A case study of superintendent leadership behaviors: Bridging the transition between a new and long-serving superintendent

by

Daniel Farley

B.S., McPherson College, 2009
M.S., Kansas State University, 2013

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Department of Educational Leadership
College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the transition in a rural Midwestern school district from a long-serving superintendent who served sixteen years in the position to a recently hired superintendent, focusing on leadership behaviors and how the observed behaviors of the two superintendents influenced the transition period between superintendent tenures. The theoretical framework guiding this study was Roger's "Diffusion of Innovations" theory. The investigation uses a mixed methods convergent design to conduct a case study of the superintendent leadership transition utilizing three forms of data collection: The Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ), interviews, and observations at the selected site. The significance of this study is its potential to identify leadership behaviors that can be used to better understand how an incoming superintendent responds during the transition period in a rural school district after the retirement of a long-serving superintendent. The findings from the study demonstrated the outgoing and incoming superintendent utilized qualities from four selected leadership frameworks (i.e., transformation, distributive, servant, and adaptive). The behaviors of the superintendents did affect the transition and there was a stronger alignment between incoming superintendent stakeholder responses than the outgoing superintendent stakeholder responses. Recommendations for future research and implications for practice are detailed from the findings of the study and discussed in connection with the theoretical framework.

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Approved by:
Major Professor
Dr. Donna Augustine-Shaw

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Dedication

To Trista and our puppies, you were always there waiting when my thirty minutes was up. With you by my side, nothing is impossible!

Chapter 1 - Introduction to the Research Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the transition between a long-serving superintendent who recently retired from the district and the hiring of a superintendent with experience from outside of the district. The behaviors of each superintendent are identified through a survey, interviews, and observation of the new superintendent. In Chapter 1, the literature review provides the basis and driving force for the study, the rational and research questions, and an introduction to the methodologies used in this study.

School Leadership

Leadership matters. In public education settings, leadership can directly affect student achievement in a school district. Effective leadership can include the use of practices such as goal setting and establishing an agreed upon vision and path for staff to follow. In a meta-analysis study conducted by Waters and Marzano (2007), over twenty-seven studies beginning in 1970 were examined for effective superintendent leadership strategies. The findings demonstrate that districts with effective leaders see an increase in academic progress when there are clear goals and an established direction (Waters & Marzano, 2007). Along with goal setting, making the goals non-negotiable and including the board of education in the development of the goals can enhance the effectiveness of district leadership (Waters & Marzano, 2007). The study also found that the length of a superintendent's tenure in a school district can have a positive correlation to student achievement (Waters & Marzano, 2007). Positive results of superintendent leadership on student achievement were apparent as soon as two years into a superintendent's tenure according to this landmark study (Waters & Marzano, 2007). Leadership is important for school districts and notable leadership frameworks provide a definition of leadership characteristics and behaviors demonstrated by effective district leaders.

The definition of leadership according to Hoy and Miskel (2012) is "a social process in which an individual or a group influences behavior toward a shared goal" (p. 427). Although literature offers other definitions of leadership, the common theme is the inclusion of the term influence (Hoy & Miskel, 2012). The definition of influence according to Merriam Webster is "the power to change or affect someone or something: the power to cause changes without directly forcing them to happen" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Influence and change are similar, but understanding what change is and the varying levels of change is an important factor in leadership.

Leading change is a natural part of leadership. However, many practicing superintendents often have limited knowledge of established theories around managing and leading change. Administrators are expected to lead and make positive changes in their school districts based on data and other factors that enable opportunities for internal and external stakeholders to experience success, especially to support student learning. Because change often results in challenges to current practice and processes, the impact of change on staff and community can present dilemmas for superintendents. The fallout of orchestrating necessary change in a school district often leads to position turnover in the superintendency. Beginning in August of 2021, nine percent of Kansas superintendents reported they had been in their current school districts less than a year along with these superintendents also reporting this was their first superintendent position (Kansas Association of School Boards, 2022). With the unlikelihood that challenges resulting from leading necessary change will dissipate, turnover in superintendent leadership will continue to be commonplace. Therefore, a need to investigate examples of sustainable leadership in managing position transitions exists (Walsey, 1992).

Leading a district includes employing useful practices such as goal setting, professional development of staff, and redesigning the organization (Jacobson, 2010). Being able to recruit and prepare future school superintendents by providing examples of effective leadership models and gaining insight into how a new superintendent manages transition has grown in importance. Studies have not readily captured how a superintendent inheriting a stable district works to maintain a level of certainty and consistency that allows a district to continue to move forward nor do studies provide an understanding of the leadership behaviors that allow this progress to continue.

The research topic examined in this study is the lack of knowledge around the leadership behaviors of a newly hired superintendent establishing their leadership approach in a school district following the retirement of an experienced and long-serving superintendent in the same district. Better understanding the leadership behaviors during the transition period of superintendents adds to existing literature and informs standards that discuss and govern effective superintendent leadership. There is insufficient research focusing on how a new superintendent assumes their role and responsibilities while gaining important perspective around the past practices of a long-serving superintendent.

The proposed study will investigate the leadership behaviors of a superintendent striving to understand and respect the current performance and culture of a school district after taking the reins following the departure of a long-serving superintendent. Long-serving in this study means a tenure of sixteen years as superintendent in the same district. Through this study, data is collected to examine the leadership behaviors of a new superintendent, the leadership behaviors of the past superintendent, and garner insight from a selected group of stakeholders with knowledge of the leadership behaviors of these superintendents. The data is also examined to

provide important connections to four established leadership frameworks to better understand the behaviors leading to successful transition of the executive leader.

Rationale

The rationale for this study is supported from literature describing the effects of superintendent leadership on a school district. When there is a change in superintendent leadership, there will be an effect on student achievement (Waters & Marzano, 2007). Moving into the 2023 – 2024 school year, there were 57 superintendent vacancies recorded in Kansas (Kansas Association of School Boards, 2022). Moreover, superintendent leadership plays an even larger role in the success and well-being of rural school districts. Rural school districts face significant challenges despite the smaller scale of operations. The breadth of responsibilities for a rural school superintendent is demanding and overwhelming (McHenry-Sorber, 2019). For these reasons, the study is focusing on rural districts. The knowledge, skills, and beliefs of the superintendent provide the baseline and impetus for the direction the school district will ultimately move. The focus on rural school superintendent leadership in this study is based on literature substantiating that rural school districts face many challenges, and more research is needed to understand the complexity of leadership transition in these settings. The rationale for this study is supported by the literature presented in Chapter 2 and furthermore, by the volume of superintendent vacancies and position turnovers in the state of Kansas.

Research Problem

Much of the literature on superintendent leadership focuses on change and highlights how the leadership provided by a superintendent can improve a low performing district (Myers, 2008). Through the literature review, a gap in research is discovered. There is an absence of research surrounding superintendent leadership during the transition between a long-serving

superintendent and a newly hired superintendent. Superintendent turnover is caused by multiple reasons including termination, non-renewal, and retirement (Tekniepe, 2015). With superintendent vacancies occurring in all types of school district contexts, it is important to better understand how a leadership change in the superintendent impacts the on-going stability and success of a school district.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to examine the transition in a rural midwestern school district from a long-serving superintendent to a recently hired superintendent, with an explicit focus on leadership behaviors and how the observed behaviors of the two superintendents influenced the stability and opportunity for change and integration of new ideas. The study identifies and describes salient organizational and cultural leadership characteristics observed in superintendent behaviors before and after the change in superintendents, and compare, contrast, and synthesize those observations to generate insights about the transition in leadership. The data collecting tools used in this study will be the use of a survey, interviews, and in person observations of the incoming superintendent in the district.

Research Questions

This research study answers the following question and sub questions:

- How and in what ways is the transition from a long-serving superintendent to a recently hired superintendent in a Midwestern rural school district influenced by the leadership behaviors exhibited by each?
    - What leadership framework(s) best characterizes the leadership behaviors of the long-serving outgoing superintendent?

- What leadership framework(s) best characterizes the leadership behaviors of the recently hired incoming superintendent?
- In what ways and to what extent was the transition influenced by leadership characteristics of the outgoing superintendent, leadership characteristics of the incoming superintendent, and congruence/alignment between them?

Theoretical Framework

An incoming superintendent faces uncertainty when trying to build acceptance and participation when assuming responsibility of a new school district (Riordan, 2008). An incoming superintendent must understand and bridge the past expectations of a long-serving superintendent while finding small windows to begin implementing their own leadership style and set of expectations (Manderscheid & Ardichvili, 2009). Communicating this differing approach is a factor in the success of a new superintendent (Manderscheid & Ardichvili, 2009. Building support for a varied and alternative path from what the staff and community are used to can be a complex process. To investigate this dilemma, Rogers' (2003) Diffusion of Innovations theory offers a useful framework. The theoretical framework explains the process of communicating a new idea and is an example of a social change because of the nature of uncertainty in new messages (Rogers, 2003). The communication chain in this theory works effectively when the message can travel through an established order of personnel with similar levels of understanding (Rogers, 2003). Innovation can sometimes stall in its attempt to make it through the organization when it is communicated between individuals with varied levels of misunderstanding (Rogers, 2003). For this study, the new ideas are communicated from the incoming superintendent. These ideas naturally differ from the outgoing superintendent.

