

RURAL MISSOURI SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR  
ABILITY TO EVALUATE A RURAL SUPERINTENDENT

STEVEN A. BRIGHAM, II

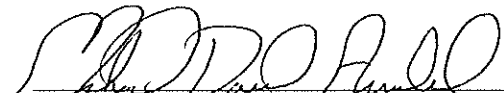
2017

The undersigned, appointed by the Department Chair of the Graduate Studies in Education, have examined the dissertation entitled:

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Presented by Steven A. Brigham, II a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Education and hereby certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.




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RURAL MISSOURI SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR  
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A Dissertation  
Presented to  
The Faculty of the Graduate Education Department  
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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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By

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## **Abstract**

Title of Document: Rural Missouri School Board Members' Perceptions of Their Ability to Evaluate a Rural Superintendent  
Steven A. Brigham II, Doctor of Education, 2017

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This study surveyed school board members at rural districts in Missouri about their perceptions of their ability to evaluate a rural superintendent. A total of 41 school districts and 287 individual board members were included in the study. The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of rural board members related to training in superintendent evaluation and to ascertain what if any additional professional development board of education members perceive is needed to be effective in evaluating the performance of the superintendent of schools.

This study utilized a researcher-developed survey tool that contained three parts: six demographic questions, 16 5-point Likert-scale questions related to board members' understanding of their perception of their ability to evaluate the rural superintendent, and two rank-order questions related to board member training and school vision.

Results revealed there was a significant difference between board members with longer tenures compared to those with less than six years of experience related to their perception of their ability to effectively evaluate the superintendent. Based on the data compiled this study found the 16 hours required of Missouri Board members is not adequate to foster effective Superintendent evaluation therefore it is important the state add additional hours of training within the first six years of service to ensure excellence

in evaluation. This training should include school culture, vision, and climate, school management, and professional development.

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Finally, to my former and current students, never let anyone tell you that you cannot achieve your dreams. Use their criticism as motivation and never stop reaching for your goal of achievement of the highest level. Never forget where you have come from.

## **Dedication**

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your love, motivation, hard work, dedication, direction, and discipline throughout my life.....  
.....thanks, MOM!

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In a report on school boards, Hill (2003) wrote, “the hero superintendent is an ideal seldom realized. The whole governance structure is tilted against strong executive leadership” (p. 2). Hill’s statement is a strong argument for the following study. The superhero complex must be reevaluated and strong leadership must become the norm rather than the exception. The quality of district leadership varies across the state without a mandated set of evaluation criterion (Brown, 2004). The purpose of this study was to determine rural Missouri board members’ perception of their effectiveness in evaluating the rural superintendent. Further, this study explored whether there is a need for increased accountability of school board members in the rural schools surveyed, with potential implications for schools across the state specifically related to the evaluation of the superintendent of schools, possibly the most important paid individual in a school district.

#### **Background for the Study**

According to an email conversation with J. Young (personal communication, August 6, 2015) at the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MODESE), at the beginning of the 2015-2016 school year, there were 52 new superintendents in Missouri. This was down slightly from 56 new superintendents in 2014, and was the lowest number of new superintendents reported since at least 2010. This is not surprising as the average tenure for a superintendent is two to five years

(Robertson, 2003; Lafee, 2014), a number that has stayed consistent over the past two decades, though it is important to note these superintendents were new, not just to a district, but to the job. Turnover for administrators in education is high. As stated, almost half of all superintendents leave within 5 years (Robertson, 2003; Lafee, 2014); reasons for transition and turnover are as varied as the superintendents themselves. Often for the individual, advancement is a financial opportunity due to the increase in salary that comes with a new position, but it can also be a matter of poor board-superintendent relationship, political maneuvering, exiting the education profession altogether, or it can be a moral issue that affects an entire school district (Robertson, 2003).

For their part, school board members are also constantly changing. In 2015, 381 new school board members won elections across the state according to the Missouri Board Development Department (J. Young, personal communication, August 6, 2015). In 2014, the number of new board members statewide was 518. The larger number is due to elections for three seats rather than two (DESE, August 15, 2015). Still, the numbers hold steady at 300-500 new board members per year, since 2011 (DESE, 2015). Such circumstances bring to the forefront the need for continuing conversations about the role of school boards in relation to the evaluation of rural superintendents.

A review of the requirements for school board member training shows the 2016 requirements for Missouri State Board training was 16 hours for each board member. Training included topics such as student achievement, school law, school finance, board policies, board relations and operations, goal setting, strategic planning, advocacy, and communications. Training in the area of the superintendent evaluation is not a mandated

requirement, it is available for local school boards upon request through MSBA. Missouri offers an optional opportunity for school board members to take 12 additional credits in order to be considered “advanced”, or 24 additional credits in order to be considered at the master level as a board member. The latter two options are not required (MSBA, 2016).

### **Statement of the Problem**

The current recommended professional development requirements for incoming and currently serving school board members are ineffective to meet the needs of local school districts (DiPaola, 2014; Mayo and McCartney, 2004; O’Brien and Rossmiller, 2013; Weiss, Templeton, Thompson, and Tremont, 2015). In rural schools, it is not uncommon for the school board to spend minimal time per month on campus (Bolla, 2010; Franklin, 2011). This makes it difficult for board members to have an understanding beyond what they are exposed to at the monthly board meeting. Trust is essential in leadership and earned on both sides of the board table (Carr, 2003). With limited efforts to align mindsets toward shared goals, it is difficult to build trust between superintendents and school board members. To this end, it is also essential for trust to be built beyond the boardroom and across the various buildings in a district (Eller and Carlson, 2009). Building a strong school culture is essential for all districts to strive to achieve. It is in the board members’ and districts’ best interest to be well versed in the areas of their budget and curriculum--yet training is minimal (Bruton, 2001; Reimer, 2008). Discussions each month concerning regular issues might be open to deeper, more meaningful conversations if board members were better educated in school district

matters. This study focused on determining rural Missouri board members' perception of their effectiveness in evaluating the rural superintendent.

A successful superintendent is defined by his/her ability to meet the academic, social, economic, and political needs of a school district (R. Campbell, 1993; Robertson, 2003; AASA, 2006). Students, teachers, parents, and community members also impact the success of a superintendent through their support of district goals and objectives. The researcher attempted to determine rural Missouri board members' perception of their effectiveness in evaluating the rural superintendent. The research presented current professional development requirements for board of education members as well as data on perceptions individual board of education members have on their ability and knowledge level to effectively evaluate the superintendent of schools.

### **Purpose for the Study**

This study obtained perceptions of current board of education members in selected rural Missouri schools to effectively evaluate the rural MO superintendent of schools based on the current Missouri Leader Standards. The superintendent evaluation system is not addressed in MSBA's mandated training (MSBA, 2014). In addition to was to studying rural Missouri board members' perception of their effectiveness in evaluating the rural superintendent the researcher explored the role of the board of education (BOE) member's perception of how to effectively evaluate the rural superintendent and whether it should be a component of the local BOE member's in-service training. States such as Kansas, Arkansas, Oklahoma and others are attempting to address the inconsistencies in

training requirements of school board members and the process of evaluating superintendents (Howley, 1992; IASB, 2014; Selby, 1984; Shaw 2013).

This study focused on the superintendent evaluation process as part of each BOE members' perception of their ability to evaluate the superintendent. By the time a superintendent takes his/her position in the district office, he/she is expected to know where the school district is currently in many important areas. Areas of knowledge before entering the superintendency include: test scores and most importantly, student achievement and cultural growth (Carr, 2003; Education Funders of St. Louis, 2007; Eller and Carlson, 2009; Rebore, 2007; Patillo, 2008). Even though there is an strong emphasis on test scores and budgeting, the determining factor of taking a position is understanding the community, values, ethics, and how that is displayed through the board of education (Bolla, 2010; Carr, 2008; DiPaola, 2014). By allowing a dysfunctional superintendent to remain in place, the growth and success of a district can be hindered (Maeroff, 2010). Maeroff in 2010 argued the qualifications of school board members should be reconsidered. He also argued there is a need for more professional development and training for today's board members. J. Young in a 2015 interview, stated superintendents have a high turnover rate. Highlighting strengths and areas requiring improvement specific to an individual's needs and standards should be the result of the evaluation process.

The purpose of this study was to determine rural Missouri board members' perception of their effectiveness in evaluating the rural superintendent. In addition to the literature, quantitative data was collected by the researcher, via the final two researcher-

developed survey questions, opinions from the perspectives of board of education members who have attended state and local in-service training sessions including, but not limited to, those provided by MSBA. This study offers conclusions and recommendations regarding the perceptions of the school board related to the evaluation of the rural superintendent.

Upon review of the changes that have occurred in the evaluation process of the superintendent as a result of Missouri School Improvement Plan 5 (MSIP5) it is likely the superintendent evaluation is not a top priority in most districts due to the focus on other areas. Missouri's MSIP 5 deals with academic achievement, sub group achievement, college/career readiness, attendance rates, and graduation rates (DESE, 2011). Evaluation of the superintendent is not a topic addressed in this plan intended to better Missouri schools. Instead MSIP 5 is student-focused. The responsibility of insuring this is the case falls to the board's evaluation and rehire of the superintendent and the trickle-down effect on subsequent evaluations. While not a focus of MSIP 5, since 2010 new evaluation models at various levels including the superintendency have been designed for implementation in Missouri school districts. This is a result of the push for superintendent evaluation that first began in the early 1980s (MODESE, 2012). With the increased focus on evaluation in Missouri, school boards need increased training on evaluation of the superintendent (Bruton, Garner, and Hudson, 2011; Fowler, 2004; DiPaola and Stronge, 2003). Superintendents should not be the only person to explain the changes to the local board of education, especially in rural districts, and are not generally responsible for the professional development of the board and certainly not professional development related

to their own evaluation (Bruton, Garner, and Hudson, 2011; Fowler, 2004; DiPaola and Stronge, 2003).

While it is true education is largely influenced by government mandates such as Title IX, Section 504, and No Child Left Behind, superintendents, in conjunction with the BOE, have been and are the face and force of education when it comes to the operation of individual districts (Urban, 2009). With the educational system based on continuously changing school board members, it is difficult for any board member to fully grasp how to evaluate the superintendent in an effective way. Stagnant school boards often become complacent and focused on personal agendas to drive their decision making process, rather than placing focus on standards based outcomes (Robertson, 2003), constantly having the district's best interest at heart. The process itself can be detailed with a number of components included in the evaluation with a mandated time line for boards to focus on month by month (MODESE, 2012). These areas of the evaluation process, such as vision, school culture, school management, professional development, community, and ethics, need to be explained in detail, because if school boards do not understand the ramifications of the evaluation system, the district can suffer under poor leadership.

### **Independent Variable**

The independent variable was the training in evaluation practices received by the school board members surveyed.

### **Dependent Variable**

The dependent variable was how much each school board member perceived their ability to utilize the evaluation training received.

## **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

1. What are rural school boards of education members' perceptions of their abilities to be effective in the evaluation of the superintendent of schools job performance?
2. What additional professional development do current local rural board of education members need based on their perception of their effectiveness to evaluate the superintendent?

## **Null Hypothesis**

There will not be a significant difference in the perceptions of school board members' perception of their abilities to effectively evaluate the superintendent.

## **Theoretical Framework**

Every school board in Missouri faces the task of evaluating the superintendent. Much of the literature focused on evaluation, and board training related to evaluation, but a consensus among the researchers has not been achieved. This research provides an understanding of what impact this lack of evaluation consensus has had, and continues to have, in districts across Missouri. The problem this study addressed is the lack of adequate board member training related to the superintendent evaluation in rural districts in Missouri. There is also a lack of consensus on what the evaluation process should entail, as a series of standards (Missouri Leader Standards) exists, but a uniform evaluation does not. Fowler (2004) discussed the importance of finding a good

evaluation. DiPaola (2007) pointed out this lack of uniformity has resulted in a cyclical yearly process in which superintendents are evaluated, but as the evaluations lack any real meat and show no deficiencies, superintendents are retained, or at times not retained, based on very little substance. Wise et al. (2015) found the evaluation to be the key to relationship building between superintendents and board members. O'Brien and Rossmiller (2013) suggested the evaluation process should be a two-way street and following a superintendent evaluation by the board, the superintendent should then evaluate the board. DiPaola and Stronge (2003) and Bruton, Garner, and Hudson (2011) both compiled lists of qualities that should be evaluated in this important process.

The outcome of this study provided insight to school boards regarding adequate preparation for evaluating a school superintendent. Giving school boards the needed background to approve and implement an evaluation program meets the needs of the district while aligning with pertinent state requirements. This research fills the gap left by other researchers by focusing on the implications of board member training on superintendent evaluation in rural districts in Missouri.

### **Limitations**

The limitations of this study included responses to survey materials distributed and the biases of participants as demonstrated in their responses to questions. It was assumed that individuals taking the survey both understood the contents of the survey and answered with honesty and integrity.

### **Delimitations**

Delimitations of this research included the focus on rural districts in the state of Missouri. This study did not include districts identified as urban or suburban. The research was quantitative.

### **Design Controls**

The study was quantitative in nature utilizing a researcher developed survey, based on the MO Leader Standards, used by permission. The survey was voluntary and confidential. Data was collected via a paper survey. Identifying information such as name, email address, or IP address was not be collected to ensure anonymity. All data will be kept confidential and stored in a password protected electronic format. The results of the study were used for scholarly purposes only. The confidential nature of the survey allowed for honesty and integrity from participants.

To control the study, the researcher included two reverse questions. A reverse question reorders the 5-point Likert scale answers. This was to ensure the participant is reading the questions and not simply answering the questions in a systematic, rote manner. Additionally, this was also to help the validity of the instrument as the participant is expected to answer the reverse questions in the opposite manner of the additional questions. If the researcher finds this is not the case, the questions can be thrown out rather than becoming a part of the data set. A panel of former board members will serve as a pilot group for this survey. This will in turn improve the reliability of the survey instrument.

### **Definition of Terms**

Board of Education/School Board. “A board controlling an educational system or a unit of it; especially: a board of citizens controlling especially the elementary and secondary public-school education in a state, county, city, or town” (Merriam-Webster 2015).

Missouri Education Evaluation System. “The evaluation for Missouri educators developed in response to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act Flexibility Request. This evaluation system focused on formative development of each educator and was founded on the belief that improving educator practice improves student performance” (Merriam Webster, 2015, pg. 16).

