formal training for principals and teachers on how to analyze and use student performance data?
    - Yes
    - No

26. Does your district provide training to principals and teachers on analyzing student performance data down to the individual student and classroom?
    - Yes
    - No

27. Does your district use a formal district-wide training program, often called a teacher induction program (TIP), for all new teachers?
    - Yes
    - No

28. Does your district use teacher-leader positions in each school through which a teacher is freed from classroom duties to coach other teachers in the school on their instruction?
    - Yes
    - No

29. Does your district use a common planning time so that teachers at each grade level, or in each subject, within the school can meet to talk about instruction during the workday?
    - Yes
    - No

30. Does your district use a district-wide standard process for drafting school improvement plans (strategic plans) in which individual schools must assess their performance data and explain how they will meet improvement targets?
    - Yes
    - No

31. Does your district limit professional development for teachers to the focus of the district's or school's student improvement goals?
    - Yes
    - No

APPENDIX D: CURRICULUM VITA

Leatha G. Williams
426 Floyd Drive
Little Birch, WV 26629
Cell Phone: (304) 681-2014
Home Phone: (304) 765-2254
Work Phone: (304) 765-7101 ext. 473

Education:

Edinboro University of Pennsylvania
Major: Bachelor of Science in Education Degree
Area of Certification: Secondary Education Social Studies
Minors: History and Geography
Marshall University Graduate College
Major: Leadership Studies
Area of Certification: Principal
Marshall University Graduate College
Major: Educational Specialist
Area of Certification: Curriculum and Instruction
Marshall University Graduate College
Major: Doctoral of Public Education Administration, ABD
Anticipated Completion: Fall, 2018

Relative Work Experiences:

July, 2016-Present ***Director of Technology, Assessment, Accountability and Food Service: Braxton County Schools***

Duties:

- Coordinator the implementation of all summative assessments
- Disaggregate annual summative assessment data
- Lead training in the utilization of assessment data to improve core instruction and targeted interventions
- Report annually to the school board on county performance from the summative assessment, accountability, technology and child nutrition
- Oversee the updating of technology infrastructure, the phone system and plan all device deployment
- Maintain technology equipment and systems for the purpose of ensuring that systems are functioning properly and effectively in support of district administrative and educational operations
- Manage procurement process and county inventories for technology and child nutrition
- Develop and conduct an annual needs assessment for the state Technology Plan
- Lead the Local Wellness Committee and the Technology Committee
- Review and revise all policies related to technology, food service and assessment
- Oversee budgets for Tools for Schools, Step 7B Funding, E-Rate Reimbursement, bids for all telecommunications and bids for all equipment
- Training principals on policy 2340, benchmark assessments and the West Virginia General Summative Assessment

July, 2015- June, 2016 ***Superintendent of Wetzel County Schools***

Duties:

- Oversee all state and federal requirements for funding and reporting for the LEA
- Build a data-driven system for meeting all accountability and accreditation requirements for the LEA
- Lead data analysis and curriculum development for all programmatic levels
- Create a stakeholders group for capacity building and sustainability of accountability measures
- Train and supervise a District Leadership Team
- Train and oversee the implementation of district evaluations, curriculum development and standards-based instruction
- Collaborate to develop a Strategic Plan that comprehensively addressed standards-based instruction and data-driven decisions
- Serve as Secretary of the Wetzel County Board of Education
- Act as a liaison to community and business organizations
- Coordinate all facility/construction projects, transportation and nutrition for the school system
- Work with all district Local Improvement Councils
- Oversee the supervision of all district office staff and ensure the alignment of work with federal and state requirements
- Oversee budget development, implementation and management of district resources

September, 2011- August, 2015 ***School Improvement Specialist/Federal Programs Coordinator: West Virginia Department of Education***

Duties:

- Conduct Consolidated and ESEA Flexibility monitoring
- Report findings, recommendations and accommodations from monitoring reports to county superintendents
- Serve as lead coordinator for the Office of School Improvement for Priority Schools on the Literacy Design Collaborative with the Southern Regional Education Board
- Work effectively with CPD, RESAs, LEAs and schools to coordinator resources and technical assistance
- Coordinate and conduct Diagnostic visits, reports and debriefs
- Work effectively as team leader during diagnostics, monitoring and serve as a supporting team member for other coordinators during diagnostics and administrative reviews
- Assist counties in Strategic Plan revisions after audits visits from the Office of Educational Performance Audits
- Provide assistance, support and guidance on the implementation and utilization of the Instructional Practice Inventory, the School Culture Survey, the Cultural Typology, School Leadership Team and collaborative teams
- Train LEAs and schools on data analysis, determining root causes, writing of Strategic Plan goals, writing student learning goals, and developing of scope and sequences

July, 2006 – August, 2011: ***Principal Rupert Elementary School: Greenbrier County Schools***

Duties:

- Develop and coordination all staff development
- Oversee all school wide formative and summative assessments
- Develop and implement elementary schedule
- Implementation of K-5 90-minute Reading Block
- Develop a schedule for and coordinate the Three Tier Reading Model
- Train teachers in the county of developing common assessments
- Serve on county Safe Schools Committee
- Serve on county Reading and Math Adoption Committees
- Write school level instructional grants
- Oversee all aspects of school level Title I Program
- Management of all aspects of school level budgets and funds
- Evaluations of all staff members and service personnel
- Serve as county Acuity Trainer during Summer Academies
- Lead a team in developing, implementing and monitoring the Five Year Strategic Plan
- Oversee Multidisciplinary Team Meeting with local agencies

Nov., 2004- July, 2006: ***Assistant Principal Eastern Greenbrier Middle School: Greenbrier County Schools***

Duties:

- Supervision of all student discipline in 8th and 9th grade
- Oversee the prioritization and mapping of the curriculum
- Observe and evaluate all 8th and 9th grade staff members
- Coordination of all school wide standardized and benchmark assessments
- Develop and write the Safe Schools Plan
- Collaboratively develop the middle school schedule
- Collaboratively develop and write the Five-Year Strategic Plan
- Serve as assistant president of the Local School Improvement Council