Rogers' (2003) theory is built around a five-step process consisting of knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation. Knowledge of an innovation occurs when an individual either learns of the innovation or develops an understanding of the innovation. The individual's perception of an innovation is known as persuasion. The third step in the process focuses on decision-making. In Rogers' (2003) model, a decision is made once the individual chooses whether to adopt the innovation or not. Implementation occurs when the innovation is used and then seeks confirmation based on the results (Rogers, 2003). This research study directly relates to Rogers' (2003) Diffusion of Innovations theory by focusing on the process and uncertainty of a new leader facing the challenge of building acceptance and participation aligned to their unique leadership style. The new leader must acknowledge that staff and community stakeholders have accepted the leadership behaviors of a long-serving superintendent. As an incoming superintendent maneuvers through the five-step process of this theoretical framework, their differing communication style and approach necessitates a keen awareness on communication processes and receipt of information as ideas and innovations move through the organizational system. The researcher links the study's findings to the theoretical framework in Chapter 5.

Methodology

The proposed investigation uses a mixed methods convergent design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) to conduct a case study of the superintendent leadership transition in one rural Midwestern school district. To answer sub-questions one and two, quantitative and qualitative data on leadership behaviors are collected and analyzed separately, then compared to assess the degree to which the data confirms or disconfirms the questions and produces a characterization of the leadership behaviors of the outgoing and incoming superintendents. To answer sub

question three, the leadership behavior characterization of the incoming superintendent was compared with the leadership behavior characterization of the outgoing superintendent to assess alignment/congruencies and to make inferences about how and in what ways leadership behaviors influence the transition.

Three forms of data are collected: the Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ), interviews, and observations of the new superintendent at the selected site. The outgoing superintendent and selected stakeholders of the district are interviewed to establish the organizational environment of the district and the leadership behaviors used by the outgoing superintendent. The outgoing superintendent was interviewed twice by the researcher. These interviews provide an understanding of the background of the district and the practices and culture the incoming superintendent is inheriting. The incoming superintendent was also interviewed twice and was observed by the researcher to provide opportunities to witness situations where the superintendent interacted with staff and stakeholders. The incoming superintendent was not critiqued or rated, but instead the researcher attempted to identify the behaviors that the incoming superintendent employs to bridge the transition between their leadership behaviors and the outgoing superintendent. Each participant took the LBDQ. The stakeholders responded to the LBDQ describing the leadership behaviors of the superintendent that selected them to participate. The outgoing and incoming superintendent took the LBDQ to assess themselves. The interview data was coded, and memos collected during the observation process validated the incoming superintendent behaviors. Techniques to promote trustworthiness and credibility included thick rich description, triangulation, negative case analysis, and a data audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Significance

The significance of this study lies in its potential to identify leadership behaviors that can be used to better understand how an incoming superintendent responds during the transition period in a rural school district after the retirement of a long-serving superintendent. The study also adds information to a gap in the research that connects these leadership behaviors to existing leadership frameworks that describe the actions and work of an effective superintendent. The structure of the study allows for replication and modifications to the structure by selecting superintendents with different career tracks that can add to the research base. Superintendent turnover in districts with previous superintendent stability happens and it is important to research this unique situation when a board of education decides to hire a superintendent from outside of the district. The results of the study also place an emphasis on practicing superintendents having knowledge of existing leadership frameworks to help in the integration of theory to applied behaviors and practice. The significance of this study has the potential to impact aspiring and practicing superintendents as well as other preparation and professional development organizations that support the development and position of the superintendent.

Delimitations

For this study, the scope of research focuses on a single school district serving a small, rural Midwestern community and a superintendent transition between a long-serving outgoing superintendent (with 30 years' experience as a teacher and administrator in the district) and a recently hired incoming superintendent with five years of experience as a superintendent. The incoming superintendent is entering the superintendency from outside the district.

Limitation

The delimitation to a single school district and the use of a case study limits the applicability of findings to other districts, especially to districts that differ substantively from the small, rural, Midwestern district site. Similarly, specific characteristics of the transition (e.g., the longevity of the outgoing superintendent) limit the transferability of results. Aspects of the design and methods (e.g., the use of thick, rich description) enhance transferability of findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), and presentation and discussion of results will be attentive to these limitations.

A more practical limitation of this study is its inability to determine the extent to which the incoming superintendent and their behaviors prove to be successful in transitioning the district in accordance with the expectations established by the outgoing superintendent. This study is limited to an analysis of data obtained after the superintendent has been on the job 90 days. The study itself is focused on what behaviors the superintendent utilizes to bridge the gap between themselves and the former superintendent. These practices may end up being successful, but due to the length and timing of the study, it is impossible for the researcher to study the effectiveness of the chosen leadership behaviors over a longer period of time. Another limitation is scheduling. Since this study is examining a practicing superintendent and the researcher is currently in a superintendency, finding time for observing and conducting the interviews was challenging. In addition, opportunities to observe the incoming superintendent working with the board of education in formal meetings are limited as the board of education meetings for the participant and researcher occurred on the same night.

Operational Definitions

Adaptive Leadership: The activity of guiding adaptive work (Heifetz et al., 2009).

Distributive Leadership: Leadership that embraces the development of teams and groups to facilitate tasks across an organization (Hoy & Miskel, 2012).

Evolutionary Change: A change that occurs gradually and only affects a portion of the organization (Burke, 2018).

Influence: The power to change or affect someone or something: the power to cause changes without directly forcing them to happen (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

Leadership: A social process in which an individual or a group influences behavior toward a shared goal (Hoy & Miskel, 2012).

Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire: A research-based instrument that provides a tool allowing group members to describe the behavior of designated leaders in formal organizations as well as leaders to describe their own leadership behaviors (Halpin, 1957).

Open System Theory: A theory that explains any system that is dependent on or interacting with its environment and a system constantly evolving with that environment (Burke, 2018).

Organizational Change: Changes that occur within an organization that can be classified as evolutionary and revolutionary (Burke, 2018).

Revolutionary Change: Change that is not gradual and impacts the entire organization (Burke, 2018).

School District: A geographical unit for the local administration of schools.

Servant Leadership: A form of leadership that nurtures individual development in the organization through listening, empathy, stewardship, and the awareness needed to build strong ethics and interpersonal relations between staff (Hoy & Miskel, 2012.

Superintendent: The chief executive officer of a school district.

Transformational Leadership: A form of leadership that is proactive and raises the awareness and achievement levels of its followers (Hoy & Miskel, 2012).

Transition Period – For this study, the transition period will be defined as 90 days.

Turnover: The rate at which employees leave the workforce and are replaced.

Summary

The study being conducted seeks to examine the leadership behaviors of an incoming superintendent following the retirement of a long-serving superintendent. The transition period bridges the leadership of the outgoing and incoming superintendent and is rooted in a rural school district described as stable. The literature review substantiates the need to examine the behaviors of superintendents during transitions of leadership. There is also a professional need for this information because of high superintendent turnover across the nation. The study uses the Diffusion of Innovations theory as its theoretical framework. The methodology employs constructivist grounded theory and case study. The data collected and results of the study analyze the leadership behaviors exhibited by the outgoing superintendent and the new superintendent aligned to established leadership frameworks. The next section details these frameworks and includes transformational leadership, servant leadership, distributive leadership, and adaptive leadership. The literature review provides evidence of the need to research leadership behaviors during the transition period of superintendents in a rural school district.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

The purpose of this study is to examine the leadership behaviors of an incoming rural superintendent during the transition period following the retirement of a long-serving superintendent. In addition, the study identifies the leadership framework(s) most closely aligned to the leadership behaviors of the outgoing and incoming superintendent as derived from the findings of the study. To fulfill this purpose, the following research strategy to conduct the literature review was followed. The first step to narrow the focus from open-ended introductory searches was identifying the leadership frameworks that would be used to observe and collect information about the selected leaders during the research. Transformational leadership was the starting point. Focusing on one leadership theory led to searching for the original theorists who developed the frameworks. This compiled studies that had used those same authors in their citations and had relatable topics to the research purpose. Using Hoy and Miskel's (2012) leadership book as a foundational text, the researcher explored frameworks such as transformational leadership that specifically described the characteristics most notable in the style of the leader and the process and focus in working with others as a part of their leadership style. In addition to transformational leadership, the researcher identified three other leadership frameworks: servant leadership, distributive leadership, and adaptive leadership. The next step associated with the leadership frameworks was identifying an established and validated research instrument used in leadership studies. This investigation led to the selection of the Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire.