Missouri School Improvement Plan. “The state's school accountability system for reviewing and accrediting public school districts in Missouri. MSIP began in 1990 and entered its fifth version in 2013” (DESE, 2015, p. 1). The commonly accepted acronym for this plan is MSIP 5, the 5 indicates that the state of Missouri is currently in its 5<sup>th</sup> cycle.

Network for Educator Effectiveness. Most commonly referred to by the acronym NEE. “NEE is a comprehensive educator assessment system designed by a partnership of experts on professional development and assessment within the University of Missouri’s College of Education. NEE offers research-based professional development specific to each of the thirty-eight performance indicators from the Missouri Teaching Standards and Indicators” (NEE, 2015).

Performance-based Teacher Evaluation. “Designed to measure the teacher’s knowledge of effective teaching techniques so that students can achieve at higher levels”

(MODESE, 2011, pg. 5).

Professional Development. “Continuing education that keeps school board members abreast of education issues to increase their skills, while empowering the organization (school district) to be forward thinking” (Turley, 2013, pg. 19).

Superintendent. “A professional educator selected by the school board to act as its executive officer and as the educational leader and chief administrator of the local school district” (Ryan & Cooper, 1998, pg. 553).

### **Summary**

Local Missouri Board of Education member training appears to be lacking in both depth and content (DiPaola, 2014; Mayo and McCartney, 2004; O’Brien and Rossmiller, 2013; Weiss, Templeton, Thompson, and Tremont, 2015) when it comes to evaluation of the superintendent. Board members therefore are ill-equipped to evaluate superintendents due to a deficiency in understanding of the evaluation process of the superintendent. This has the potential to result in stagnant districts under poor leadership.

Limited research has been done on this topic, with a smaller emphasis focused on Missouri, specifically rural school districts across the state. The literature discussed at length in Chapter Two examines the need for increased school board member training as it directly correlates to superintendent effectiveness. The four major areas of emphasis will be: the role of the superintendent as a manager and leader, school board members’ understanding of the language of the evaluation model, current board member perceptions of the superintendent evaluation model(s), additional training requirements for school board members.

Five chapters compose this research study. Chapter One includes the purpose and significance of the study, the guiding research questions, hypotheses, and definitions of the terminology used throughout the body of this paper. Chapter Two outlines the historical background of public education, the position of superintendent, and the development of the board of education, including a discussion of the most current research and relevant theories pertaining to the superintendent evaluation as well as the role of school boards. Chapter Three describes the methodology that will be utilized to fully research this issue. Chapter Four provides an analysis of the data procured through this study. Chapter Five presents additional considerations and recommendations for further study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

#### **Introduction**

As early as 1987, Peterson was questioning whether it was an appropriate role for school board members to evaluate superintendents. Peterson went on to suggest that objectivity in the evaluation process might be called into question in some situations, perhaps a situation in which there is animosity between board and superintendent (as cited in NSBA, 2014). These concerns, though stated in the mid-1980s, are still pertinent in 2016. The National School Board Association (NSBA) report (2014) also suggested the most important role of a school board is, in fact, the job of “superintendent selection and oversight” The report went on to say that an effective evaluation of the superintendent directly correlates to the improvement of the district. A matter of focusing the evaluation process on how to show the need for improvement was found by NSBA in 2014 to be the main issue.

In 2013, the State of Missouri began the implementation process of Missouri School Improvement Program 5 and the impact each new standard placed on school districts helped to refocus schools on accountability. According to the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MODESE, 2016) the performance

standards for K-12 districts are as follows: academics, academic achievement of subgroups, and preparation for post-secondary life, attendance, and rate of graduation. Each standard is student-based and relies entirely upon student outcomes. However, one area of concern not addressed by MSIP 5 is the evaluation process for school staff including teachers, counselors, program directors, and administrators. MSIP 5 is focused on evaluating educators via the process of evaluating their clientele with no emphasis on the processes by which teachers and administrators are evaluated. The question that arises is: why does MSIP 5, the guiding plan for holding schools accountable, place so much emphasis on these new techniques and training methods for every area of a district except the school board understanding of the new evaluation system pertaining to the superintendent? The state is providing training opportunities for building-level principals regarding the evaluation of teachers and for superintendents in the evaluation of building-level administrators. These have been implemented in part to ensure that the policies and practices of a district align with the standards of MSIP 5. And yet, to date, no real training exists for board members regarding how to best and most effectively evaluate the superintendent. School board members in Missouri are only required a minimal amount of training mandated from the state detailing their specific guidelines and job duties. In Missouri, the requirement is 16 hours of training for new board members and this requirement has not changed since it was implemented in 1993 (MSBA, 2014).

Lupardus (2005) identified several concerns including the increased focus on accountability, the inexperience of school board members, and the lack of training for school board members suggesting that over time the role of the school board has not

remained in step with the changes made to education. Lupardus identified Senate Bill 380, also known as the Outstanding Schools Act of 1993 (MODESE, 2015), as the mandate for the 16 hours of required training that remains in place today. In her research, she compared the responses of board members who had attended this mandated training with members who had not. Lupardus (2005) drew the conclusion through her research that this training is beneficial and the outcomes are largely positive, but found the training was not necessarily in line with the expectations outlined in legislation such as the Outstanding Schools Act and No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Lupardus (2005) stopped short of calling for more mandated training concluding only that the evidence suggested training makes a difference and who conducts the training matters as well. Interestingly, Lupardus found that responses from rural school board members and suburban/urban board members were vastly different and also found that training conducted by Missouri Association of Rural Education (MARE) was largely ineffective. She called for additional study to identify the causes for these differences in perception and to draw conclusions about just how much these differences affect the success of a district.

Lupardus' (2005) work is one focusing on the role of school board governance. Similarly Schmitz (2007) examined the leadership of the Montana public school system stating, "The job description has been vague and subject to broad interpretation" (Schmitz, 2007, p. 1). Schmitz went on to say, "Very often Montana's new board members do not know the scope of their elective position" (Schmitz, 2007, p. 3). Schmitz (2007) cited a need for research-based knowledge to allow board members the opportunity to become proficient in their job. The inclusion of Montana's school board

training model, which allows members to review a yearly cycle of budgeting, evaluation, and upcoming changes to their district, could potentially increase consistency and improvement vertically and horizontally if applied across the country, specifically in Missouri. Adding stronger requirements and a better understanding of the day-to-day operations of a superintendent, as well as continuing education for school board members might result in a shift in who runs for the school board, as well as who may be able to maintain their seat on a school board. While Schmitz's (2007) research is thorough, it has not been applied to schools in Missouri.

Board of Education Training in Missouri is designed to inform and guide the local school board member for the length of their tenure on the local board of education. To be clear, there are additional opportunities for school board members to attend training and develop with the changes throughout their term, but these are on a voluntary basis regardless of the length of the board member's tenure (MSBA, 2014). This study seeks to determine board of education members' perception of their ability to evaluate the superintendent of schools. Related research as outlined in this chapter has been conducted in different states pertaining to the continuing education of school board members.

Education is in a state of constant change due to changes in both delivery and evaluation as well as changes from state and federal governments. Federal changes such as Race to the Top (RTTT), which created competition about schools applying for RTTT-related funding based on specific criteria such as teacher performance, state success, adoption of common standards, and improvement of the lowest achieving schools (US Dept. of Ed, 2015) or the No Child Left Behind waiver create a constant state of change

for districts (US Dept. of Ed, 2015). Missouri state funding changes are just one example of how the superintendent's responsibilities are changing and the need for continuing education is imperative.

As changes such as Race to the Top and No Child Left Behind have taken effect in each district, it has become evident there are some deficiencies in school boards across Missouri (CCSSO, 2016). In addition, when school boards do not have a shared philosophy of education, it creates difficulty in forward moving decision making due to differing opinions and agendas. This is especially important when it comes to selecting a superintendent whose philosophy aligns with the district's mission (CCSSO, 2016). It is important that school boards are trained properly and in accordance with state requirements and guidelines to perform to the highest level of governance. If it is true that leadership starts at the top, and this research study presumes that leadership does, then failing school districts are a direct reflection of school board members. It is evident then that a local board of education needs to be well versed in all aspects and mandates put forth by the state to adequately represent their constituents while meeting district needs (V. Young, 2003).

Each school district has their own agenda and needs to include these specific concepts, whatever they may be, within their evaluation model. This allows the evaluator to understand how they will be evaluated and what the important factors are to their school board members (DiPaola and Stronge, 2003). The following study of relevant research indicates there is no common consensus on what areas of training should be

addressed. An examination of more dated research will demonstrate that this lack of consensus is not new.

In one example of how three different sources vary, DiPaola's (2007) evaluation handbook provides 24 pages of very specific guidelines for the superintendent evaluation, while MSIP 5 and the Missouri Leader Standards set a new precedent for the evaluation of teachers. The problem with the lack of consensus on evaluation methods is there is no reason for the superintendent to invest time and energy to fix an evaluation process that is not showing deficiencies. This means their deficiencies will likely be permanent but they will continue being employed nonetheless (DiPaola, 2007).

The process becomes cyclical. Bruton (2011) cites a figure stating from WWII to 2005 that only 54 studies looked at superintendent evaluation with the majority having publication dates post 1983. Schools did the bare minimum administratively to keep moving forward during this era. There exists, therefore, a gap in the literature pertaining to superintendent evaluation. The impact of how to evaluate the evaluator is something that school board members have faced since evaluation of school personnel began and for at least 40 years as evidenced by Shapiro's (1973) article about evaluating competency. In short, this is a consistent, not new, problem in education.

Continuing education for school board members, superintendent evaluation, and criteria for determining best training methods for school board members and educational personnel have been shown to increase student achievement over time, which is the purpose of MSIP 5. According to Moffett (2011), when boards and superintendents are aligned in their thought process, the focus on student achievement is appropriately

emphasized. Planning and implementation models are in line in highly accredited school districts. Training and continuing education of school board members has a direct relationship to a school district's success and ability to meet state requirements (Moffett, 2011). Enhancing the overall approach to a school district's success should start with the school board's preparation to properly evaluate a school superintendent. The board has the ability to monitor and adjust any area of the school district they deem appropriate.

### **The History of School Governance**

“A school district is the basic governmental unit through which the exercise of local control of schools is in effect” (R. Campbell, Cunningham, Nystrand, and Usdan, 1990, p. 106). Education is still under local control, and, as such, is the responsibility of the state. As a result, districts were established, first in Massachusetts, to localize control even more (R. Campbell et al., 1990; Urban, 2009).

**The Superintendent.** The manner in which the position of superintendent came to be is important for this study. A brief discussion of the history of education is necessary for greater understanding. The foundation for the public education system derives from Virginia's very first attempts to educate native children as early as the 1620s (Urban, 2009). The City of Boston claims the first American public school: the Boston Latin School, a school with deep religious connections focused on literacy and arithmetic. As a nation, schooling that is not done within the home, really did not become a part of a national dialogue until the early 1800s. Heavily influenced by European practices around 1819, compulsory education began generally with the idea of training productive citizens (Kaestle, 1983; Gee, 2006). It was not until the late 1800s the idea of dividing schools

into districts became popular (Kaestle, 1983), after the first education legislation was passed in Massachusetts in 1852 (Urban and Waggoner, 2009). The passage of such legislation led to free common schooling in most states by 1860 (Kaestle, 1983). It is important to note that the term free common schooling did not make public education available to all students in practice. Historically, children of color, immigrant children who were already employed, and underprivileged children would not have access to schooling outside the home for decades. Education is a constantly changing field and comments on the major changes are worth noting here. It was not until World War I that the first major change of the 20<sup>th</sup> century came to education by way of the addition of vocational education to the curriculum already developed (R. Campbell et al., 1990). Small changes would happen over the next 21 years and on the eve of WWII “Congress appropriated money to aid local government in the construction and operation of schools and other facilities” (R. Campbell et al., 1990, p. 49) marking the first element of the federal government involving itself in education. The most sweeping legislation of this time was the Elementary and Secondary School Act of 1965 (R. Campbell et al., 1990). All of these reforms culminated in 1979 with President Carter’s creation of the Federal Department of Education (R. Campbell et al., 1990). This altered education by creating a national department to oversee this once localized governance established.

Griffiths (1966) described the development of the role of superintendent into three stages: 1837-1910, 1910-1945, and 1945-present, though likely a more up-to-date division could be created. The first era, 1837-1910, was the era of superintendent as instructional leader, the second, 1910-1945, was the era of the leader as businessman, and

the third, 1945-present, the era of shared leadership that coincided with the rise of professional agencies. This evolution will be further discussed in the following section.

By 1860, it became popular for the leader of a district to be given the title Superintendent of Schools. However, according to DiPaola (2007), the history of the school superintendent dates back to the foundation of modern education in the United States. The first superintendent was appointed in 1837 in Buffalo, New York. This was due in part to a need specific to urban districts: an increase in enrollment which required changes in the leadership of the school (Urban, 2009). This increase in enrollment was due to the availability of jobs in urban centers. The history of the superintendency is better understood through an understanding of the foundation of public education's leadership. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, schools were under the local control of the church, township, and local governance.

Upon his appointment as the secretary of education, Horace Mann worked on establishing an educational foundation that would direct education into a statewide system. This system included teachers with a strong educational background and a professionalism that followed the Prussian model. A common model established for public schools allowed all children to receive the same content in their educational experience (Gee, 2006). In essence, this was the creation of a shared curriculum. It became important for leadership to emerge at a more localized level as Horace Mann and others began to standardize the field.

As stated, as early as 1837, the term superintendent was utilized to denote the leader of a school, but it was not immediately accepted by all schools. Baltimore

originally turned down the concept of a superintendent of schools around 1848, instead allowing roles traditionally given to modern superintendents to be held by a board member, until the need became apparent, and they officially appointed a superintendent (Griffiths, 1966). When it became clear that board members should not be utilized in this way, the position of superintendent became more consistent nationwide. In 1866, the National Association of School Superintendents was established (“About AASA”, 2016) as a part of the Reconstruction Era following the Civil War. The organization would eventually merge with the American Normal School Association and later become the National Education Association (NEA), a prominent teachers’ union. By the 1930s, The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) replaced the National Association of School Superintendents due to a break from the union (AASA, 2016). Today, the AASA continues to support school leaders, specifically superintendents, by advocating for excellence in public education.