As the leadership frameworks were taking shape, a link to organizational theory developed. Identifying what environmental and change factors were going to be considered came from authors such as Burke (2018) and Schein (1984). Similarities between the studies of

organizations and characteristics of school districts resulted in searching for broad topics such as school size and rural leadership. This strategy enabled the researcher to find academic journals that would substantiate the direction of the literature review and potential selection of the research site. These journal articles led to the formation of the criterion to be used to select the district and participants and dictated the order of the literature review, starting with organizational theory, followed by research focused on district characteristics and leadership behaviors. To conclude this process, the researcher identified the leadership instrument for the data collection process and the leadership frameworks to be examined. The instrument and frameworks provided the researcher with clarity to develop the research questions and refine the purpose of the study.

Organizational Theory

Organizational theory is an appropriate starting place for the literature review to begin. This section is built on literature concerning environmental factors and considerations for change. The results of this literature review were the basis for shaping the research study. Both environmental factors and the process used to lead change are important considerations and development tasks for school district leaders.

Organizational Environment

An organizational environment is described as the motivational and cognitive processes that can work and become unconscious values among groups that dictate a setting's culture (Schein, 1984). Schein (1984) explained these processes can be repeated so many times that they do not need to be stated or thought about. Additionally, the Schein study found that a new leader coming into an organizational environment from outside of the system can uncover unconscious assumptions about relationships and daily behaviors by asking appropriate questions to a staff

member from inside the organization (Schein, 1984). Schein's (1984) study discovered that an organizational culture could develop strength over time as strong cultures typically consist of groups who are familiar with each other and have encountered challenges or situations that has bonded them. Elements of school cultures are created by learned solutions to a problem. Aligning with the study's findings, positive cultures consist of groups that have tried multiple viable solutions until they find one that works (Schein, 1984).

Two specific types of cultures are anxiety reducing and positive solution cultures. In an anxiety reducing culture, the group is trying to locate the cause or a factor that is inducing anxiety. Once located, that factor can be removed and avoided. In a problem-solving solution culture, the group finds an innovative solution that is more efficient or effective than the previous method. Moving from an anxiety reducing culture is difficult because it requires the leader to find the source of the anxiety and show the learner it does not exist or that an alternative form of avoidance is needed. The level of difficulty in trying to develop problem-solving skills amongst staff makes the avoidance reducing culture an easier choice than the problem-solving culture. This is why anxiety reducing actions are more prevalent in school environments. Identifying what culture is in place can be done by completing four steps: 1) analyze the process and content of socialization of new members, 2) analyze responses to critical incidents in the organization's history, 3) analyze beliefs, values, and assumptions about culture, and 4) jointly explore and analyze with insiders the anomalies or puzzling features observed or uncovered in interviews (Schein, 1984). The ability of a leader to accurately identify what paradigm the organization finds itself in can dictate the decisions important for the new administrator as they assume responsibilities for the organization.

A new leader along with the holdover staff have an opportunity to work together to develop a fresh culture and direction for the district. Leadership turnover can provide opportunities to bond staff resulting in the establishment of a certain type of culture. Henry et al. (2021) reported more support from educators in change initiatives and the direction of the building when teachers felt supported by the administration, had influence on policies at their schools, and maintained control of their instruction. The study also mentioned developing opportunities for collective work and engagement of teachers is important because teachers often look to fellow educators for instructional ideas (Henry et al., 2021). This study showcased the impact collective engagement from staff has in leading organizational change at varied levels of leadership levels in a school district.

Organizational Change

Organizational change is difficult and in some instances beyond the control of the leader (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2015). Organizational change is also systemic (Burke, 2018). The concept of change has been portrayed in a variety of ways, but in the book chapter by Swanson and Holton (2001), the authors cite multiple purposes to show the relationship between change, the individual, and their method of learning. Specifically, Swanson and Holton (2001) provided two core dimensions of change, incremental and transformational change, describing the amount of change that can happen in a setting. Incremental change describes small adjustments that do not cause a disruption. Transformational change, however, creates a substantial break from the norm such as the changing of a mission or vision statement (Swanson & Holton, 2001).

Burke (2018 comparatively explained incremental and transformation change in different terms, evolutionary and revolutionary. Revolutionary change, much like transformational change, deals with large scale change that affects all parts of the organization. Revolutionary

change can be experienced as a jolt in the organization, meaning it is suddenly felt throughout the system and nothing seems the same (Burke, 2018). Evolutionary change is the most common, occurring in 95% of all changes. Evolutionary change consists of adjustments used to fix problems or acclimatize to natural process changes (Burke, 2018). Any change that is not felt in the deeper context of an organization or fundamentally modifies an aspect of the system is considered evolutionary (Burke, 2018). Evolutionary changes occur because systems are open and living (Burke, 2018). An open system is dependent on its environment and has continuous interactions with it. Open systems gain their energy from the environment such as in the case of school funding and monetary resources (Burke, 2018). Schools get their funding through state governments and local tax bases, which requires the open system to change as required by the governing agencies. Change in an open system is dictated by many factors.

Nadler (1981) explains the obstacles (resistance, control, and power) that will be encountered when implementing change in an open system. Nadler (1981) describes a period known as the transition state that occurs between when a change is implemented, and the results are achieved. During a transition period, a plan should be developed, and a clear and consistent message communicated to the individuals or others involved in the organization. The leader determines whether change should be initiated and identifies whether staff are satisfied with the current state of the organization. The leader must also gain input from staff, and develop a reward system (Nadler, 1981). While this process is occurring, the leader should be mindful of the fact that some staff may need time to mourn the loss of the old system and ways of doing things. When leaders provide this time, it can aid in continued involvement from those in the organization and help promote a more successful transition between states (Nadler, 1981).

Burke and Litwin (1992) also examined the causal relationship between performance and change. Their findings emphasize the importance of team members knowing and understanding expectations related to their actions and organizational results. Empowerment and team member stimulation are the starting points for leadership to move their constituents to a level of feeling effective over time (Burke & Litwin, 1992). Oreg et al. (2011) found when change fails, it is often because managers or leaders are oblivious to the needs of the staff. Meaningful change is supported by trust and involvement of the staff in the organization (Oreg et al., 2011). The study conducted by Oreg et al. (2011) further substantiated that clear expectations and helping staff better understand the personal impact of a proposed change lessens the ambiguity of the process and puts the organization at ease (Oreg et al., 2011). Other reasons for failure in major changes to organizations occur because of a lack of urgency, inadequate formation of a core leadership group, lack of vision and communication of that vision to staff, absence of empowerment, missing rewards, inability to utilize the credibility gained from previous experiences, and not making newly formed approaches and strategies normal practices (Kotter, 1995).

Ford et al. (2008), noted reframing resistance to change as a tool that exists as part of the normal process can serve to engage people and deepen conversations, strengthen ideas and decisions, and increase staff engagement. Using resistance this way suggests that the change agent or leader must know their staff to navigate the natural challenges presented by change. Change is a regular occurrence in leadership, especially in schools. As superintendents began to lead in a new school district, it is imperative they understand the complexities and intricacies of leading change. The next section addresses transition characteristics affecting a leadership change.

Leadership Transition

Transitions can provide leaders with turbulence that they have not encountered in past undertakings (Riordan, 2008). Leaders navigating transitions in their career must be willing to be agile and show adaptability in learning new skills that lend themselves to success in their new roles. A common transition leaders face is the change in job/role (Riordan, 2008). Leaders face the choice to stay ahead, keep up, or fall behind. The levels that encompass the leader's ability to navigate a transition are determined by the leader's ability to manage inputs they face in the new environment (Riordan, 2008). Leaders can navigate transitions successfully when they change their attitude or way of thinking, develop the skills and competencies needed in the new environment, and change their behaviors (Riordan, 2008).

Transitions in environments experiencing high performance present a unique setting for leadership transition. These environments present a challenge because they have aspects that are worth preserving, results that need to be sustained, and relationships that need to remain intact (Christy, 2009). For organizations that are facing a leadership transition, the identification of those areas that need to be addressed should be at the top of the list in acknowledging who should be next as a leader (Christy, 2009). The model presented in this article encompasses the following steps: identify features worth saving, communication throughout the organization, building strong management teams, completing major tasks before the current leader departs, the recruiting of leaders, training those new leaders, and building social networks (Christy, 2009). These are not all the elements that can ease a transition, but they are important because they create a deeper knowledge of self within the organization (Christy, 2009). The model presented in this article encompasses a combination of communication, spreading of leadership, and a desire by all involved for the success of the organization.