Missouri’s first superintendent of schools was Peter Glover, appointed in 1839 by the state legislature (Phillips, 1923). It is important to note that this original position was a statewide position and not a position related to a specific district as we expect today. Phillips (1923) noted the position was short lived as, in 1841; the responsibilities associated with this role were shifted to the Secretary of State. The State Superintendent office was reestablished in 1853 and filled at that time by John W. Henry. The Civil War caused the abolition of this position again in 1861, but it was reinstated following the war and, in 1875, the Constitution “made provision for the continuation of the office” (Phillips 1923, p. 125).

It was not long after the appointment of the first state superintendent that it became clear there needed to be more direct supervision. This came in the form of the county superintendent, a role that was provided for in 1853 state laws. The term commissioner was used instead of superintendent, but in 1865, post-Civil War, the county superintendent was born. This elected position was to be filled by a person who was a “competent public teacher of good moral character” (Phillips, 1923, p. 128) who examined schools and provided what today would be termed professional development to county teachers at least twice a year. Of interest was the salary of the 1870 county superintendent: \$5 per day (Phillips, 1923).

Over time, the role of superintendent expanded and actually came with more duties than the role of the state superintendent. This was the earliest form of supervision in the state. The move to a uniform manner of leading and guiding districts established a more professional atmosphere in school districts, but also drove schools toward a business-like approach to education harkening back to the idea of superintendent as CEO of the district (Kirst, 1994; DiPaola, 2007). This model was then formally adopted at differing times across the United States (Urban, 2009) to provide consistency and a strong knowledge base to improve young educators though, realistically, it wouldn't be until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century that the role of superintendent came to be seen as a real profession (Patrick, 2006).

It was in the 20<sup>th</sup> century that superintendents would face a number of historic challenges. Among those challenges: a Civil Rights movement that desegregated schools and led to forced busing, a season of nation-wide strikes in the 1970s, and the reform

movement born as a result of *A Nation at Risk* in the 80s (Tyack and Cuban, 1995). The shift over the last 300 years from this concept of school committee leading a district to the modern-day superintendent in the age of reform is a monumental shift. And the modern-day superintendent faces issues the earliest school committee members could have never foreseen.

**Local Board of Education.** While the role of superintendent is an important one having that has many responsibilities associated with it, C. Campbell (2012) refers to the role of school board member as an intense one as boards of education are “increasingly under fire” (p. 2) for a myriad of reasons.

As education slowly morphed into the standardized system it is today, it has become difficult to ignore the role of local school boards. As previously discussed, the public school system was initially regulated by local communities who directed the foundation and implementation of school topics and educational decisions. As decisions continued to become more in-depth and regulations more intricate, the need for more localized leadership became important and that leadership role was labeled “superintendent” (Phillips, 1923).

The individualized development of curriculum and requirements are then closely related to local perception towards education and training requirements. Undeniably, the location of the school system and township are strong driving forces behind what is important to each district. If the district is in a rural or urban setting, that directly reflects the concept of the big picture in life. What areas are important to that community for student progression, and what additional opportunities would be available towards being

productive citizens, were the driving components of the curriculum and were taught differently within different districts (Lupardus, 2005).

This study focused specifically on school boards and superintendents in rural schools in Missouri, and that focus on rural education created a picture that looks very different than suburban and urban counterparts as Lupardus (2005) found in her research.

Beginning as early as 1647, Massachusetts Bay Colony drafted legislation requiring towns to establish and maintain public schools for the purposes of providing education to community children (NSBA, 2014). By 1826, the country had laid the foundation for what became known as school committees (NSBA, 2014), which required each town to have its own committee to oversee the schools. In fact, this term is still used in New England states (Patrick, 2006) so the terms should be considered interchangeable within the context of this study. Calvert (2004) suggested this school committee idea dates even further back to 1721 in Boston. According to Urban (2009), this committee was directly responsible for all decisions made dealing with all schools within their district boundaries and would eventually be referred to as a school board, mirroring the business counterpart for this group, directed administration to run the day to day operations while the school board handled district and budgetary matters.

In 1837, the first school board in America was established in the state of Massachusetts by the sitting Governor Edward Everett. Senate President Horace Mann was named the first secretary of the board. Board members at this time were appointed by the Governor and were paid (Pulliam, 2007). By 1900 this reform had become the norm

and by 1905 a city like Philadelphia had 43 elected school boards in various districts (Kirst, 1994).

In Missouri, local school boards are selected in two different ways: they are elected or they are appointed (R. Campbell et al., 1990). Generally appointed boards are found in urban areas, though in recent history the state has taken control of some urban districts. These districts include Riverview Gardens in 2010 and Normandy in 2014 (DESE, 2014) both of which are located in St. Louis.

In addition to providing a consistent education model, this process also allowed strong local control which in turn allowed local stakeholders to influence areas of governance that allowed the local ambassadors the opportunity to have their voices heard and concerns addressed. These areas of the school board model are the foundation to the process that is still in use today for preparing our students for tomorrow. The role of a board of education in 2016 is creating and enacting policy (R. Campbell et al., 1990). This role belongs to lay persons within the community the school is serving.

Since 2001, the question of control has come to the forefront as the federal government has become more involved seemingly at the behest of the citizenry of America (Epstein, 2004). The current form of school governance described here may no longer be the most efficient for the majority. Maeroff (2010) found this to be true. He argued strongly against what he referred to as a flawed system. He went on to say that a number of solutions to this flawed system have been tried. When charter schools came into vogue, a tension with public schools was created which in turn created an environment in which money was used as an incentive for public schools to increase their

performance to that of charter schools (Maeroff, 2010). Additionally Maeroff (2010) suggested one way to assure a departure from this flawed system is the appointment rather than the election of school board members as was done in the early 1800s when the governor appointed board members.

Halik (2012) noted the weakest link in education is not teaching, or even administration, rather it is governance. Most states have basic residency and age requirements (Halik, 2012) and most states, Missouri among them, have very few actual legal requirements to serve as a school board member (MSBA, 2012). Some larger, more urban areas have more restrictions, but for rural districts the expectations are simply the state minimum requirements. In short, the expectation is for board members to have a vested interest in the district in which they are serving. This is generally demonstrated by their participation in the community as taxpayers. School leadership is based on local control and that has, historically, been important to school communities. That said, since 1996 there has been a “trend toward increased non-local power over schools” (Epstein, 2004, p. 15).

School board membership does not come without a cost. There are areas and requirements for which an individual who seeks membership needs to be prepared, and the time commitment can be enormous. The amount of time it takes for an individual to properly develop and maintain his or her knowledge base, while continuing training within state mandates, is overwhelming and continually expanding. Budget reports, state funding, district and state policies are all areas in which a school board member needs to be well educated and trained (Bruton, 2001; Reimer, 2008). As a board member, it is

important to understand what areas of the position are board directed and driven. Researchers such as Bruton (2011), Carter and Cunningham (1997), Kirst (1994), Patrick (2006), and Reimer (2008) all argued that school board responsibilities should be amended to the most important, minimum responsibilities: hiring the superintendent, creating policy, and creating a vision for the school. That vision might include funding and projects, but does not include the day-to-day that is the responsibility of the superintendent. Hence the reason that accurate and adequate evaluation is so important.

Reimer (2008) stated that good leadership is not just a given, people are not just born with excellent leadership skills, they must be taught and cultivated. Further, Reimer believed the first key to an effective school board is excellent orientation or training. This combination of a lack of requirements coupled with the vast knowledge required of current board members caused Maeroff (2010) to lament the loss of strong qualifications for leading a school. While he stated emphatically that the role of school board member does not require a degree in rocket science, he remarked that when Benjamin Franklin first established his academy in Philadelphia, he also proposed a board of trustees and that board was made up of 24 men, “15 were titled and eight were wealthy merchants” (Maeroff, 2010, p. 188). Maeroff (2010) argued for training and also professional development standards to be increased.

R. Campbell et al (1990) added another responsibility for school board members, that of ethical responsibilities. This generally aligns with the community in which the school board member is serving, but the moral implications of serving on a school board are an important consideration as well: “board members assume substantial obligations to

act in the best interests of their local constituencies” (R. Campbell et al., 1990, p. 209) even when those best interests don’t align with personal agendas or political posturing.

Given the typical manner in which school governance is set up, with the superintendent as the leader of the district, bound by the decisions of the school board, and elected by the community, it is important to discuss what effective school governance looks like. Education Funders of St. Louis (2007) explored this question focusing specifically on urban districts, but compiling a list of 10 best practices most often identified by effective districts: “establishes and shared vision and purpose, focuses on policy, allocated resources to align with shared vision, monitors progress toward district goals, builds relationships with parents and community, builds effective relationships with superintendent and staff, advocated for student achievement, provides for clear communication regarding district, commits to training and development of board members and staff, plans for transition and intentionally recruits board members” (Education Funders of St. Louis, 2007, pg. 6). This study is especially interested in the best practices of recruiting and transitioning board members.

### **The Role of the Superintendent**

According to the 1875 revision of the Missouri Constitution, the responsibilities of the superintendent were outlined as 12 specific duties: 1) keeping the books, 2) supervision of funds, 3) review of school reports, 4) distribution of laws, 5) grant and revoke certificates, 6) selection of assistants, 7) “distribute all school blanks necessary for school officers” (Phillips, 1923, p. 126), 8) provide annual report to legislature, 9) act as adviser for county officials, 10) inspection of schools, 11) classification of schools, and

12) “it is his duty to do everything in his power to increase the efficiency of the public schools of the state” (Phillips, 1923, p. 126). These were the needs of schools in Missouri, according to the legislature, in the late 1800s. While those needs have changed over time, the role of the superintendent certainly has not gotten easier or smaller, instead it has grown. To a certain extent, one of the best and only ways to take on all that comes with the title of superintendent is on the job training (Hurley, 2005); though, it is likely not the sort of job that one can truly learn as he/she goes. A study by Bolla (2010) suggested administrators spend an average of one minute out of every five minutes working on something directly related to education, while the other four are spent on other duties (Bolla, 2010). According to more additional research, the role of the superintendent is that of facilitator, change agent, producer of change within the system, and the remarkable task of changing children’s lives forever (Bolla, 2010; Carter/Cunningham 1997; Eller and Carlson, 2009; Patillo, 2008).

In broadening the discussion of superintendent to a discussion of the national role, it should be noted this study defines the role of superintendent, in part, as the role of manager. To fully understand the position of management, a review of the literature related to managerial positions is important. As the position of superintendent developed over time, the principles of management became important to help define what this position should look like.

Still, it is important to understand the depth and breadth of what is expected of a superintendent generally, and all these aspects need to be taken into account when anyone considers taking the position of superintendent in any school district. The role of the

superintendent changes from district to district and state to state, but can arguably best be defined by The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards, better known as the ISSLC standards. The standards were created in the 1990s through collaboration between the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Policy Board (NPB). There are six standards total, each one describing the characteristics of an excellent superintendent. These became known as the Professional Standards for Education Leaders in 2015 and are as follows:

Standard 1: Mission Vision and Core Values: Effective educational leaders develop, advocate, and enact a shared mission, vision, and core values of high-quality education and academic success and well-being of each student

Standard 2: Ethics and Professional Norms: Effective educational leaders act ethically and according to professional norms to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

Standard 3: Equity and Cultural Responsiveness: Effective educational leaders strive for equity of educational opportunity and culturally responsive practices to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

Standard 4: Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment: Effective educational leaders develop and support intellectually rigorous and coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

Standard 5: Community of Care and Support for Students: Effective educational leaders cultivate an inclusive, caring, and supportive school community that promotes the academic success and well-being of each student.

Standard 6: Professional Capacity of School Personnel: Effective educational leaders develop the professional capacity and practice of school personnel to promote each student's academic success and well-being. (CCSSO, 2016, pgs. 15-20).

In 2016, the ISLLC Standards were updated to the following:

Standard 1: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community

Standard 2: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

Standard 3: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.

Standard 4: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members,

responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.

Standard 5: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.

Standard 6: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context

(ISLLC Standards, 2016).

The AASA joined the discussion on the job of superintendent by setting eight professional standards first published in 1993.

Standard 1: Leadership and District Culture: Vision, academic rigor, excellence, empowerment, problem solving

Standard 2: Policy and Governance: Policy formulation, democratic processes, regulations

Standard 3: Communication and Community Relations: Internal and external communications, community support, consensus building

Standard 4: Organization Management: Data-driven decision making, problem solving, operations management and reporting

Standard 5: Curriculum Planning and Development: Curriculum planning, instructional design, human growth and development

Standard 6: Instructional Management: Student achievement, classroom management, instructional technology

Standard 7: Human Resources Management: Personnel induction, development, evaluation, compensation, organizational health

Standard 8: Values and Ethics Leadership: Multicultural and ethnic understanding, personal integrity and ethics (DiPaola, 2007, p. 15).

The role of the school district superintendent has naturally evolved during the existence of the American public education system with the changes in federal and state mandates such a No Child Left Behind, Race to The Top, and others. D. Campbell et al. (1994) called the role of superintendent vital owing to the fact that the superintendent stands as the link between the school and the board. The researcher has observed, as major changes in legislation and education as a whole occurred and deadlines ensued, districts under the direction of a superintendent with school board support needed to be prepared and ready to implement any changes necessary for the betterment of the school district and its stakeholders. In 2016, the superintendent is no longer responsible for simply maintaining a positive budget or having the personnel in place to run a district using the hands-off approach. The superintendent as the vital foundation of a district should then understand all aspects of the district and how to direct all aspects with certainty and not rely solely on his or her faculty to maintain status quo. Kirst (1994) argued that with the development of the school board came the shift towards a business approach to education and with this shift came the need for a CEO.

This concept of the superintendent as CEO requires a remark on literature outside the field of education and in the field of management. Taylor (1911), Maslow (1943), and McGregor (1960) all speak to importance of the human element of leadership roles. In a

field requiring as much personal contact as education, the principles discussed are important and applicable for the effective leader of a school district. Maslow's often discussed hierarchy of needs is worth noting as it is so often applied to education in terms of student-teacher relationship. However, Maslow's theories also apply to the role of the superintendent and his/her ability to foster and cultivate relationships. Maslow's theory was that if basic human needs are met then humans can achieve and accomplish more going so far as to call the individual whose needs go unmet "a sick man" (1943, p. 14). Maslow also discussed the importance of motivation as a need that most humans possess.

Taylor (1911) became a popular figure in teaching educators post World War I when his principles of management were accepted in both the industrial and corporate world (Patrick, 2006). As with so many things related to business, education followed and professors began to teach Taylor's principles as a means of managing a school or district. Taylor's ideas are valuable to districts because he strongly advocated against waste and inefficiency (Campbell et al., 1990). Today these principles are still taught to many future administrators though it would be fair to say that some board members are not exposed to these principles of management.

What Taylor (1911), Maslow (1943), and McGregor (1960) indicated is just how difficult a managerial role can be. Beyond the physical responsibilities of day-to-day operations, managers in human service professions must also balance the human responsibilities of day-to-day operations, taking care to meet the needs of staff and clientele to build a strong school.

Researchers Carr (2003), D. Campbell (1994), Kirst (1994), Carter and Cunningham (1997), and Eller and Carlson (2009), built their research on the aforementioned research related to management. The role of the school district superintendent is multi-faceted. Carr (2003) called being a school superintendent the toughest job in America, the most important task of which is arguably that of the leader of a school district. The definition of a superintendent can be written in numerous forms, but all lead back to the structure, functionality, and leadership of a school district. While the role has been redefined, according to DiPaola (2007) the foundation of the role of the superintendent has not changed since its inception. The foundation and role of the superintendent are defined by a few areas of expertise: human resource skills, forecasting for the future of their district, and a technical aspect that contains the knowledge and techniques available to direct a district into the future. The superintendent has a variety of people to keep happy from community stakeholders to state law makers to students and staff (Carr, 2003). Maeroff (2001) used a sports analogy to describe the relationship between the superintendent and his/her staff stating that perhaps one of the reasons so many coaches and athletes move into administration is because it is somewhat of a natural fit. He also offers the reminder that the superintendent is the top dog in the school: no one makes more than the superintendent. Carter and Cunningham (1997) called the modern era an age of pressure suggesting that, while DiPaola (2014) might be right that there are foundational elements of being a superintendent, the shift into the modern era has added pressures that the earliest superintendents could not have imagined. The reason for these changes, they say, is the state of education: the politicization of the field and the

constant push for reform in the modern era. Additionally, the role of superintendent is a public role, the superintendent being the face of the district creates a fishbowl scenario in which every decision is a matter of public discussion. This is especially true in rural districts which are generally markedly smaller and everyone knows everything about everyone communities.

Human resource skills are the pinnacle of a successful superintendent (DiPaola, 2014). Bolman and Deal (1997) addressed term human resources in one of their four frames for reframing an organization effectively. In this way, Bolman and Deal (1997) suggest that an organization is actually just one large family, borrowing heavily from Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, they identified that each member of this family has needs, feelings, and limitations and a good leader fits the organization to the family, not the other way around. A leader needs to build a fantastic faculty and then work to build the trust and foundation of their faculty to run a successful district. Rebores (2007) dedicated an entire textbook to the topic of human resources as an element of administration and found the umbrella of human resources does not simply encompass hiring and firing, but involves predicting and anticipating what staff is needed, an understanding of the vast number of policies related to fair hiring practices such as Affirmative Action laws related to people with disabilities, and an ability to actively and effectively recruit the best teachers and other staff members to a school or district. In an earlier publication, Rebores (2003) stated human relations is as important to educational leadership as the functional issues such as building maintenance and supplies. Carter and Cunningham (1997) emphasized the importance of morale and how quickly low morale can affect an entire

district. The decisions that are made at the top are not always the most popular, but need to be supported by the faculty and community for the best interest of the district and its students. Building positive relationships with faculty, and keeping an open dialogue with stakeholders, will allow a superintendent the support needed to implement all aspects of change. It is worth noting that for many rural districts the human resources role falls squarely on the superintendent and principal. Where a larger district might have an individual, or even an entire office of people, in charge of all the responsibilities related to human resources, often a smaller district does not have this benefit and this task is added to the list of responsibilities the superintendent takes on. Coleman (2013) considers the listener hat as one of three of five primary roles which are pertinent to this study of an effective superintendent. Forecasting, or wearing the planner hat (Coleman, 2013), is the second concept and refers to having a vision for the future of the school district and the changes that will need to be implemented over time. This is essential for today's superintendents. Finally, technological skills that enhance the programs and techniques that are presently in place will revolutionize the future. DiPaola (2014) pointed to the importance of modernizing facilities and programs as essential to the future of all school districts for the benefit of the 21<sup>st</sup> century learner, school district, and community. These skills referenced by DiPaola mirror the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards.

In addition to the managerial role a superintendent naturally takes on, Bolla (2010) referred to the superintendent as the educational leader of the district. Beyond finances and personnel, the superintendent is also the leader when it comes to learning.

This means being well-versed in curriculum. Rebores (2007) referred to this as staff development, which is both the training and continuing education of teachers which Rebores draws distinctions between. While there is usually a great deal of focus on training teachers when they first begin their tenure in a district, this practice seems to wane over the years. Additionally, Rebores (2007) made an argument that administrators should not focus such training on professional staff exclusively, but on all district employees. This promotes the idea of family previously mentioned.

For all the standards put in place to promote excellence, and all research outlining the roles and responsibilities of the modern superintendent, it would seem that there is a certain personality suited to the profession, but measuring that is difficult if not impossible. Carter and Cunningham (1997) addressed this side of the role of the superintendent: the human side. They described an effective candidate for this role not only as someone who understands the job, but also someone who possesses the ability to identify when his/her effectiveness in a given district has come to a close. The toll of the 60 plus hours a week on the superintendent includes health and the passion for the job. The superintendency is a job that “can destroy the fire in the belly for the job” (Carter and Cunningham, 1997, p. 121). And one thing remains: if an educator is looking for job security, the superintendency probably is not for that individual.

One final role of the superintendent identified by Carter and Cunningham (1997) is the role of innovator. In part, this means good superintendents encourage their teachers and principals to be lifelong learners by “acquiring the latest knowledge” (Carter and Cunningham, 1997, p. 201) allowing them to develop a vision for the future while

learning the most up-to-date information. Innovation, the two go on to say, is not only a matter of forecasting for the future, but a trial and error approach to attempting new things in the classroom, in the school, and in the district as a whole. As important as that was when they wrote their book 20 years ago, it is even more important for the 21<sup>st</sup> century superintendent leading a district of 21<sup>st</sup> century learners. The modern superintendent must be up-to-date on all the latest trends in the field and provide support in the form of encouragement, in the form of finances, or both.

As a part of Missouri's Educator Evaluation System, all processes of evaluation have undergone a transformation in the last decade. With the changes to the evaluation system across the state, Missouri's Education Evaluation System has distributed detailed standards for each level of administration. With this redevelopment of leadership standards, MODESE published a new framework to describe the position of superintendent.

**The rural superintendent.** For the purposes of this study, it is important to understand how a superintendent in a small, rural district might have different roles and responsibilities a suburban or urban superintendent. Lupardus' (2005) study contributed to the study of urban districts. It is important to note that the reason schools were organized into districts was due to rural districts and the desire for local control (Kaestle, 1983). For the purposes of this study rural refers to something pertaining to country life or country people (Sullivan, 2010). For the purposes of this study, the definition of rural is narrowed further focusing the study on conferences made up of a majority of Missouri Association of Rural Education member schools. As stated, MARE does not currently

provide guidelines by which Missouri schools are designated as rural, instead districts are encouraged to self-identify as rural. In Missouri, this has created a somewhat diverse organization of schools. Nonetheless, a shared set of characteristics seem applicable and differentiate rural districts from larger ones.

Rural school districts have been the topic of doctoral studies within the past six years including those of Wallace (2011) and Rogers (2014) who both wrote on teacher retention in rural districts, and Franklin (2011) who completed a case study on rural district Marceline, in Missouri, to focus on the unique elements that define rural districts.

Franklin (2011) found, there are five characteristics true of rural districts: fewer discipline issues, an interdependence on the surrounding community, school events are community events attended by community members who might have never even had children in the district, change of any kind is difficult and generally slow to implement, sometimes due to resistance, a strong sense of loyalty. This means for the person who is the face of the district, the superintendent, community and community support is even more important. Bearing in mind the size of most rural communities, this also means that the number of qualified candidates is generally smaller than a suburban or urban area and those candidates are members of this very close-knit community.

Buckner (2009) focused his research on issues specific to rural districts. The forward moving district of the modern-era, Buckner says, is much harder to attain for rural schools in part due to funding, an increase in government mandates, and location. Realistically, these three things are connected. For example, when it comes to an increased focus on technology to prepare the learner for a 21<sup>st</sup> century world, rural

districts often find themselves in a quandary. The funding to meet these needs is simply not available, but even if it was available to satisfy the increased expectations, often the schools are located in an area that does not have the technological infrastructure to provide the resources anyway (Buckner, 2009). And this is just one example of the challenges that face the modern superintendent working in a rural district. Of note, Bolla (2010), in her research surveying every superintendent in Missouri, found finance was the number one role rural superintendents spend the most time on whereas superintendents in large districts reported spending much less time on this task. This is perhaps due to the fact that large districts have administrative staffing to help with such things and smaller districts generally do not. Another area in which Bolla (2010) found a distinct difference was in the area of management responsibilities. Rural superintendents ranked management responsibilities as taking a majority of time while superintendents from larger districts spent less time on these tasks. Again Bolla (2010) concluded her results were likely due to the difference in the number of support staff and assistant superintendents larger districts generally have.

Extra duties are another example of how a rural district differs from larger districts. In the modern era most teachers take on extra responsibilities whether sponsoring a club or coaching a sports team. Often, this is a means of making more money as generally stipends are attached. In a rural district, with fewer bodies to meet the needs, these extra duties often extend to the top, forcing principals and superintendents to pick up a coaching position or other responsibility on top of the roles already discussed (Buckner, 2009; Franklin, 2011). Bolla (2010) also found this to be the case. It is not that

the superintendents in rural districts have such different jobs, but that the amount of time they spend on certain tasks varies widely based on the size of the district. Copeland (2013) refers to this as the many hats a superintendent in a small district must wear to do the job.

While it is difficult to measure all the differences between larger and smaller districts, or to determine where most of the pressure lies, Bolla (2010) pointed out that one of the benefits of being a leader in a rural district is the reality that the superintendent generally knows all his/her students by name and can build strong relationships with a majority of the community rather than a small percentage. Copeland (2013) agreed and stated this is due in part to the fact that patrons expect the superintendent in a small district to handle everything personally rather than delegating tasks to others.

In Buckner's (2009) survey of 135 superintendents in Missouri, he concluded that rural districts are so preoccupied with laws and mandates and the lack of money to implement those that the role of the superintendent narrows to this very focused task where, in a larger district, revenue is proportional, and a larger administrative team shares in the duties and responsibilities of the job. Whether or not this makes the job more difficult for rural educators is open to interpretation, but understanding that the participants in this study face a particular set of challenges not consistent in larger districts is important.

### **Superintendent and School Board Relations**

The relationship between the superintendent and school is an important one. The district can be deeply and profoundly affected by this marriage of leaders (Patrick, 2006)

making it all the more important that this relationship be one focused on and founded in professionalism. And like a marriage, communication seems to be the key, the common thread in all the literature, the essential piece that must exist for this relationship to work (Eadie, 2001; Edwards, 2006; Hanover Research, 2014). Educational Communication Center (2005) pointed out building this relationship is the responsibility of everyone involved, this means the superintendent and all the board members; though Weiss et al. (2015) pointed out that the relationship between the board president and superintendent is worth some special cultivating as well. With the turnover that occurs naturally through the school board election process, this relationship is an ever changing, constantly evolving relationship that needs continuous cultivating (Weiss et al., 2015). One strategy for addressing the ebb and flow of the board is “new school board member orientation” (Edwards, 2006, p. 55), an internal program that orients new members not only to their new role but also to the important details they need to know about the current state of the district. Of all the responsibilities belonging to the superintendent, Hurley (2006) referred to this relationship with the board the most challenging of them all. Worth remembering is the fact that the position of superintendent was in fact created due to the inability of school boards to adequately control and lead schools (Patillo, 2008).

In theory, the relationship of the board and superintendent should be one of mutual respect and partnership. In practice, however, this is often not the case. When surveying Missouri superintendents, Patillo (2008) found that the number one reported factor inhibiting their ability to lead the district was “relationship with the board of education” (p. 76). Edwards (2006) found this as well, saying up to 96 percent of

superintendents cited this as crucial for their success. Superintendents who do not have a good relationship with the board will be constantly undermined and likely will eventually be dismissed. Carr (2003) calls this relationship one of teamwork and trust. Walser (2009) cited a New England School Development Council (NESDEC) study from 1997 that said the most important factor of a well-run district is collaboration and trust. Interestingly, she went on to point out that collaboration does not equal agreement just an attempt to minimize conflict. Eadie (2001) called this a partnership and lists 11 keys to growing and maintaining this all important partnership. Among Eadie's suggestions, he included honesty, communication, and a shared philosophy. English (2001) pointed out that often it is superintendents and board members themselves who contribute to tensions. They are in complete control of the situation, but often politics and competing agendas get in the way of strong relationships (English, 2001). Carter and Cunningham (1997) suggested a change over the past 30 years, a cultural shift in which problem schools are no longer blamed solely on the superintendent, but are now a matter of shared responsibility among the leadership as a whole. In short, the superintendent is no longer a scapegoat for failure.

Hanover Research (2014) published a report citing five findings, four of which are pertinent to this study, regarding the relationship between a school board and superintendent: clear definitions of each body's duties and responsibilities is essential, frequent communication, both official and unofficial is needed, board members are often unclear on what the nature of a superintendent's job actually is, politics between these two roles are a problem in every school district, nationwide. From these findings,

strategies can be developed to assist in creating a collaborative relationship that works for all parties involved and serves the district well. One way these four things can be accomplished is by regular communication between board and superintendent. A number of superintendents have a habit of sending a weekly email or other correspondence keeping the board in the loop so to speak about the day-to-day that makes up district responsibilities (Edwards, 2006). Educators Writers Association (2004) found that the highest achieving schools always have a strong board/superintendent relationship, across the board. This does not immediately mean that low-achieving schools lack a good administrative relationship, it simply means that it is never absent in a high-achieving school.