For leaders transitioning into leadership roles from the outside of an organization, the transition can be difficult and has a risk of failure. In the article by Manderscheid and Ardichvili (2009), leaders entering a new environment have a higher risk of failure because of the needs required in a transition period. This outside transition is difficult and requires the leader to take more of an active approach in developing relationships with their employees. The outcome of the article was the development of a transition period model for new leaders and teams (Manderscheid & Ardichvili, 2009). The model consists of two levels. In the first level, the leader needs to manage impressions, seek feedback, and align expectations (Manderscheid & Ardichvili, 2009). Following this initial phase of action, communication between the new leader and their employees develops. The communication created is two-way and will aide in the development of managing stress and developing relationships, which make up the second phase (Manderscheid & Ardichvili, 2009). Transitioning into a new leadership role is a stressful situation and setting expectations and developing relationships can aid in lowering that stress and anxiety (Manderscheid & Ardichvili, 2009). Following this model can increase the likelihood of a successful transition, which would produce higher levels of team productivity, healthy relationships, and reduction in leader stress (Manderscheid & Ardichvili, 2009).

Research on Salient School District Characteristics

The research in the following sections contains identified characteristics relevant from the literature that established the criterion used to identify potential districts aligned to the purpose and intent of the study. These research areas included the choice of a rural or urban setting for the study, years of superintendent experience, tenure needed for a superintendent to have a positive impact on achievement and culture, aspects of community involvement, the number of and type of changes occurring in the district, and the size of the school district. Based

on the outlined studies in the sections below, the researcher determined the study will be conducted in a rural school district with an enrollment of 500 students or less, with documented community support. The outgoing or previous superintendent will need to have served in the district for five or more years prior to leaving the position and the incoming superintendent will have been in their position for no less than three years. The period examined will be during the first year of the incoming superintendent.

Rural School Districts

Research conducted in rural educational environments exemplifies the challenges faced by rural educators. The term rural is designated for communities that have a certain population size and density based on the most recent United States Census Bureau (Johnson et al., 2011). In an article by Preston and Barnes (2017), students attending school in rural schools made up 24% of the population. One third of the total number of schools in the United States were categorized as rural. There were multiple research articles that shared a rural student population figure, each was different, but similar in amount.

Showalter et al. (2019) detailed in "Why rural matters 2018 – 2019: The time is now" that rural education faces many challenges including inequities in per student spending, teacher salaries, reliance on local tax bases, obtaining adequate college preparatory programming, and widespread poverty. In addition to these challenges, diversity also extends to the rural school setting, creating both a challenge and an opportunity (McHenry-Sorber, 2019). Examining diversity in rural school districts, Greenough and Nelson (2015) divided the term rural into three sub-categories to show a relationship between level of diversity and level of isolation: remote, rural / distant, and rural fringe. In their study, they found that Native American students are five times as likely as White students to be in remote settings and Hispanic, Asian, and Black

students are five times less likely to be in remote and rural/distant schools (Greenough & Nelson, 2015). Their work also highlighted an important economic diversity finding: 57% of remote students, 49 % of distant students, and 39% of fringe students qualified for free or reduced food programs (Greenough & Nelson, 2015). Compounding the natural adversities that rural educational communities face is the lack of support from state agencies and governing bodies. The importance of this missing support is that it adds the duty of advocating for the superintendent in rural districts. In rural districts, there exists a threat of being overshadowed by larger districts. The need to advocate adds another complexity to the role of the rural superintendent.

Showalter et al. (2019) emphasized the challenges rural schools face is exacerbated by a focus directed towards urban school districts in most states. The dominance of attention to the plight of urban school districts in the United States has caused a lack of educational policy that contributes to closing the performance gap and resources that exist between rural and urban settings (Showalter et al., 2019). Despite the lack of attention from state agencies, an example of the potential academic progress in rural settings taken from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) 2018 – 2019 state assessment scores showcase rural students outscoring non-rural peers (McHenry-Sorber, 2019). The challenges that rural superintendents face in leading their districts can be factors related to student achievement and overall success. These factors can also be important in contributing to superintendent turnover and the level of involvement in community support.

Rural superintendents are challenged in several ways. Community support can help superintendents meet these challenges. Successful rural leadership was found to encompass people centered leadership along with aspects of leading change and being a change agent

(Preston & Barnes, 2017). Collaboration between community and rural school staff supported administration in these settings when trust between the community and the school existed. Trust also allowed curricular needs of the district to be better supported (Preston & Barnes, 2017). Considering the performance of students attending school in rural settings and the academic challenges faced by rural administrators, there was no evidence that these factors played a part in superintendent turnover in Kentucky school districts studied by Johnson et al. (2011). In these school districts, strong patterns supported a correlation between superintendent turnover and district demographics such as enrollment size and fiscal resources (Johnson et al., 2011). The study also showed there was not enough evidence to support a correlation between rural and non-rural school districts with regards to superintendent turnover (Johnson et al., 2011). The next section will elaborate on how the size of a district plays a role in the types of challenges experienced and resources available to rural schools.

School District Size

The size of school districts is a factor in the challenges faced by superintendents and the leadership characteristics they must employ. In a study of school districts in Texas, rural schools were found to struggle with obtaining the same levels of student achievement as the levels of student achievement obtained in larger school districts (Mann et al., 2013). Additionally, this study found medium size districts were similar in student achievement as their larger counterparts, but small rural districts faced the added challenge of creating rigor with limited resources (Mann et al., 2013). Mann et al. (2013) stated school districts that had more than 550 students and less than 1,500 students achieved comparable academic student success to that of larger school districts. The lower student population figure provided in Mann et al. (2013) is one

of the only studies citing a range of student population to delineate middle-sized districts and small districts.

In a similar study conducted in Alabama schools, the results showed that there was not a difference in many of the examined areas including school quality, financial indicators, and student performance on standardized exams between high schools in large and small districts in this state (Lindahl & Cain, 2012). One area where there was a difference was the qualifications of teachers. In larger school districts in Alabama, teachers taught in curriculum areas for which they were highly qualified at a higher rate than smaller schools. In smaller schools, teachers taught in content areas in which they were not highly qualified to maintain full time employment (Lindahl & Cain, 2012).

In smaller districts as opposed to larger districts, the research in one study shows smaller school districts are at an advantage in resources provided by strong parent and community involvement (Weiss et al., 2010). Larger school districts hold an advantage over smaller districts because of their ability to offer a wider range of extracurricular and curricular options to students (Weiss et al., 2010). Historically, there have been attempts by state governments to try and increase the size of school districts through consolidation. A study by Cooley and Floyd (2013) examined an attempt to consolidate small districts and form a larger, unified school district. The results of the study showed that when this occurred, per pupil expenditures increased and the achievement scores of the absorbing district dropped. Cooley and Floyd (2013) show the consequence of trying to group small community schools into larger physical facilities to save on resources. Rural schools must be resourceful and utilize community resources to meet varied needs.

School and Community Involvement

In rural settings, family involvement is an important factor in the success of the superintendent. Ferlazzo (2011) discussed the importance of community involvement through working with families to plan and create opportunities rather than taking a more directive approach that doesn't include family input into school and student processes. Distributing power to families creates ownership in schools (Ferlazzo, 2011). Family involvement through participation in extra activities or extracurricular events were found to promote more involvement, engagement, and enjoyment for families in new school events (Sanguiliano et al., 2019). Students also enjoyed the support from families surrounding the things they love to do (Sanguiliano et al., 2019). Perkins (2015) suggested community engagement and partnerships can have multiple meanings. Through a literature analysis, Perkins (2015) found that research shows community and school partnerships bring positive results to schools through increased access to resources, academic improvement, and an increased ability to meet student needs.

Freeman and Randolph (2013) examined strategies that work well in rural communities to promote success. The authors explained that more involvement from school leaders in community organizations resulted in higher amounts of morale and willingness to work together (Freeman & Randolph, 2013). The authors also recommended administrators in rural settings be visible in the community with an approachable demeanor. This increased opportunities for school administrators to work together with community members to generate opportunities or even respond proactively to diffuse situations (Freeman & Randolph, 2013). In a similar study, McHenry-Sorber and Budge (2018) found that the rural superintendent needs to be the bridge between the school and the community. In rural communities, building a line of communication

can be the difference in the superintendent being considered an insider or outsider to the community (McHenry-Sorber & Budge, 2018).

Superintendent Tenure

The length of a superintendent's tenure matters. Hart et al. (2019) found a correlation between student achievement and superintendent tenure. Their study showed superintendent tenure can play a part in increased student achievement, but there are other factors in school districts that should also be considered such as student demographics. Effective superintendent leadership also depends on a leader's ability to navigate the demands from state education agencies. Superintendents that had experience in the same state understood the laws and policies that contributed to higher achievement in their local district (Hart et al., 2019).