In 2001, Petersen and Fusarelli called for more research on board-superintendent relationships citing that with the changes in school and society came a need for a re-evaluation of this critical role. Once a superintendent has been named to the role of superintendent, the relationship building begins. It is imperative for boards of education and superintendents to build strong working relationships absent even the appearance of in-fighting. Carlson (2015) identified three successful elements of superintendent board relations: equal treatment of board members, processing time, and regular updates. The Center for Public Education (2011), when assessing effective school boards, cited the need for collaborative relationships as well as a need for a superintendent and board team that is unified. Reimer (2008) refers to this unification as a shared vision and remarks that it is the second most important element of a successful board. EWA (2004) found the same: a shared vision is a necessity in building a strong relationship between

superintendent and board. This is built in part by the practice of working openly with one another (ECCR, 2005). Interestingly, research published by Todras (1993) suggested that school boards are just as often scapegoats as superintendents. The report went on to say that in rural districts, the relationship between school board and superintendent is usually a very micromanaged relationship bogged down in minutiae. Carr (2003) used the same word and stated dysfunctional leadership is often due to a lack of vision and the desire of the board to micromanage.

As stated, research since 2002 has shown that the average tenure of a superintendent is two to five years (Robertson, 2003). Robertson goes on to say that the importance of this relationship between the superintendent and his/her board is impossible to overstate and has the power to shape the culture of the school, as previously mentioned in the discussion of the various standards.

Walser (2009) employed a unique way of explaining the relationship when referring to the board as the what and the superintendent as the how meaning what needs to happen is the role of the board and how it should happen is the role of the superintendent. This breakdown of roles is important because it provides clear roles for each position allowing for clarity of job descriptions and also helping administration to avoid the missteps involved in a power struggle caused by a lack of clarity (Walser, 2009). Weiss et al. (2015) found this as well. Determining what roles belong to each entity leaves room for the collaboration required to effectively lead a district of any size. Edwards (2006) calls this “role confusion” (p. 45), when both parties are confused as to what is expected of them and step on toes or otherwise create conflict with one another.

Walser (2009) also provided six characteristics of a strong governance team. Among those characteristics, she listed three that are intricately tied to one another: retreats, a student achievement focused team, and collaboration (2009), the very factor that has been mentioned time and time again in the research reviewed. For this, she cited a study showing trust and collaboration to be the most important factors of a district that is considered well-governed. Collaboration, it would seem, is more than just a buzz word, but a real necessity “above all else” (Walser, 2009, p. 10). Retreats, Walser said, are a way of creating a shared vision among school board members and the administrative team. This allows such teams to work toward the same end goals avoiding the pitfalls of personal agendas. She cites examples such as three day sessions in which an administrative team can “brainstorm about the vision for the district and new practices, [and] go over data” (Walser, 2009, p. 23). Walser went on to say that this regular collaboration, sometimes in the form of retreats, creates a student-focused atmosphere allowing leaders to “talk in detail about student achievement” (Walser, 2009, p. 24). Bolla (2010) found not just six but seven characteristics in her research and while collaboration was on her list as well, so too was public relations pointing to a need to collaborate not just within the district but within the community as a whole.

When it comes to distinctions between superintendent roles and board roles, some local boards of education have adopted a chart that identifies the distinction in roles. One other element of this relationship mentioned by Eller and Carlson (2009) is the importance of treating all board members the same. While it is often the case that the relationship between board president and the superintendent is cultivated with more care,

Eller and Carlson (2009) suggested that a lack of equal treatment toward all board members can breed the contempt that most superintendents wish to avoid in relationship building. For their part, MODESE provided a detailed, and lengthy, list of superintendent responsibilities in their superintendent evaluation handbook in 2012. This list however does not draw distinctions between board roles and superintendent roles. It largely ties to Missouri state laws and statutes.

### **Evaluating the Superintendent**

Weiss et al. (2015) found when it comes to building the all-important relationship between board and superintendent, the evaluation process is actually key. As early as 1997, studies like that of Candoli, Cullen, and Stufflebeam found that evaluation of superintendents in most districts was neither effective nor results based (as cited in Mayo and McCartney, 2004). A later study conducted by Mayo and McCartney (2004) found the lack of a national evaluation approach to be a concern. DiPaola (2010) added evaluation to a list of superintendent needs, suggesting that without real evaluation the superintendent cannot adequately do his/her job. Bollow's (2002) research suggested this as well, but added that a superintendent should not be evaluated personally, but an evaluation should be made of the body of work of the superintendent.

O'Brien and Rossmiller (2013) made an interesting argument suggesting the board evaluates the superintendent yearly, then in turn the superintendent should evaluate the board on a yearly basis. It is important to note one unusual element of this process: the board does not work with the superintendent on a day-to-day basis, or even a week-to-week basis in some cases (Vranish, 2012), making the process that much more

complicated. Because of the vast nature of evaluation, it is imperative that school boards have a plan of action for implementing and completing the process. Some contracts go so far as to outline the evaluation process in writing (NSBA, 2002). Interestingly, the role of evaluating the superintendent has been called a matter, not just of responsibility, but one of accountability for the board (D. Campbell, 1994). Mayo and McCartney (2004) pointed out that despite the clear understanding that evaluation across the board is important, “superintendent processes appear to lag far behind the nearly 20-year-old accountability movement” (p. 32).

McGoodwin (2011) asked two veteran superintendents their opinions of superintendent evaluation. The administrators represented two different states and two different schools, one rural and one suburban, yet the two agreed on some basics. Goals need to be written with clear definitions and the process needs to be exactly that: a process, a months-long process that begins early and is driven by the written goals and nothing else. Both also agree that an evaluation instrument approved by all involved must be used to insure the evaluation is professional, concise, and clear (McGoodwin, 2011).

The evaluation process, when effective, focuses on the three major areas of the skill set: technical, conceptual, and human resource skills (DiPaola and Stronge, 2003). Technical skills are the label DiPaola and Stronge (2003) give to the managerial role of superintendent. The conceptual skill set is that set that is focused on the culture of the school: the school climate and the relationship within the building. Finally, the human resource skill is used by DiPaola and Stronge (2003) in the traditional manner referring to hiring and firing processes and it is focused on collaboration and communication between

superintendent and subordinates. In an effective evaluation, DiPaola and Stronge (2003) argued, a superintendent should be evaluated on his or her skills as a manager, a relationship builder, and a collaborative communicator. Bruton, Garner, and Hudson (2011) identify four major skill areas as defined by the Performance Based Evaluation: “educational leadership, district management, professional relationships, and professional responsibilities” (p. 21). Much like the skills described by DiPaola and Stronge (2003), these can be further explained with terms commonly found in education literature: educational leadership is the element of direction, district management is similar to DiPaola and Stronge’s (2003) conceptual skill, it is focused on school climate, and includes a focus on accountability. Professional relationships are the relationship building component of the performance based evaluation, and professional responsibilities are the managerial, policy-making role the superintendent must take on as another portion of his job. Bruton, Garner, and Hudson (2011) went on to acknowledge that while the formal evaluation of a superintendent is vastly important it is the informal evaluation that holds the most value. These systems are the foundational aspects that make up the core values of the evaluation of the superintendent. The evaluation process has changed and been enhanced with the inclusion of updated research stemming from the state and federal guidelines and expectations of the school district superintendent.

Fowler (2004) argued the importance of finding a good evaluation. He stated there are four criterion by which to judge an evaluation: usefulness, feasibility, propriety, and accuracy. He continued on that while good evaluation is important when politics is in play, it is important to “be on the lookout for evidence that lobbying against the

evaluation is occurring and move quickly” (Fowler, 2004, p. 315) to avoid any efforts to stymie good evaluations. Fowler suggested implementing evaluation early and with clear guidelines that are communicated to stakeholders, but he was intentional in stating that an evaluation without action is like a boat without water (2004).

DiPaola (2007) compared the evaluation of a superintendent to that of a CEO, commenting that the two should be more alike than different. DiPaola and Stronge (2003) wrote a manual on evaluation. First they explained that the earliest attempts to create an evaluation, around 1980, emphasized the process rather than what the evaluation should contain. Approximately a decade later in 1993, the eight professional standards were created by the AASA. Ten years after the professional standards were created DiPaola and Stronge (2003) conducted a national study to determine current evaluation practices. At the time, eight states, including Iowa and Kansas, reported not having any state guidelines for the process. From this study, they concluded, “The hue and cry for accountability at all levels demands the fair evaluation of all personnel, including the superintendent” (DiPaola and Stronge, 2003, p. 32). The two went on to say that performance standards should be the core of the evaluation process. And while the AASA provides a set of standards that are applicable to districts in every state and of every size certainly the evaluation plan (Patrick, 2006) can address the specific needs of the district. Additionally, DiPaola and Stronge (2003) too encouraged the school board to work with the superintendent to create an effective board policy relating to superintendent evaluation if current policies are ineffective. Again, it is essential that all parties involved understand how the evaluation will be conducted, but also specifically what is being

evaluated. Training is also addressed in their national study. DiPaola and Stronge (2003) found the piece most often missing in evaluation nationwide was accuracy, possibly, they say, due in part to a lack of training for board members. There is no national standard for training so the two, DiPaola and Stronge, (2003) suggested the following components for such training:

- Orientation/overview.
- Application/implementation guidelines.
- Establishment of student achievement and other goals.
- Collection of documents/artifacts.
- Use of documents/artifacts for evaluation.
- Use of student achievement data for evaluation (p. 67).

This list is coupled with some additional suggestions by the authors such as: 1) training should include both superintendents and board members, 2) an outside facilitator should be utilized when needed, 3) results should be publically reported in an open board meeting, where appropriate, and to encourage transparency, the process should also be publically reported. Absent this, the training is, at least according to DiPaola and Stronge, somewhat empty.

In a later publication, DiPaola (2007) again listed a series of performance standards and promoted the idea of self-evaluation as well as a year-long evaluation process rather than a once-a-year approach to evaluation. These two ideas work hand-in-hand to provide an effective evaluation process. He cited the chart published by Glass, Bjork, and Bruner in 2000 comparing the evaluation process in 1992 to the evaluation

process in 2000. The chart demonstrates how in eight short years the role of the board shifted greatly. In a more recent writing co-authored by Wayne Hoy, DiPaola (2010) discussed at length how important leadership is to the instructional process. The two identified a number of things that assist in strong leadership, most of them common sense suggestions such as open interaction, professionalism, shared decisions, and establishing trust. They called for a much more involved approach from administrators when it comes to both evaluation and also the development of professional development plans. They also observe that true evaluation comes with a high time cost, which is most likely why schools simply do not invest in it. As a result evaluating superintendents has become nothing more than an exercise in meeting a legal obligation rather than a reflection on job performance (DiPaola, 2010).

**Superintendent evaluation in Missouri.** In Missouri, the local board of education is responsible for the evaluation of the superintendent. The evaluation of the superintendent in Missouri is conducted on an annual basis; this process, when completed as intended, is usually conducted over the course of two months and includes the superintendent's work ethic, knowledge base, and district conduct throughout the year. The evaluation is based on the Missouri Leader Standards.

Since 2011 the evaluation process of school personnel has been a major focus in Missouri. This focus has resulted in a major restructuring of teacher evaluation but has not made its way into the administrative office of the superintendent. In 2012 the Missouri Department of Education, in an effort to improve and perhaps streamline the evaluation process, published a lengthy handbook on how to evaluate the superintendent

effectively. The handbook provides information for school boards in Missouri to utilize when evaluating their superintendent. Among them is a chart of professional frames of a superintendent, a suggested time line, evaluation forms, and a great deal of information related to what a good superintendent looks like, on paper (MODESE, 2014).

Local boards of education in Missouri use the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Model because it is in direct conjunction with state standards and a document that has produced many successful superintendents since its inception in 1962. In short it is available and it is widely used. In Missouri latitude is given to local boards to implement evaluation how they see fit (MODESE, 2014). Because of this, the potential for inconsistencies is great (Bruton, 2011). Patillo (2008), when surveying Missouri superintendents, found that approximately 90 percent of those surveyed believed state mandated, increased board training necessary.

O'Brien and Rossmiller (2013) also suggested that school boards should take the time to do a self-evaluation every year. This naturally implies that school board members should receive training not only in evaluating others but also in evaluating themselves. Reimer (2008) suggested such an evaluation would allow board members to be more confident in their respective roles given time to reflect on their performance on a regular basis. Section 168.410 of the Revised Missouri Statutes states that a superintendent should be evaluated regularly and documentation should be compiled and kept in the superintendent's personnel file (Reimer, 2008). This revision was made in 1985 and from this statute came the Performance Based Evaluation of Superintendents in 1986. Bollow (2002) marked this as a turning point in changing the evaluation process from a mere

checklist to a formative evaluation. And while this change is a positive one, Bollow's study found that a system first established in the mid-80s, having not undergone fundamental changes, is in need of revision. Bollow's work predates the 2007 revision Missouri made to the evaluation (MODESE, 2014).

The time line provided by McGoodwin (2011) advocated for in his respective interviews is clear and concise and starts the process early in the year, as Fowler (2004) suggests. It also provides a paper commitment to the process for the superintendent and board as well as for stakeholders and community members, which NSBA suggests putting evaluative information in writing for the best interest of all involved.

### **Board of Education Training**

A survey conducted by Mayo and McCartney (2004) found that about 90 percent of superintendents were being regularly evaluated but some of the responses they received were concerning and led them to believe one of the greatest limitations of the evaluation process was the lack of effective training of board members. They went on to say that the two challenges to effective evaluation are 1) the scope of the job making it difficult to define and 2) a constantly changing board creating a lack of consistency in the process itself.

Calvert (2004) devoted her research to the subject of board member training. At the time only 16 states had mandates written on the books and Missouri was one of those states. Calvert was quick to remind that the United States Constitution is silent on the topic of education; as a result it has largely been left to states to decide the rules and regulations that guide education. Calvert (2004) based her study on the idea that it is hard

to dispute the concept that more education and training make someone better at any job they might do. Using that line of thinking Calvert argued not only for more education and training but also that boards that have good training practices function more effectively (2004). Adamson (2011) suggests that it is the absence of mandatory and consistent guidelines that has created such confusion and lack of consistency sometimes resulting in weak boards.

In the 1970s, there was a focus on board member training. As a result, a number of studies were conducted in the 1980s and 1990s, Calvert (2004) cited nine different studies from 1980-2000 concluding a need for school board member training. Selby's (1984) research predates Calvert's by 20 years and he identified three consistent conditions among current school boards: qualifications for board membership are minimal at best, most board members serve a tenure of less than three years, and preparation for board membership is largely inadequate. These three conditions have changed little since 1984, if at all, producing a call for continued research to correct the problem. Kirst (1994) believed the depth of the role of the board, legislative duties, policy duties, and some student related service roles creates a role too vast for the average layperson to take on without some preparation and training. Miller (1994) wrote on a similar topic: how board members view the need for training, the same year. She found a connection between location and demographics and the value placed on training. Miller also found that one of the reasons training is lacking is cost, so it is not just a lack of valuing the act of training but it is the lack of willingness to pay for quality training. Brown's research in 2004 suggested that if no training is conducted it takes the average

board member a full two years, at least, to gain the necessary skills to perform their job “effectively and confidently” (2004, p. 2). This is supported by feedback from re-elected board members who state they feel more adequate in their second term than they did in their first. That said there is also evidence that board members who do receive training have mixed reviews on the effectiveness of the training (Brown, 2004). In 2011, Adamson found a correlation between board member training and effectiveness. He went on to conclude that not only does training have a positive effect, but the addition of standardized requirements might serve an additional purpose in deterring individuals who are incapable of the task from running for the local school board in the first place. Adding to the voices weighing in on school board effectiveness and training is Robertson, III (2003) who cited a statistic from Glass, Bjork, and Brunner stating approximately 30 percent of superintendents do not possess the qualifications necessary to do the job required. Halik’s 2012 research sought to measure the value of board member professional development finding that out of 117 surveys all agreed that new board members should be required some additional sort of training to help with their transition into a school board member. He went on to find that about half the board members surveyed valued the idea of mandated training for board members but did not believe it should take place prior to entering the role. Superintendents widely disagreed suggesting this pre-training would be extremely valuable. The surveys were consistent in agreeing that there were nothing but positive outcomes from training. Reimer’s (2008) research found the same thing: board members need to be trained and not just in the culture of the school but also in board member excellence. She went on to say that the best for new

board members is training conducted by veteran board members. This is a slight shift from the research that suggests outside training is more valuable than internal training. Reimer's point is less about the value of external training, and more about the importance of good board members begetting good board members.

Not all researchers support more training; a study by Cistone (1978) argued that school board members come to the role with the necessary skills rendering training pointless. Carver (2002) also questioned whether or not training results in more effective boards citing a lack of research to support that claim (Adamson, 2011). This lack of consensus in whether or not board members are adequately prepared for service appears to be reflected in a complete lack of agreement between the states requiring training. The question of what specific training is required and just what it should look like varies widely.

Bianchi (2003) introduced a new idea in her research when she suggested mandated training might be a necessity. Bianchi cited high turnover rate as a reason to be more diligent in training board members to be both excellent at their jobs and to stay in the role as long as the community will have them. Missouri mandates training and recent statistics from DESE indicate that the turnover rates are high even in states with such mandated training. Bianchi (2003) pointed out high turnover rates can do a great deal of damage in a district, particularly in a small community. Morehouse (2015) stated unequivocally that board training should be mandated for every school board member because "it is in the best interest of the children and education as a whole" (p. 1). He went on to argue that it is important to distinguish between formal education and school board

training as it is not necessary for school board members to be highly educated, but it is necessary for board members to have at least the bare minimum of training for their role (2015). One aspect of training he advocated for that has not been seen in any of the other research is training that teaches “the fine line that separates the superintendent and the board” (Morehouse, 2015, p. 1).

An interesting addition about rural districts should be noted, in his introduction Halik (2012) shared an anecdote from his fly fishing days during which he met a board member who shared with him the difficulty of finding authentic candidates for school board in rural communities. This is a consistent reality in smaller communities. This study will focus exclusively on small communities and this reality is important to the conversation as this study focuses exclusively on such small districts. Highly driven board members are difficult to find in big communities with plenty of capable individuals; this task becomes even more difficult when the net is made smaller. This creates a unique challenge for rural boards. Berger et al. (2006) also note the importance of understanding how different district needs are in rural communities stating that a rural superintendent does not have the central office support that superintendents in larger districts have. These distinctions remind that a one size fits all approach to this topic likely will not suffice.

## **Summary**

The modern American superintendent has been a topic of much research, much of it discussed in this chapter. It is not a role easily defined but as unique as the individual, board, and district in which the superintendent serves. It is a high stress job that requires

stamina, patience, passion, and an understanding of education, finances, inter-personal relationships, and governance. And perhaps the most astounding reality is that a superintendent who is wildly successful in one district might find no success in another district (Patrick, 2006).

One fact present throughout all the literature is the reality that the job of superintendent is a varied and multi-faceted role that is constantly changing. The list Phillips (1923) so fastidiously reported contains some responsibilities that continue today such as keeping the books and inspecting schools but that 12-item list simply does not do justice to the tasks a superintendent faces every school year, sometimes every day.

As the 21<sup>st</sup> century educational system continues to emphasize the need for increased accountability yet there remains no national evaluation system (Mayo and McCartney, 2004) so evaluation is left to the states. And while states have implemented evaluation systems, Missouri's rather extensive, the process is left to an ever-changing board of education (Mayo and McCartney, 2004) with limited required training in the area of effective evaluation. Further complicating matters is the fact that the process is generally implemented merely to meet a legal requirement (DiPaola, 2010) rather than a moral, ethical, or professional one. And this conversation is not a new one about a new problem; it dates back to the 1980s if not before. And yet, a lack of solutions remains, though the literature is not absent consistencies that are necessary for the health and well-being of a district.

The purpose of this study is to determine rural Missouri board members' perception of their effectiveness in evaluating the rural superintendent. Chapter Three

will discuss the design of the study, the instrument utilized, and the methodology utilized to gather and analyze data. Chapters Four and Five will discuss the data and further research.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to determine rural Missouri board members' perception of their effectiveness in evaluating the rural superintendent. This chapter will present the procedure utilized to determine the congruence between school board training and superintendent evaluation, including the population surveyed and the background of superintendent evaluation practices. The chapter will further address the methodology for, and validity of, the training of the participants, based on participant feedback, to ensure a study that will determine issues that arise from the lack of training requirements of school board members. The results of this study may provide evidence that school board members may not be properly trained throughout their term. Vertical growth is crucial for all school districts as they prepare for future mandates from the State of Missouri. This growth needs to continue beyond the superintendent and on to the board of education members. The research questions which guided this research were:

1. What are school boards of education member's perceptions of their abilities to be effective in the evaluation of the superintendent of schools job performance?
2. What additional professional development do current local board of education members need based on their perception of their effectiveness to evaluate the superintendent?

## **Participants/Population**

The population used for the research of board training on the superintendent evaluation process was rural school board members from a purposive sample of school regions in the state of Missouri who have been identified as having rural districts via self-identification and membership in the Missouri Association of Rural Educators. The participants of this study were board of education members serving in rural Missouri regions. Conferences, as defined by the state, were selected from five rural geographical locations in the state of Missouri: Northeast region, Southeast region, Northwest region, Southwest region, and Central region. These conferences included the Spring River Valley Conference in Southwest Missouri, the Big Springs Conference in Southeast Missouri, the Polk County League in Central Missouri, the Platt Valley Conference in Northwest Missouri and the Central Activities Conference located in Northeast Missouri. Forty-two school districts make up the population of these conferences. Of those 41 districts, 31 are members of the Missouri Association of Rural Education (MARE). According to MARE, there is no specific distinction that renders a Missouri school as rural, it is simply a matter of self-identification (2014). One school from the Spring River Valley Conference was removed from the population due to its designation as a private school. These conferences were selected based on similar size and qualities, and as representatives of the four corners and central region of the state. These districts share common factors of school population, salary schedule, and district attributes such as free and reduced lunch population. Board members from 41 schools in 5 regions in the state of Missouri, constituting 287 current board members, will provide the population for this

study. This will provide the researcher data from BOE members from rural schools from five geographical locations in Missouri.

### **Sampling Procedure**

The number of participating Missouri school districts meeting the criteria previously defined were asked to participate in the survey via a phone call to the Superintendent from the researcher. Board of Education members were identified and invited to participate in the study. Each of the school districts was sent a survey packet containing seven surveys and directions on completing the survey with a request for completed surveys to be returned to the researcher via regular mail.

Sample size requirements were based upon the number of schools identified as rural in Missouri. The current number of rural schools in Missouri, based on MARE's 2015-2016 membership roster, was 448 districts. Of the 448 school districts, 41 districts were selected and asked to participate in this study. Each member of the local school district board of education was asked to participate in a survey consisting of demographic questions, 5-point Likert survey questions, and rank-order questions. These surveys were presented to each of the seven board members from each school within the districts selected for this study. Each board member was mailed a hard copy of the survey, via each local board of education office, and then collected by board secretary and returned to the researcher. Participants were not personally identified in any way on the survey allowing confidentiality to be protected. Raw data will be kept for five years in a locked storage facility.

A response goal of 25 percent was desired to obtain the amount of data needed to support this study. This number aligns with the National Social Norms Center (2014) of Michigan State University's varied acceptable survey response rates. As 41 school districts were asked to contribute their input into this study, this allowed for 287 different board members to contribute information from the four corners and center of Missouri. The researcher exceeded this goal with a response rate of 35 percent.

### **Reliability and Validity**

To properly test the strength and reliability of the survey instrument, a panel of retired board of education members was selected based on experience. Twenty retired board members within the researcher's local community made themselves available to serve as a pilot group. Each of these former board members served multiple terms and are experienced in the fundamentals of belonging to a well-functioning board of governance. These former school board members have a strong understanding of the school board's position and were able to offer insight to local community viewpoints. The panel completed the pilot survey and returned it to the researcher with comments about the clarity of the questions asked and the relationship of the questions to the research questions. The researcher then determined if the responses received from the panel were the answers the researcher expected from the questions the researcher asked. A Chrobach's Alpha was also run on the pilot results. Finally, the researcher made one change to the survey based on the panel's analysis of the survey. The two reverse order questions were edited to the same format as the other questions on the survey.

Reliability was ensured through the use of the Missouri Leader Standards to frame the survey questions. The verbiage of the questions was carefully crafted to mirror the standards Missouri leaders are familiar.

### **Instrumentation**

The instrument used in this study was a researcher developed survey that included a biographical section, 5-point Likert-scale questions based on the Missouri Leader Standards, and rank-order questions. The instrument included basic questions related to the superintendent, school board, and the process of evaluation. The instrument was anonymous and administered via regular mail.

To create the survey, the researcher determined the appropriate population to be surveyed having determined rural districts have been overlooked and a gap exists within the research (Lupardus, 2005). In an effort to broaden the scope of the inquiry, it was determined that one conference from each of the five distinct regions in Missouri would complete the study. Questions were developed by the researcher under the guidance of the committee. Questions focused on determining board members' perceptions of their ability to evaluate the superintendent based on the Missouri Leader Standards.

The survey contained of three parts: six demographic questions, sixteen 5-point Likert-scale questions related to board members' understanding and perception of competence with the evaluation process, two rank-order questions related to board member training, and the Missouri Leader Standards which emphasize school vision, school culture, ethics, professional development, management, and community.

A quantitative model was used throughout the process to acquire the proper research. Using a researcher-developed survey to develop a strong basis from school board members throughout five different conferences across the state allowed this study the opportunity to achieve a starting point.

### **Data Collection**

This study employed a quantitative approach. A quantitative approach was selected to allow the data to be viewed from multiple perspectives and to help in the interpretation of answers provided on 5-point Likert-scale questions. On the Likert scale: 5 = strongly disagree, 4 = disagree, 3 = unknown, 2 = agree, and 1 = strongly agree. Data was collected via a three part, researcher-developed survey. The methodology is explained below.

Data collection began after the pilot group tested the validity and reliability of the survey instrument. The length of time given for pilot group members to complete the survey and provide feedback was one week. After the necessary edits to the survey instrument were made, the researcher contacted each school selected to participate in the survey to ask permission to send the survey. Upon receiving permission from each school, the survey was disseminated via regular mail to the selected participants. As the researcher was not present at this time, it is assumed regular board meeting time was set aside for the participating board members to complete the survey. Board members were given a three week window to complete and return the survey at which time data was compiled and analyzed. Surveys were confidential and required no identifying information beyond commonly used demographic questions that did not contain

identifiers. Identifying information such as name and email address were not collected to ensure anonymity. All data will be kept confidential and stored in a password protected electronic format.

## **Population**

The board members making up the population serve conferences selected from various regions of Missouri. Brief descriptions of the demographics of each conference are provided below.

The Spring River Valley Conference is located in the southwest corner of Missouri. There are a total of ten schools in the SRVC. One school was excluded due to its designation as a private school which is outside the scope of this study. The average K-12 population of the districts is 520 students, the average free and reduced percentage of students is 63 percent. The schools in this conference are 91 percent white.

The Big Springs Conference is located in the southeast corner of Missouri. There are a total of eight schools in the BSC. The average K-12 population of the districts is 407 students, the average free and reduced percentage of students is 69 percent. The schools in this conference are 98 percent white.

The Polk County League is located in the center of Missouri. There are a total of eight schools in the PCL. The average K-12 population of the districts is 292 students, the average free and reduced percentage of students is 72 percent. The schools in this conference are 97 percent white.

The Platt Valley Conference is located in the northwest corner of Missouri. There are a total of seven schools in the PVC. The average K-12 population of the districts is

170 students, the average free and reduced percentage of students is 48 percent. The schools in this conference are 97 percent white.

The Central Activities Conference is located in the northeast corner of Missouri. There are a total of eight schools in the CAC. The average K-12 population of the districts is 364 students, the average free and reduced percentage of students is 55 percent. The schools in this conference are 95 percent white.

The total average population for the selected conferences is 351 and the average free and reduced percentage of students is 61 percent. The conferences as a whole are 96 percent white which is markedly higher than the state average of 73 percent.

### **Research Design**

This study employed a quantitative design. Qualitative data and descriptive data were also used. Qualitative data was used to add depth and support the quantitative data. *Data Collection.* The first step in this process was to create a survey tool that was distributed to the schools selected. The survey was researcher-developed and included demographic questions and 5-point Likert-scale questions related to evaluation practices, current training procedures, and professional development. After the survey tool was created, the Research Review Board (RRB) reviewed the research application and supporting materials and approved not only the survey tool, but the research topic and methodology via approval granted on February 24, 2017 by the chair of the Research Review Board (RRB). Following the receipt of RRB approval, research moved forward with the piloting of the survey tool among the volunteer sample previously described. Once this process was complete, data was reviewed and analyzed. All necessary changes

and adjustments including the restructuring of the two reverse order questions were made to the survey tool. A master list of the board members currently serving at the 41 selected schools in five regions was compiled and conferences were coded in order for each participant to be anonymously identified by the researcher. Surveys were pre-coded prior to dissemination. Approximately 287 participants were included in the study. The survey was mailed to participants on May 14, 2016 with a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study and providing informed consent to the participants taking the survey.