Waters and Marzano (2007) found superintendents can have an impact on student achievement by focusing on the following: 1) the goal setting process; 2) leadership in curriculum and instruction; 3) aligning the board of education with these goals; 4) monitoring progress towards defined goals; and 5) utilizing resources to encourage work towards established goals. The study also found that superintendent tenure does influence the level of student achievement in a district (Waters & Marzano, 2007). This research supports that an effective superintendent can positively affect the achievement of students the longer they stay in the school district (Waters & Marzano, 2007). Activities that led to a higher level of stability and achievement were goal setting, board of education support, monitoring progress towards goals, and ensuring materials and support were provided to the school staff (Waters & Marzano, 2007).

In a different study conducted by Simpson (2013), superintendents who served more than five years in a district led their respective districts to higher student performance and achievement scores than superintendents that were in their district less than five years. In a study

examining community initiatives, Scheffert (2007) found that positive results of community involvement by the superintendent could be seen as early as 18 months after their tenure began. Myers (2008) found superintendent tenure in Kansas did play a role in increasing student achievement. Those superintendents with longer tenures in their district had higher percentages of students scoring "Proficient" on the Kansas State Assessments (Myers, 2008). The study also showed a higher number of free and reduced students and an increase in student population led to a decrease in student performance (Myers, 2008).

Multiple factors can contribute to higher student achievement, including lower administrative turnover. Leadership turnover contributes to a decline in student achievement (Meyers et al., 2021). In the study by Meyers et al. (2021), data showed the difference between superintendent tenure length in achievement decline over two years as opposed to the rise of achievement over three years. The study also showed a correlation between improvement in achievement scores and effective matching of school districts and the leadership style of the superintendent.

Supporting achievement through accountability both from a leadership and teaching perspective can influence the success of students in a district. Decentralization is an idea that, when present, can allow for the follow through of initiatives in school districts as opposed to centralized control from the district office (Normore, 2004). Like decentralization, site-based management can also allow for the ownership in allocating resources and agreed upon practices (Normore, 2004). Success of initiatives has a higher rate when input and involvement of those impacted by decisions is present. Getting staff onboard can be challenging, but leadership behaviors that allow for and support active engagement and feedback from stakeholders can make a difference in retention and reducing turnover. This process requires a significant amount

of effort by the leader but has a positive impact on developing a culture that allows a focus on student learning and retaining staff, including leadership.

The pressure for superintendents to increase student achievement and lead positive change in school districts promotes necessary incentivizing for the position itself. In a study written by Ehrenberg et al. (1988), results showed that superintendent turnover is linked to compensation. The researchers further explain that school boards keep their superintendents longer if compensation issues are addressed (Ehrenberg et al., 1988).

A variety of factors can impact superintendent longevity. Tekniepe (2015) stated superintendent turnover was predictable by observing performance-related factors. Indicators pointing to early superintendent departures included lack of fiscal mismanagement, inability to successfully manage politically driven situations, and inability to predict and respond to important district functions and issues (Tekniepe, 2015). In a related study, findings support the importance of developing a plan before taking over a new superintendent position along with building relationships with the school community (Jones, 2012). A research study conducted by Dewey and Andrews (1985) further shows the importance of relationships by viewing school districts as open systems that can be affected by changes in the community. There is also a correlation between the decision-making authority granted to the superintendent by the board of education and environment turbulence (Dewey & Andrews, 1985). Like building relationships, Ripley et al. (2013) examined a superintendent's ability to build and utilize social capital. The research also showed that social capital in these situations dealt with the board of education, teachers' union, and the parent teacher organization (Ripley et al., 2013). Superintendents can accrue social capital by fulfilling obligations and expectations and utilizing effective informational channels (Ripley et al., 2013).

An important factor during the transition between superintendents can be the outgoing superintendent. The research by Davidson et al. (2021) shows outgoing superintendents can assist in the transition of the new superintendent by building supportive teams to aid the successor early in their tenure. In addition, superintendents appointed internally are more likely to have an established relationship with their outgoing superintendent (Davidson et al., 2021). Acknowledging the importance of relationship building, Nebgen's (1993) research emphasized the importance of a superintendent in understanding their environment. The incoming superintendent should spend time learning about the setting, their stakeholders, and their own leadership style (Nebgen, 1993). The study recommends a new superintendent consider making their office approachable for staff to convey a welcoming attitude and promote open communication (Nebgen, 1993). The outgoing superintendent can serve as an essential link in helping a new superintendent begin their leadership journey in a supportive atmosphere, by sharing important traditions and values, and by being available to assist in the transition as needed. The leadership provided by the superintendent can impact student performance along with establishing strong relationships with internal and external stakeholders that lead to longer tenure in the district.

Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire

The Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) is an instrument that measures a leader's ability to initiate structure and consider leadership behaviors (Hoy & Miskel, 2012). Initiating structure refers to any activity that includes establishing communication, relationship building between the leader and their stakeholders, and methods of procedure (Hoy & Miskel, 2012). Consideration measures leadership behaviors that include trust, warmth, respect, and friendship between the leader and their staff (Hoy & Miskel, 2012). The LBDQ was

first used in leadership studies at Ohio State University in the 1940's and the findings from the studies catapulted the LBDQ into the preferred choice of leadership study tools. Initiating structure and consideration are fundamental in leadership behavior as the most effective leaders perform at high levels in both areas. Those in leadership positions most often focus on initiating structure while staff typically place a higher regard on consideration. Perceptions of the leader and staff around the behaviors of the leader exist along with perceptions related to the performance of the leader (Hoy & Miskel, 2012). In a study by Mehdinezhad and Sardarzahi (2016), the authors validated that there is a difference between the way the leader views themselves and how the leader is viewed by staff when utilizing the LBDQ. In these situations, the study mentioned research-based documentation that leadership effectiveness is determined by the perceptions of the followers (Mehdinezhad & Sardarzahi, 2016). The LBDQ has further been validated as an effective tool in measuring the two areas of initiating structure and consideration, but the validation study suggests the need to consider the variations in leadership and environments along with the diversity in any situation that could skew the results derived from the LBDQ (Witta & Gupton, 1999). In a review by Sashkin (1979), the LBDQ was found to be frequently used, which has built an extensive database of examples of valid data available for comparison. The only concern that was mentioned was the length of the tool, but this was not a deterrent for its use in studies (Sashkin, 1979). The LBDQ is the tool that will be utilized in this research study to identify the observed superintendent's leadership behaviors of the new superintendent and the former superintendent. The data obtained from the LBDQ will be utilized along with observation and interview data to then determine alignment to existing leadership frameworks.

Leadership Frameworks

The following literature was selected and organized to best offer descriptions of leadership frameworks aligned to the purpose of the study. Transformational, servant, distributive, and adaptive leadership frameworks were grouped around leadership characteristics focused on the constituents and the leader's ability to serve and share ownership in district processes and goals (Anderson & Martin, 2009; Bowman, 2005; McClellan, 2009; Stone-Johnson, 2014; Zucker - Gardiner & Walker, 2009). The relationship between these leadership frameworks is that while the leader is at the center of the framework, a clear focus on shareholders exists. No matter the status of the school district's environment, the effectiveness of the staff depends on the leader. All four frameworks require the leader to be giving of themself and to focus on providing service to their constituents. The goal of each of these frameworks is to maximize the potential in staff to improve the district. The leader must exhibit characteristics and beliefs that allow them to lead and manage educational change with a focus on students and staff with a people-oriented approach.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership can change the culture of a school district, and this change comes from the transformational leader first learning about their environment and then developing their knowledge of the system by aligning current organizational processes with a vision for the future (Bass & Avolio, 1993). Transformational leaders are often characterized by four factors: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass & Avolio, 1993). Implementation of these four factors can be seen through creative insight, persistence and energy from the leader, intuition on what can motivate staff, and a sensitivity to what others need (Bass & Avolio, 1993). A leader who

identifies as a transformational leader can act as the “glue” between their vision of the organization and their building stakeholders. Bass and Avolio (1993) also shared transformational leaders aim towards growth rather than settling for the “status quo”. Specific to transformational leadership is the ability of the leader to guide their constituents in a way that will promote their needs. In an education setting, the support offered to constituents can be seen between the superintendent and principal as well as the principal and teacher relationships. Nir and Kranot (2006) examined the effect of principal leadership on personal teacher self-efficacy. The study found there was not a direct relationship between self-efficacy and the leadership of the principal (Nir & Kranot, 2006). Instead, Nir and Kranot (2006) found leadership had a direct influence on teacher job satisfaction. If the teacher’s satisfaction was high, it had a positive influence on the efficacy of teachers. The findings in the study also stated that transformational leaders do not necessarily affect the efficacy of an individual teacher, but through positively impacting job satisfaction, higher personal self-efficacy is achieved (Nir & Kranot, 2006).

According to Mullin and Keedy (1998), transformational leadership is effective in the school setting. The study found data to support the need for leaders to have a framework to lead their staff and understand the dynamics of existing stakeholders such as students and staff. The superintendent must be a scholar and have knowledge of current issues and trends and remain a visionary leader who is proactive (Mullin & Keedy, 1998). The result of transformational leadership is there is a positive effect on the organization as well as a positive impact on fulfilling the professional ambitions of school staff.

Learning is an important factor in developing a transformative culture. Schools that contain continuous acquisition of knowledge are known as learning schools, which are defined as schools in which the leader facilitates the continuous learning of adults (Alangolu & Karabatak,

2021). In this study, transformational leadership was evident in the schools included in the meta-analysis. As the leader articulated and carried out an agreed upon vision, the role of the leader matured from being involved in the work to facilitator of the learning and work. Alanagolu and Karabatak (2022) also found that as the transformation continued, educators took on the duty of maintaining that culture and assisted each other in continued professional growth. The process of learning moving from administrative emphasis to staff ownership is attributed to the role of the leader being at the service of the school staff.

A variation of transformational leadership, responsible leadership is a leadership that encourages its leaders to fill four roles: visionary, steward, servant, and citizen (Stone-Johnson, 2014). Stone-Johnson (2014) defines the four roles a leader may take:

> As a visionary, a leader involves stakeholders in the process of future thinking. As a steward, a leader acts as a defender of the organization's most precious resources, including its vision and its relationships. As a servant, a leader develops a vision that aligns with stakeholder needs and goals. Finally, the citizen acts as an integral part of the community who is committed not only to business matters but to civic matters as well. (p. 649)

Responsible leadership gives the leader a framework to weave relationships that increase building performance and benefit all stakeholders (Stone-Johnson, 2014). The stronger the relationships, the stronger the culture will be. A drawback to this model is the potential to view this form of leadership as primarily leader driven, but it is important for the organization and its stakeholders to look at this model not from the perspective of who is leading, but instead from the viewpoint of what is leading the organization (Stone-Johnson, 2014).

Servant Leadership

Another form of leadership built around the leader's role as facilitator is servant leadership. The model of servant leadership is built on the idea to serve first and lead second (Bowman, 2005). Serving their constituents first, a servant leader focuses on developing relationships and learning about their followers. Building a collective vision for both faculty and students is at the forefront of this model. Through collaboration, a servant leader can place individuals in positions where they will be able to succeed and thrive in an environment that capitalizes on their individual strength, which in turn will help the group (Bowman, 2005). Bowman (2005) also shares servant leadership is a way to empower and unite teaching staff, offering teachers an opportunity to lead. Anderson and Martin (2009) examined a case study of a district leader utilizing servant leadership and found that the utilization of servant leadership required the superintendent to attend to more than the typical duties of budgeting and handling issues. The superintendent in this study went beyond traditional roles, which impacted the staff they served. The study showed that staff rated the superintendent highest in providing and sharing leadership (Anderson & Martin, 2009). A staff member shared during the Anderson and Martin (2009) study:

> I wouldn't be the person I am had [Superintendent] not been around. Just personally, [Superintendent] has continued to put people first and that has encouraged me because I feel the same way, that people should come before programs or test scores or the bureaucracy of the things we must do. We've got to take care of people first, whether it be our faculty or our kids. (pp. 200-201)

Servant leadership emphasizes service over the other facets that can pull leaders away from working directly with their constituents. Another form of servant leadership that has been

studied is transcendent leadership. Transcendent leadership expounds on the idea of servant leadership through a focus on surpassing personal interests and instead serving others (McClellan, 2009). Keeping the term transcending in mind, the servant leader moves from doing to identifying as a servant to their constituents. Zucker-Gardiner and Walker (2009) stated consciousness and awareness are behaviors that must be developed for a leader to transcend their current level of wholeness. Additionally, transcendent servant leadership keeps the "big picture" in focus, while using data to find solutions and create an environment where everyone wins. Servant leadership, like other leadership theories, is focused on genuinely serving others, but at the crux of servant leadership is the individual leader developing a mindfulness of their surroundings and purpose. In the following section, distributive leadership will be discussed as an additional leadership theory framework.

Distributive Leadership

At the crux of distributive leadership, the leader delegates responsibilities and equips staff with the skills to manage obstacles themselves. In action, this theory highlights the leader sharing their control. According to a study conducted by DeMarco and Gutmore (2021), there is a positive correlation between distributed leadership, school culture, and teacher self-efficacy. Leaders share the ownership of policy and management at a base level and help others be involved in better understanding foundational issues and more effectively prioritizing their work. This approach develops and supports a positive climate that can improve staff and student performance (DeMarco & Gutmore, 2021).

A study by Camburn and Han (2009) found that prior studies of distributed leadership led to mixed results, but in their study, the authors found that distributed leadership works better when the teaching staff have resources and guiding frameworks from existing programs to direct

and support their work. Similarly, Harris (2002) identified the need for leaders operating in a distributed leadership style to include teaching staff in each step of implementing a recommended change to increase the level of support and offer opportunities for clear communication during implementation. Examining the scope of research surrounding distributive leadership, Tian et al. (2016) conducted a meta-analysis of literature spanning 2002 to 2013 to examine whether research had addressed gaps in knowledge found originally in another meta-analysis pre-2002. Previous examination of research identified the need to define the components and application of distributive leadership more clearly (Tian et al., 2016). Tian et al. (2016) in their meta-analysis, found some information had been gathered to clarify these issues, but sufficient evidence was still lacking to offer a clear picture of distributed leadership. These findings support the idea that distributive leadership needs to have parameters to support staff when staff is given increased responsibility for certain aspects of the organization.

Mayrowetz (2008) studied the variety of ways that distributed leadership is being utilized in the professional arena. The study concluded that distributed leadership can be found in four uses: theoretical, democratic, efficiency and effectiveness, and human capacity building. Theoretical use of distributed leadership occurs in the scholarly environment as a tool to explain events. The democratic form of distributed leadership describes settings in which leadership is not in the hands of a sole individual, but instead spread amongst several members of the organization (Mayrowetz, 2008). An efficient and effective example of distributed leadership can be identified as giving ownership of certain organizational aspects to non-administrative staff that have expertise in a certain area such as academic coaches or lead teachers. The final form of distributed leadership concerns human capacity building and is the act of developing staff members to increase their capacity within the environment (Mayrowetz, 2008). An additional

report conducted by Abbott et al. (2007) studied and collected data from districts that effectively utilized distributed leadership. The districts included in the study had expectations for shared leadership, a democratic environment amongst staff, and leaders who were comfortable with site-based leadership rather than a top-down managerial approach (Abbott et al., 2007). Settings using distributive leadership demonstrated effective communication, modeling of expectations, empowerment for the development of internal leaders, and support for staff (Abbott et al., 2007).

Distributive leadership has been found to be successful in a variety of environments. Aimee Sulit's study (2020) gathered data that supports the assumption that distributed leadership can increase teacher retention. Supporting the idea of teacher retention, Cansoy (2019) examined multiple leadership frameworks and found distributed leadership to employ certain characteristics that can be predictors of job satisfaction. His study identified the skills of flexibility, healthy and open communication, and collaborative participation as leading to staff satisfaction (Cansoy, 2019). A positive work environment for teaching staff can create conditions that allow leaders to implement ideas and initiatives more easily. An example of that ease came during the Boren et al. (2021) study which observed building leaders with a shared leadership style. These principals were more successful than those that relied on a top-down approach. An important factor in implementing a distributive approach noted by Bjork and Blasé (2009) included managing micropolitics in a more decentralized leadership approach in a school district. The inclusion of principals to ensure effective implementation in these studies provided successful examples of distributive leadership and highlighted the importance of principal involvement in areas they shared and delegated to staff to ensure appropriate levels of guidance were provided.

Administrative perceptions play a role in effective distributive leadership. Brunner (1998) showed that it is important for superintendents to perceive power as shared with or given to staff. The more district leaders viewed power this way, the better they were able to carry out collaboration and work effectively with others (Brunner, 1998). To further explore the concept of collaboration, Kamrath (2015) found superintendents and staff members surveyed in the study viewed collaboration differently. The superintendents thought they were collaborating and building a strong community of shared leadership, but the surveyed staff felt that too much collaboration was a sign of a superintendent who had issues making decisions. The researchers cautioned that utilizing too much collaboration or approaching every situation with a collaborative process may indeed lead to unexpected responses or results. Superintendents who provided opportunities to educate teachers and staff about the rationale for decisions as part of a collaborative approach had more positive reactions to decisions that they made (Kamrath, 2015).