Respondents were given until May 26, 2016, two weeks, to return the completed survey.

### **Data Analysis**

In summary this research was quantitative, with some open-ended qualitative and descriptive data collected, in nature using author developed questions. Qualitative data was used to add depth and support the quantitative data. Once the data was compiled into aggregate data, it was disaggregated. A result to each question was generated by computing individual responses to each one. Each of the research questions related to the 5-point Likert-style questions was analyzed using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). An ANOVA was selected over a *t*-test as multiple variables are being examined. The purpose of an ANOVA is to decrease the possibility of error that can result from running multiple *t*-tests. The ANOVA examined four groups based on years of service: 1 to 3 years (group 1), 4-6 (group 2), 7-9 years (group 3), or 10 plus years (group 4). Years of service were grouped in units of three to align with the three-year term many Missouri board members serve.

## **Pilot Survey**

The pilot survey was disseminated to 20 former Board members in February 2017. Pilot group volunteers had one week to take the survey and provide feedback. The following data was compiled from the pilot. The researcher calculated a Cronbach's alpha on the responses of the pilot group of 16 items and the reliability factor was 0.903. A factor of .70 is considered sufficient reliability for a survey.

The researcher used the first version of the survey as presented in Appendix A to gather information from the pilot group. The survey was sent to these volunteer experts and they were asked to provide feedback. The results of the pilot survey indicated that the two reverse order questions originally included for the purposes of validity hindered the reliability of the survey instrument. Using the final 20-person pilot Cronbach's Alpha was determined through SPSS, the reliability of the instrument increased from 0.903 to 0.926 with the removal of the reverse order questions. This test confirmed that the survey instrument was reliable. As a result, edits were made to the survey instrument as presented in Appendix B. Items six and ten were reorganized to remove the reverse-order ranking for the final survey. This resulted in more reliable responses during data collection.

## **Procedure**

After the pilot surveys were completed, and the revisions restating the reverse order questions were made, the researcher contacted the Superintendent of each selected district by phone, on May 11, 2016, to ensure a willingness to participate and the final survey was mailed on May 14, 2016 by US Postal service to selected boards.

Superintendents and board secretaries distributed the survey to board members.

Participating boards had two weeks to return the survey via regular mail. The RRB approved the survey presented in Appendix B, and this final survey was distributed to board members.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this study was to determine rural Missouri board members' perception of their effectiveness in evaluating the rural superintendent. Five regions were selected to participate in this study, one from each of the four corners of the state, and one from the central region of Missouri. A total of 287 board members represent these regions. A quantitative approach utilizing a researcher-developed survey was used.

Chapter Four provides the data analysis from the survey. Chapter Five discusses conclusions and recommendations and areas for further study.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **ANALYSIS OF THE DATA**

#### **Introduction**

“The superintendent personifies the aspirations and responsibilities of the entire organization” (Patillo, 2008, pg. 5). The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of rural board members related to training in superintendent evaluation and to ascertain what, if any, additional professional development board of education members perceive is needed to be effective in evaluating the performance of the superintendent of schools. The following research questions were addressed:

1. What are school boards of education member’s perceptions of their abilities to be effective in the evaluation of the superintendent of schools job performance?
2. What additional professional development do current local board of education members need based on their perception of their effectiveness to evaluate the superintendent?

Chapter Four details participant characteristics followed by descriptive statistics presented in both narrative and table formats. The results of the study and analysis of the data are presented. The researcher states deductive conclusions and summarized the chapter. A response goal of twenty-five percent was desired to obtain the amount of data needed to support this study. This number aligns with the National Social Norms Center (2014) of Michigan State University’s varied acceptable survey response rates. The researcher received a response rate of 35 percent.

## Results

The number of useable responses by board of education members was 104. Seventy-eight percent of the responders were male with eighty-one, and twenty-two percent were female with twenty-three responders. Forty-five percent served as board members for four to six years; twenty-three percent had served for seven to nine years; seventeen percent for ten or more years; and fourteen percent for one to three years. The responders represent a range of experience, from 1-28 years, as board of education members. Conferences from five regions were selected to participate. School size ranged from approximately 170 students to approximately 520 students.

Table 1

*Mean and Standard Deviation for the participant responses to the survey questions*

N=104

<b>Descriptive Statistics</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
1. I am confident in my ability to evaluate the superintendent of schools with establishing a vision, mission, and goals for the school district?	104	1.875	0.6782
2. I am confident in my ability to evaluate the superintendent of schools with implementation of a district vision, mission, and goals for the school district?	104	1.942	0.7082
3. I am confident in my ability to evaluate the superintendent of schools to promote positive culture in the district?	104	1.875	0.6489
4. I am confident in my ability to evaluate the superintendent of schools to provide effective instruction programs?	104	2.163	0.8138
5. I am confident in my ability to evaluate the superintendent of schools to ensure continuous professional learning for the school district?	104	2.077	0.772
6. I am confident in my ability to evaluate the superintendent of schools to manage the organization structure of the school district?	104	1.971	0.6891

7. I am confident in my ability to evaluate the superintendent of schools to lead personnel for the school district?	104	1.913	0.6092
8. I am confident in my ability to evaluate the superintendent of schools to manage all district resources	104	1.808	0.6244
9. I am confident in my ability to evaluate the superintendent of schools on collaborating with families and other community members on community interest and needs?	104	1.99	0.7307
10. I am confident in my ability to evaluate the superintendent of schools on responding to community interest and needs?	104	1.865	0.7113
11. I am confident in my ability to evaluate the superintendent of schools to ensure the success of all students by acting with integrity responsibly, and in an ethical manner?	104	1.712	0.6487
12. I am confident in my ability to evaluate the superintendent of schools to understand the larger context in reference to political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context?	104	2.346	0.8564
13. I am confident in my ability to evaluate the superintendent of schools to respond to the larger context in reference to political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context?	104	2.279	0.818
14. I am confident in my ability to evaluate the superintendent of schools to influence the larger context in reference to political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context?	104	2.298	0.7089
15. I am confident in my ability to evaluate the superintendent of schools to remain current on best practices in education administration and school-related areas as evident by establishing a plan to increase positive professional development and best practices	104	2.135	0.7248
Valid N (listwise)	104		

Using a five-point Likert scale the responses were as follows: 1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = undecided, 4 = disagree, and 5 = strongly disagree. A larger standard deviation indicated a wider variety of answers while a smaller standard deviation signified a narrower variety of answers. All means in Table 1 indicate close agreement

(2= agree) on the statements. The standard deviations are all less than 1 indicating a small range of responses.

Group 1, identified as Overall 1.0, indicated they utilize MSBA’s superintendent evaluation while group 2, Overall 2.0, indicated using a different evaluation process. A total of 66 board members identified as group 1, and 38 indicated they were members of group two. The “other” evaluation platforms used included: NEE (4), MARE (1), MCE (8), and nine responses stating that the board used a variation of evaluation that was unique to a specific district.

Table 2  
*Effect of years of service on confidence in superintendent evaluation*

N=103

ANOVA					
Overall					
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between Groups	411.037	3	137.012	2.859	0.041
Within Groups	4791.877	100	47.919		
Total	5202.913	103			

Table 2 shows the data from the researcher-conducted ANOVA and Post Hoc tests to determine the significance between groups compared with the least experience of 1 to 3 years (group 1), 4-6 (group 2), 7-9 years (group 3), or 10 plus years (group 4). The Post Hoc test was run with the independent variable of survey question responses and the dependent variable of years of experience as a board member with 1 to 3 years of

experience compared to members with 7-9 and 10 plus years of experience. The significance was shown between BOE members when it came to Superintendent Evaluation. Board members having 7-9 and 10 plus years of experience may have a better understanding of, and believe in their ability to, effectively evaluate the Superintendent.

This study found there was no significant difference in perception between Board members in their first three years and board members serving four to six years. The majority of survey responses, 63 percent, stated they currently used MSBA training.

Table 3  
*Rank order results*

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33. Describe: On a scale of 1 (most important) to 4 (least important) please rank the following in order of who you believe should provide board training?

N=104

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	Average	Number	Percentage
1 DESE	2.03	39	37.5%
2 MARE/MSBA	2.19	26	25%
3 Local	2.66	22	1.15%
4 Combination	3.12	17	6.35%

---

Table 3 shows the responses to the question: Who should provide board member training related to evaluation? The majority of board members, 37.5%, identified a belief that DESE should provide training for board members. MARE/MSBA with 25% came in second. It is important to note, however, that 37.5 percent, the majority of board members surveyed, identified DESE as the entity they believed should provide board member training as shown in Table 3.

Table 4  
*Rank order results*

Describe: On a scale of 1 (most important) to 6 (least important) please rank the following in order of importance.

N=104

	Average	Number	Percentage
1. School Vision	2.59	38	36.54%
2. Ethics	3.06	32	19.23%
3. School Management	3.01	16	15.38%
4. School Culture	2.96	8	7.69%
5. Community	4.46	8	7.62%
6. Professional Development	4.92	2	1.92%

Table 4 shows the responses to the question about specific issues most important for professional development training. Thirty-six percent of those surveyed identified school vision as among board members’ greatest concerns with the next highest concern being ethics at 19 percent of those surveyed.

**Summary**

The researcher found that length of service had a bearing on responses to the survey, while there was no significant difference between board members in their first three years compared to board members who had served four to six. The significance emerges among board members having served seven to ten plus years who responded with a stronger belief in their ability to effectively evaluate their superintendent.

Additionally, while the majority of respondents use MSBA’s evaluation tool currently,

when it came to identifying who is most appropriate to provide training, the majority selected DESE as that entity.

Chapter five will discuss conclusions and recommendations for further study.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to determine rural Missouri board members' perception of their effectiveness in evaluating the rural superintendent. Further, this study explored whether there is a need for increased accountability of school board members in the rural schools surveyed. There are potential implications for schools across the state specifically related to the evaluation of the superintendent of schools, possibly the most important paid individual in a school district. This study included 41 rural Missouri districts. Private schools were not included. A total of 104 board members were represented in this study.

The population for this study included rural board of education members in five specific regions of Missouri. The distinct culture that is unique to rural school districts, as discussed in Chapter Two, is imperative to remember as it affected the data procured for this study. One district within the selected conferences was removed due to its designation as a private school. Regions were selected in order to provide a broad view of rural districts in Missouri.

A researcher-developed survey containing six demographic questions, sixteen 5-point Likert-scale questions related to board members' understanding of and their perception to evaluate the rural superintendent, two rank-order questions related to board member training, and the Missouri Leader Standards which emphasize school vision, school culture, ethics, professional development, management, and community, was distributed to selected participants following a verbal confirmation, via phone, of a

willingness to participate via regular mail. Surveys were coded to allow the researcher to match each to the region in which it was completed. A three-week window was given for participants to complete the survey. Participating conferences were asked to return all surveys regardless of whether or not they were completed fully or left blank. A self-addressed stamped envelope was provided for return.

## **Conclusions**

Based on the data compiled, school board members with less than seven years of service were not confident in their ability to effectively evaluate a superintendent. This may suggest the current requirements are not adequate to foster effective Superintendent evaluation, therefore it is important the state add additional hours of training within the first six years of service to ensure excellence in evaluation. This training should include vision, school culture, school management, professional development, community, and ethics based on the answers provided on the rank order questions. The researcher concludes that the more experience the board member has, the greater their perception is in their ability to effectively evaluate the superintendent, specifically, in the areas of professional development and community relations.

Based on data acquired, board members with a longer tenure were more comfortable and confident evaluating the superintendent. While there is no current data to suggest that additional training would alter this finding, the researcher believes there is a need for additional training beyond the 16 hours required by the state of Missouri to assist in better preparing board members for the evaluation process specifically in the areas of school culture, vision, and climate; school management; and professional development.

The term “longer tenure” refers to board members who have served for seven years or longer. The findings of this study indicate a need for increased training, specifically focused on superintendent evaluation, within the first six years. This would meet a need expressed by board members surveyed. Providing additional board training in the areas of culture, climate, community, vision, professional development, and school management in addition to evaluation would further prepare board members for the process of evaluation given the focus on these areas found in the Missouri Leader Standards. Increased school board member requirements pertaining to professional development at the district level, may increase the understanding of the effectiveness of the rural school superintendent, his/her evaluation, and the evaluation process of the rural superintendent. Additionally, in his research Patillo (2008), found that approximately 90 percent of those surveyed believed state mandated, increased board training necessary.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

It is recommended that further research should be conducted using a larger sample size of somewhere between 250-500 Board members. In addition to the increased sample size, a future researcher replicating this study might find valuable information in adding the component of administrators, specifically Superintendents, to the sample, allowing superintendents to discuss their perception of the board of education related to superintendent evaluation.

One additional recommendation would be a comparative study to determine if a significant difference exists between board members that attend additional training beyond 16 hours versus their counterparts that attend only the basic training. This

difference could be measured not only based on superintendent evaluation but other elements of board membership as well. This could be taken one step further by comparing those who were trained by MSBA and those who were not to determine how perceptions differ.

Recommendations for further study include focusing research on the value of an elected board over the value of an appointed board as well as the value of a paid board versus the value of a volunteer board. The potential in researching how perceptions change when the buy in of the board changes would be worth noting (Lupardus, 2005).

Replicating this study or merging this study with that of Lupardus in order to create a study that focuses on both urban and rural districts creating a comparative study would allow this research to be applied more broadly. A true comparative study might also yield results that are applicable across districts of all kinds, allowing urban and rural districts to acknowledge their similarities. Additional research of this nature might include comparing two different states to determine the similarities and differences among school board member perceptions at the state level. This comparative study design would allow researchers to understand distinct differences on a national level.

## **Summary**

The topic of superintendent evaluation has been researched and debated for many years. Whether a discussion of the role of the superintendent, or the process of evaluation itself, one consensus that emerged throughout the literature is the reality that the superintendent is the face of the district and has one of the most difficult jobs in education. As a result, it is imperative that the superintendent is evaluated regularly and

fairly to provide the best possible leadership for a district. The preparedness of the board of education to effectively evaluate school leadership is therefore also imperative.

The purpose of this study was to examine board member perceptions related to the evaluation of the superintendent. Rural districts in Missouri were the focus of this study. A sample of 41 districts including 287 individual board members were selected and contacted to participate in the researcher-developed survey utilized for this project. A return rate of thirty-six percent was achieved when final data was compiled.

Board of education members look for the best ways to evaluate superintendents, but their presuppositions and lack of additional training make it evident that board members are not adequately prepared to evaluate the superintendent. If additional state training becomes more of a mandate moving forward, this could help board members better evaluate district leaders. In the researcher's opinion until this process becomes something moved to the forefront of education, school districts and states will not see consistency in the superintendent evaluation and, as a result, superintendent longevity.

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## Appendix A

To Whom It May Concern:

The purpose of this research project is to examine the perceptions of current board members related to the evaluation of the superintendent. If you agree to participate in the research, you will be asked to complete one brief survey assessing your opinion of, and participation in, the evaluation of the superintendent. This is a research project being conducted by Steven Brigham, II at Southwest Baptist University. You are invited to participate in this research project because you are a school board member or superintendent at a rural K-12 school district in the state of Missouri.

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate. If you decide to participate in this research survey, you may withdraw at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you withdraw from participating at any time, you will not be penalized. The procedure involves filling out a survey that will take approximately 10-15 minutes. Your responses will be confidential and the researcher will not collect or report identifying information such as your name, email address, or IP addresses. The survey questions will be about your demographic information, familiarity and comfort level regarding the MSBA superintendent evaluation, and your opinion related to board member training pertinent to evaluating a serving superintendent. All data will be kept confidential and will be stored in a locked filing cabinet for the length of time required by the Research Review Board (RRB). To protect your confidentiality, the surveys will not contain information that will personally identify you or your district. The results of this study will be used for scholarly purposes only. If you have any questions about the research study or would like additional information, please contact Steven Brigham, II at [sbrigham@goldencity.k12.mo.us](mailto:sbrigham@goldencity.k12.mo.us) or (417) 317-7921. You may also contact my faculty advisor Dr. Mick Arnold at [marnold@sbuniv.edu](mailto:marnold@sbuniv.edu) or (800) 526-5859/(417) 328-1700. This research has been reviewed according to Southwest Baptist University RRB procedures for research involving human subjects.

Thank you for your time.

CONSENT: Please check the item below indicating your consent to participate in the study.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have read the above information and agree to participate in the study.

**Biographical**

Please select the appropriate response for the following biographical questions.

Male\_\_\_\_\_ Female\_\_\_\_\_

Years of Experience as a Board of Education member

1-3 4-6 7-9 10+

Which evaluation are you currently using to evaluate the superintendent?

MSBA\_\_\_\_\_ Other\_\_\_\_\_ If Other, (Name) \_\_\_\_\_

Have you attended the MSBA (Missouri School Board Association) training regarding the evaluation of the superintendent? If you have attended training please indicate the year of your most recent training regarding the evaluation of the superintendent.

Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_

Year Attended: \_\_\_\_\_

**Likert Scale Questions:**

Likert Scale questions based on Missouri Leader Standards.

- 1) I am confident in my ability to evaluate the superintendent of schools with establishing a vision, mission and goals for the school district?

1 Strongly Agree 2 Agree 3 Unknown 4 Disagree 5 Strongly Disagree

- 2) I am confident in my ability to evaluate the superintendent of schools with implementation of a district vision, mission and goals for the school district?

1 Strongly Agree 2 Agree 3 Unknown 4 Disagree 5 Strongly Disagree

- 3) I am confident in my ability to evaluate the superintendent of schools to promote positive culture in the district?

1 Strongly Agree 2 Agree 3 Unknown 4 Disagree 5 Strongly Disagree

4) I am confident in my ability to evaluate the superintendent of schools to provide effective instruction programs?

1 Strongly Agree    2 Agree    3 Unknown    4 Disagree    5 Strongly Disagree

5) I am confident in my ability to evaluate the superintendent of schools to ensure continuous professional learning for the school district?

1 Strongly Agree    2 Agree    3 Unknown    4 Disagree    5 Strongly Disagree

6) I am confident in my ability to evaluate the superintendent of schools to manage the organization structure of the school district?

1 Strongly Disagree    2 Disagree    3 Unknown    4 Agree    5 Strongly Agree

7) I am confident in my ability to evaluate the superintendent of schools to lead personnel for the school district?

1 Strongly Agree    2 Agree    3 Unknown    4 Disagree    5 Strongly Disagree

8) I am confident in my ability to evaluate the superintendent of schools to manage all district resources?

1 Strongly Agree    2 Agree    3 Unknown    4 Disagree    5 Strongly Disagree

9) I am confident in my ability to evaluate the superintendent of schools on collaborating with families and other community members on community interests and needs?

1 Strongly Agree    2 Agree    3 Unknown    4 Disagree    5 Strongly Disagree

10) I am confident in my ability to evaluate the superintendent of schools on responding to community interests and needs?

1 Strongly Agree    2 Agree    3 Unknown    4 Disagree    5 Strongly Disagree

11) I am confident in my ability to evaluate the superintendent of schools on responding to community interests and needs?

1 Strongly Disagree   2 Disagree   3 Unknown   4 Agree   5 Strongly Agree

12) I am confident in my ability to evaluate the superintendent of schools to ensure the success of all students by acting with integrity, responsibly, and in an ethical manner?

1 Strongly Agree   2 Agree   3 Unknown   4 Disagree   5 Strongly Disagree

13) I am confident in my ability to evaluate the superintendent of schools to understand the larger context in reference to political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context?

1 Strongly Agree   2 Agree   3 Unknown   4 Disagree   5 Strongly Disagree

14) I am confident in my ability to evaluate the superintendent of schools to respond the larger context in reference to political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context?

1 Strongly Agree   2 Agree   3 Unknown   4 Disagree   5 Strongly Disagree

15) I am confident in my ability to evaluate the superintendent of schools to influence the larger context in reference to political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context?

1 Strongly Agree   2 Agree   3 Unknown   4 Disagree   5 Strongly Disagree

16) I am confident in my ability to evaluate the superintendent of schools to remain current on best practices in education administration and school-related areas as evident by establishing a plan to increase positive professional development and best practices?

1 Strongly Agree   2 Agree   3 Unknown   4 Disagree   5 Strongly Disagree

**Please respond to the following questions by ranking the responses.**

- 1) On a scale of 1 (most important) to 4 (least important) please rank the following in order of who you believe should provide board training.

\_\_\_ DESE

\_\_\_ Local District

\_\_\_ MARE/MSBA

\_\_\_ Combination

- 2) On a scale of 1 (most important) to 6 (least important) please rank the following in order of importance.

\_\_\_ School Vision

\_\_\_ School Culture

\_\_\_ School Management

\_\_\_ Professional Development

\_\_\_ Community

\_\_\_ Ethics

**The following questions are optional and ask you to provide additional insight into your perceptions on additional training needed as a board of education member.**

What specific area(s) in the evaluation of the superintendent would you like to receive additional professional development?

List any additional comments you believe would add to the overall study regarding board of education member's perception of their ability to effectively evaluate the superintendent of schools?

## Appendix B

To Whom It May Concern:

The purpose of this research project is to examine the perceptions of current board members related to the evaluation of the superintendent. If you agree to participate in the research, you will be asked to complete one brief survey assessing your opinion of, and participation in, the evaluation of the superintendent. This is a research project being conducted by Steven Brigham, II at Southwest Baptist University. You are invited to participate in this research project because you are a school board member or superintendent at a rural K-12 school district in the state of Missouri.

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate. If you decide to participate in this research survey, you may withdraw at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you withdraw from participating at any time, you will not be penalized. The procedure involves filling out a survey that will take approximately 10-15 minutes. Your responses will be confidential and the researcher will not collect or report identifying information such as your name, email address, or IP addresses. The survey questions will be about your demographic information, familiarity and comfort level regarding the MSBA superintendent evaluation, and your opinion related to board member training pertinent to evaluating a serving superintendent. All data will be kept confidential and will be stored in a locked filing cabinet for the length of time required by the Research Review Board (RRB). To protect your confidentiality, the surveys will not contain information that will personally identify you or your district. The results of this study will be used for scholarly purposes only. If you have any questions about the research study or would like additional information, please contact Steven Brigham, II at [sbrigham@goldencity.k12.mo.us](mailto:sbrigham@goldencity.k12.mo.us) or (417) 317-7921. You may also contact my faculty advisor Dr. Mick Arnold at [marnold@sbuniv.edu](mailto:marnold@sbuniv.edu) or (800) 526-5859/(417) 328-1700. This research has been reviewed according to Southwest Baptist University RRB procedures for research involving human subjects.

Thank you for your time.

CONSENT: Please check the item below indicating your consent to participate in the study.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have read the above information and agree to participate in the study.

**Biographical**

Please select the appropriate response for the following biographical questions.

Male\_\_\_\_\_ Female\_\_\_\_\_

Years of Experience as a Board of Education member

1-3 4-6 7-9 10+

Which evaluation are you currently using to evaluate the superintendent?

MSBA\_\_\_\_\_ Other\_\_\_\_\_ If Other, (Name) \_\_\_\_\_

Have you attended the MSBA (Missouri School Board Association) training regarding the evaluation of the superintendent? If you have attended training please indicate the year of your most recent training regarding the evaluation of the superintendent.

Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_

Year Attended: \_\_\_\_\_

**Likert Scale Questions:**

Likert Scale questions based on Missouri Leader Standards.

17) I am confident in my ability to evaluate the superintendent of schools with establishing a vision, mission and goals for the school district?

1 Strongly Agree 2 Agree 3 Unknown 4 Disagree 5 Strongly Disagree

18) I am confident in my ability to evaluate the superintendent of schools with implementation of a district vision, mission and goals for the school district?

1 Strongly Agree 2 Agree 3 Unknown 4 Disagree 5 Strongly Disagree

19) I am confident in my ability to evaluate the superintendent of schools to promote positive culture in the district?

1 Strongly Agree 2 Agree 3 Unknown 4 Disagree 5 Strongly Disagree

20) I am confident in my ability to evaluate the superintendent of schools to provide effective instruction programs?

1 Strongly Agree    2 Agree    3 Unknown    4 Disagree    5 Strongly Disagree

21) I am confident in my ability to evaluate the superintendent of schools to ensure continuous professional learning for the school district?

1 Strongly Agree    2 Agree    3 Unknown    4 Disagree    5 Strongly Disagree

22) I am confident in my ability to evaluate the superintendent of schools to manage the organization structure of the school district?

1 Strongly Disagree    2 Disagree    3 Unknown    4 Agree    5 Strongly Agree

23) I am confident in my ability to evaluate the superintendent of schools to lead personnel for the school district?

1 Strongly Agree    2 Agree    3 Unknown    4 Disagree    5 Strongly Disagree

24) I am confident in my ability to evaluate the superintendent of schools to manage all district resources?

1 Strongly Agree    2 Agree    3 Unknown    4 Disagree    5 Strongly Disagree

25) I am confident in my ability to evaluate the superintendent of schools on collaborating with families and other community members on community interests and needs?

1 Strongly Agree    2 Agree    3 Unknown    4 Disagree    5 Strongly Disagree

26) I am confident in my ability to evaluate the superintendent of schools on responding to community interests and needs?

1 Strongly Agree    2 Agree    3 Unknown    4 Disagree    5 Strongly Disagree

27) I am confident in my ability to evaluate the superintendent of schools on responding to community interests and needs?

1 Strongly Disagree   2 Disagree   3 Unknown   4 Agree   5 Strongly Agree

28) I am confident in my ability to evaluate the superintendent of schools to ensure the success of all students by acting with integrity, responsibly, and in an ethical manner?

1 Strongly Agree   2 Agree   3 Unknown   4 Disagree   5 Strongly Disagree

29) I am confident in my ability to evaluate the superintendent of schools to understand the larger context in reference to political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context?

1 Strongly Agree   2 Agree   3 Unknown   4 Disagree   5 Strongly Disagree

30) I am confident in my ability to evaluate the superintendent of schools to respond the larger context in reference to political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context?

1 Strongly Agree   2 Agree   3 Unknown   4 Disagree   5 Strongly Disagree

31) I am confident in my ability to evaluate the superintendent of schools to influence the larger context in reference to political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context?

1 Strongly Agree   2 Agree   3 Unknown   4 Disagree   5 Strongly Disagree

32) I am confident in my ability to evaluate the superintendent of schools to remain current on best practices in education administration and school-related areas as evident by establishing a plan to increase positive professional development and best practices?

1 Strongly Agree   2 Agree   3 Unknown   4 Disagree   5 Strongly Disagree

**Please respond to the following questions by ranking the responses.**

- 3) On a scale of 1 (most important) to 4 (least important) please rank the following in order of who you believe should provide board training.

\_\_\_ DESE

\_\_\_ Local District

\_\_\_ MARE/MSBA

\_\_\_ Combination

- 4) On a scale of 1 (most important) to 6 (least important) please rank the following in order of importance.

\_\_\_ School Vision

\_\_\_ School Culture

\_\_\_ School Management

\_\_\_ Professional Development

\_\_\_ Community

\_\_\_ Ethics

**The following questions are optional and ask you to provide additional insight into your perceptions on additional training needed as a board of education member.**

What specific area(s) in the evaluation of the superintendent would you like to receive additional professional development?

List any additional comments you believe would add to the overall study regarding board of education member's perception of their ability to effectively evaluate the superintendent of schools?

## Appendix C

February 24, 2017

Steven A. Brigham, II

**Re: Rural Missouri School Board Members' Perceptions of Their Ability to Evaluate a Rural Superintendent**

Mr. Brigham

On February 24, 2017, the RRB completed a review of your application and supporting documents for the above named research proposal. The Research Review Board (RRB) for Southwest Baptist University has determined that the proposed research project meets the criteria for Exempt status as per policy 1.15.3 in the faculty guidelines. The project has been approved and work on the project may begin. The principle investigator need not resubmit the project for continuing RRB review as long as there are no modifications in the procedures

If any modifications to the procedures are made the RRB will need to complete a new review of the changes to determine if the project continues to meet Exempt status or if further review is necessary.

Congratulations on the approval of your project and we wish you the best. If you have any questions regarding the RRB's decision, please contact me at 417-328-1909.

Sincerely,

Herb Hamann DPT

Southwest Baptist University, Research Review Board, Chairman