Communicating the why as one facilitates shared ownership is needed in effective implementation of a distributive model of leadership. In addition to communication, Filippi and Hackmann (2019) examined the role of the district leader in establishing a focus on student learning and best practice and found that being visible and accessible to staff is important. The researchers stressed the importance of being involved in the classroom and building relationships with school staff and community stakeholders as vital (Filippi & Hackmann, 2019). The superintendent's leadership behaviors are an important factor in a district's focus on teaching and learning. The superintendent should strive to establish themselves as an instructional leader while allowing ownership and involvement of teachers throughout the district (Filippi & Hackmann, 2019). In a related study, West et al. (2014) highlighted the differences between two superintendent leadership styles, oppressive and relaxed. In this study, the former superintendent

was deemed oppressive, and the successive superintendent was viewed as relaxed by staff. The relaxed leadership approach relieved stress from the principal perspective, but the effects on achievement when leading with a relaxed approach affected academic results (West et al., 2014). The previous superintendent was perceived as being involved, although not as comfortable to be around versus the new superintendent being perceived as approachable with a lesser focus on accountability (West et al., 2014). Distributive leadership requires the leader to find a level of involvement that works for staff in addressing technical problems and working together towards solutions. In the next section, adaptive leadership will be explored as the final leadership framework.

Adaptive Leadership

Superintendents encounter challenges during their tenure that do not have apparent solutions. Problems without an obvious answer are known as adaptive problems. Adaptive issues are not defined, are complex, and demand multiple perspectives that require dialogue (Squires, 2008). Adaptive leadership is a form of leadership that consists of observing, interpreting, and intervening (Heifitz et al., 2009). Adaptive problems, such as those during crisis, require leadership to leverage positive opportunities and manage the negatives (Hemmer & Eiliffin, 2020). Superintendents meet these types of ambiguous challenges or times of crisis by prioritizing safety and relying on established processes and procedures. Leaders observed in crisis situations use past experiences and routines to help them through crises initially, which also lead to the development of unconventional strategies to solve problems (Hemmer & Eiliffin, 2020). Adaptive issues test leadership but can also lead to rapid development of ideas by leaders facing difficult situations (Hemmer & Eiliffin, 2020).

In circumstances that require adaptation, leaders can learn through assimilation and accommodation (Glover, 2002). Accommodation occurs when a leader learns experientially as opposed to assimilation, which is learning through taking in information such as lectures and discussions. When learning is low in both assimilation and accommodation, the organization can find itself caught in maladaptive cultural traps. Organizations that stay in a maladaptive cultural setting do not see a need for change and are unlikely to last or thrive over time (Glover, 2002). In addition, cultural predispositions can be a factor in the leader's ability to react and lead adaptively (Glover, 2002). A leader's ability to move beyond cultural influence provides opportunities to be open to a wider array of ideas, experiences, and methods of leading and managing challenges (Glover, 2002). Adaptive leadership separates itself from distributive leadership because it is meant to develop a collaborative culture and work around team members' area of expertise (Squires, 2008). Leadership utilizing adaptive methods aims to explore new solutions through energizing and motivating followers while developing shared purposes and values (Squires, 2008).

The four frameworks described during this section of the literature review were transformational leadership, servant leadership, distributive leadership, and adaptive leadership. A similarity between these frameworks is their focus on the betterment of the constituents served by school district leaders. Each framework has unique behavioral characteristics that appear in situational experiences, but they all are built around empowering staff. The difference between these frameworks is the approach of the leader in working towards and achieving the goal to empower others. Each of these frameworks will be important in describing the experiences and behaviors of the superintendents examined in this study.

Summary

The literature in Chapter 2 focuses on organizational theory, important district characteristics related to the dissertation study, and leadership frameworks that contribute to understanding the leadership behaviors of superintendents. The size, location, and leadership history of school districts are important factors that help define research related to superintendent leadership and that serve to inform this study. The leadership frameworks of transformational, servant, distributive, and adaptive are unique but related through common characteristics of the leader sharing and empowering others, facilitating processes to allow participation and ownership in decision-making, and allowing staff to collaboratively work towards agreed-upon goals. The literature review serves to inform the study. Chapter 3 presents the methodology and describes the actions of the researcher to collect and analyze the data.

Chapter 3 - Research Study Process and Methods

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine the transition from a long-serving superintendent to an incoming superintendent through the lens of leadership behaviors and how specific behaviors and congruence of behaviors across the two leaders influence the transition. To facilitate the process, the study identified the leadership framework(s) most closely aligned to the leadership behaviors of the outgoing and incoming superintendent as perceived by both the leaders and others with whom they work. A convergent mixed methods (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) design provided the structure for the investigation.

Research Questions

This research study answered the following question and sub questions:

- How, and in what ways, is the transition from a long-serving superintendent to a recently hired superintendent in a Midwestern rural school district influenced by the leadership behaviors exhibited by each?
    - What leadership framework(s) best characterizes the leadership behaviors of the long-serving outgoing superintendent?
    - What leadership framework(s) best characterizes the leadership behaviors of the recently hired incoming superintendent?
    - In what ways and to what extent was the transition influenced by leadership characteristics of the outgoing superintendent, leadership characteristics of the incoming superintendent, and congruence/alignment between them?

Diffusion of innovations provided the theoretical framework for the research study. The use of this theory allowed the researcher to follow the communication that occurs when new

ideas are spread through an organization. Next, case study research methods were used during the data generating and analysis phases. The researcher used criterion-based purposeful sampling to select the school district and participants for the study. An in-depth explanation of the data collection tools and data analysis is included in the following sections and contain descriptions of each individual process and the audience it is meant to serve.

Subjectivity Statement

The researcher had 14 years of experience as an educator and educational leader. These years of experience spanned across urban, suburban, and rural settings. Classroom experience for the researcher was spread across regular education classrooms and special education environments. Upon leaving the classroom, the researcher spent time working as a building administrator and eventually moved to the district level serving as a director supervising several departments, including special education. The researcher first had experience working with the studied school district as a part of his administrative role in special education. After six years as a special education administrator, the researcher assumed the position of superintendent in a district with similarities to the size and rural location of the observed district. The researcher had a background in administration.

The inquiry process was attentive to these experiences as both assets, in terms of background knowledge and professional experiences that can aid in interpretation of data and challenges, along with how the researcher's experiences shape and color perceptions. The goal was to maximize the contribution of the assets while minimizing the interposition of the challenges. Toward that end, the researcher employed connoisseurship (Eisner, 1976) to leverage professional experiences to enhance the empirical inquiry, while using standard quality controls

and techniques (e.g., triangulation, member checks, negative case analysis) to mediate potential bias and enhance credibility and trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Tracy, 2010).

Diffusion of Innovations Theory

The theoretical framework guiding this research came from the Diffusion of Innovations Theory by Everett M. Rogers (2003). The theory is broken down into two parts: diffusion and communication. Diffusion pertains to the communication of new ideas and how they travel in a social system (Rogers, 2003). Communication represents the sharing of ideas between individuals in the system (Rogers, 2003). A factor that made this theory applicable to this study is tied to the purpose of the research. There is a level of uncertainty that comes with new ideas or methods employed by a new superintendent as they assume responsibility for a school district after a long-serving superintendent. Communication also plays a critical role during this transition as the superintendent bridges between what stakeholders have been used to and how they choose to respond and begin to pave their own path. This theory supported the investigation of the focus inherent in this work. In addition, diffusion can also be viewed as a form of social change (Rogers, 2003). The social change examined in this research study is differing expectations and communication approaches between superintendents.

Case Study

The method used to conduct the study, generate, and interpret the data will be based on case study principles that involved data collection consisting of interviews, observations, and historical documents (Stake, 1995). For this study, the researcher utilized interviews and observations to generate the necessary data to make comparisons to the leadership frameworks. Data sources can be used in any combination and can be interpreted through triangulation, which is the collection of multiple forms of data examining the same problem (Corbin & Strauss,

2008). Triangulation of data for the research study was derived from a group of stakeholders for each superintendent, the previous superintendent, and new superintendent from several investigative approaches. Data focused on the perceptions of a small group of stakeholders and from the leaders themselves on leadership behaviors utilized in the school district setting. The analysis of data depended on the quality of information gleaned from the collection methods used in the study. Observations and interviews that do not provide a researcher with the material needed to generate codes can cause lulls in progress.

Coding and memo writing were used to analyze the data collected from these varied sources and are presented to the reader as a case study. Observations were used in the data collection process, which is an integral part of conducting a case study (Stake, 1995). The observations consisted of viewing the new superintendent after their first 90 days (about three months) in the district interacting with staff in multiple arenas to gauge their leadership behaviors. Utilization of a case study allowed the researcher to ensure that all facets of the district were considered when observing and studying the identified educational environment and the transition between the superintendents. The depth of information gained about a specific environment is critical when utilizing case study research methods.

Pilot Study

During the pilot study for this dissertation, respondents were selected from school districts with a high school enrollment of seven hundred and fifty students or less. The selected superintendent participants' backgrounds varied in that one was hired outside of the district, while the other superintendent was promoted from within, thus spending their entire career in the district. In attempting to answer the questions asked during the pilot study interview, the superintendent who was promoted from within, did not have much to elaborate on because of

their longevity and previous experiences and knowledge of the district. The other superintendent had previous experience as a superintendent and could reflect on these experiences as they considered their current leadership position. The ability to call upon previous leadership experiences allowed for rich answers and insight into why decisions were made and the considerations that guided the interaction and solutions for the superintendent hired outside of the district.

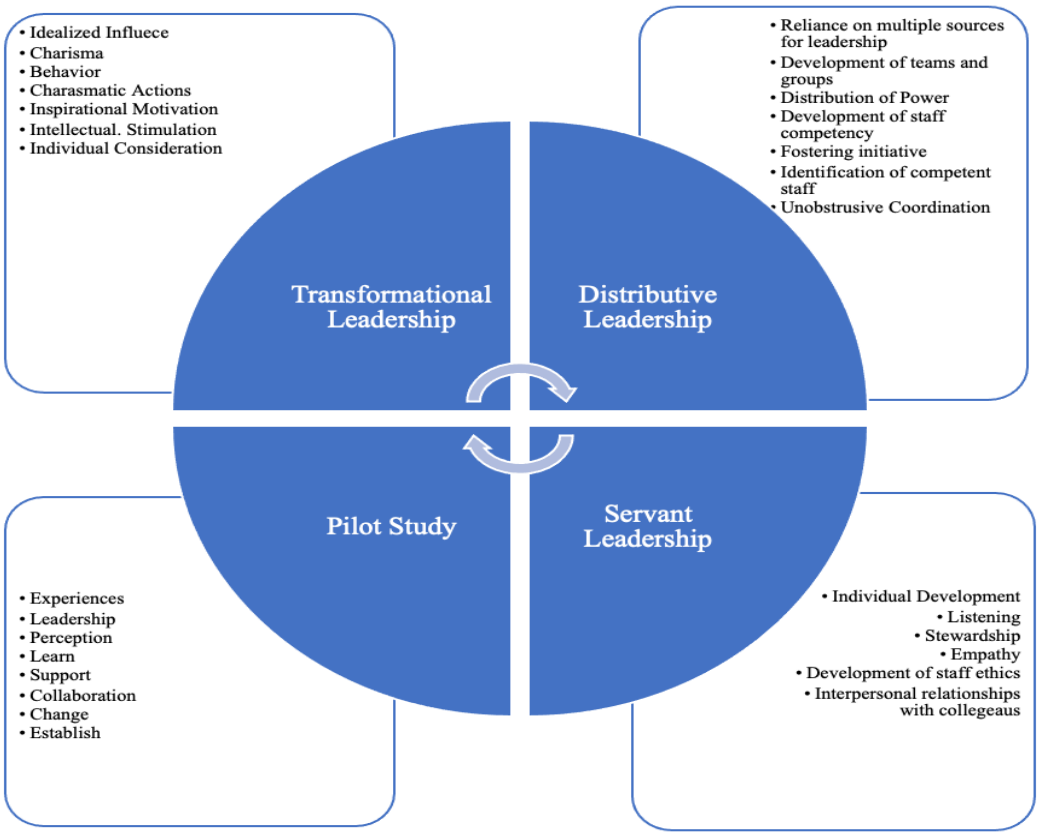
Using the interview process during the pilot study as a guide, the answers to the questions below provided information allowing the researcher to realize that the questions were not directed deeply enough at the issues. The following research questions were used during the pilot study interview:

- *Describe the state of the district when you became the superintendent.*
- *Describe the methods and processes you used to measure the effectiveness and performance of the district.*
- *Describe the specific tools you used to assess the district's performance level.*
- *Describe the decision-making process that you employed in the determination of how to move the district forward.*
- *Describe your level of knowledge of the KSDE District Leadership framework and how much of that knowledge dictated your decision on how to lead the district.*
- *Describe the considerations that were included in the decision-making process for the direction of the district.*
- *Based on your district's current state today, describe the decisions you would make differently in deciding the style of leadership you chose to utilize in your district.*

Reflecting on the pilot study interview process, the questions lacked the depth needed to flush out the specific answers needed to provide responses to the questions. The researcher could infer what the responses to the questions were based on participant responses, but the organization and development of the questions needed to be modified. The visual representation of data from the pilot study in Figure 3-1 allowed for an initial comparison between established leadership frameworks versus what was collected from the interviews with the selected pilot study superintendents. During the interview phase of the pilot study, both superintendents conveyed that they did not enter their respective districts with preconceived planning, instead, they entered with an observational approach. The pilot study characteristics are not clear, which is a result of the interview questions lacking focus and depth. The researcher found that moving forward, the interview questions used in the pilot study needed refinement and needed to be constructed to gather deeper levels of information. The researcher also added adaptive leadership to the compiled list of compared leadership frameworks after the pilot study concluded.

Figure 3-1

Comparison of Leadership Frameworks



Sampling

The subsections below describe how the participants were selected using criterion-based purposeful sampling. The criterion-based purposeful sampling model was utilized in this study to select a site with the specific characteristics aligned to the purpose of the study and its investigative methods, but not specific enough to be limiting (Suri, 2011). The criterion used to determine the sampling focused on a typical case and included consideration of the length of the long-serving superintendent's tenure and experience in the district as well as the reason for leaving the district. In this case, the departure from the district was retirement. These criteria helped establish the selection of a district considered to have stable leadership. The typical case can be described as an effective superintendent retiring from their post and the position being filled by an experienced superintendent tasked with leading the district through the transition of leadership. Selecting a new superintendent with experience allowed the superintendent to reflect on their leadership behaviors and practices and the reasons why they chose to lead the way they did during the transition period.

Study Site

The district selected for the research study possessed the needed characteristics to observe and collect data around the leadership behaviors of the long-serving superintendent and the new superintendent during the transition period. The number of enrolled high school students in the district for the research study was 300 or less and was classified as a 1A school district. Based on the experience from the pilot study, the researcher purposefully selected a smaller school district because the superintendent is knowledgeable about the day-to-day operations. A smaller school district requires the superintendent to be involved in multiple aspects and they have the ability to interact with the entire district. The identified district qualified as rural

according to the classification in the United States Census. The selected school district site was in a rural community having the same superintendent for 16 years. The outgoing superintendent had retired from the district after serving as a teacher, principal, and superintendent for a total of over 30 years in the district. This leader had provided leadership for the district through statewide initiatives and dilemmas involving student performance and finances. The programs instituted by the former superintendent still exist. The former superintendent had served most of their career in the examined district.

Participants

The research study selected one long-serving superintendent from one school district. This participant served solely as superintendent in the district and did not carry dual role responsibilities. The new superintendent selected to participate in the study assumed responsibilities in July of the designated year in which the study was conducted and had previous superintendent experience serving as superintendent in at least one other mid-western state school district. The selection of participants for this study revolved around a superintendent who had previous experience yet only had duties assigned as a superintendent. The selected district had a superintendent who was retiring from the district after 16 years of service. The board of education hired a superintendent with five years of experience in another superintendency. The studied district was selected based on meeting each of the determined study criteria and had a proximity to the researcher that would allow for frequent access to interviewees and opportunities for observations. Each of the superintendent participants, outgoing superintendent (see Appendix A) and incoming superintendent (see Appendix B), received a written letter of invitation and consent to participate in the study. Both the outgoing and incoming superintendents selected a group of four to ten stakeholders of their choice to participate in the

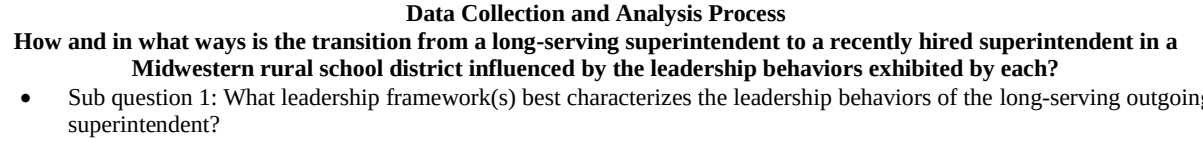
study based on criterion set by the researcher. This criterion included having knowledge of the selected superintendent's leadership style and representing various roles in the district (i.e., board of education member, administrator, teacher, parent, business or community member, classified staff). The outgoing superintendents selected stakeholders presented an interesting finding. There was only one stakeholder who had worked with the outgoing superintendent recently. In the case of the three other stakeholders, they had not worked with the outgoing superintendent for approximately five years. The incoming superintendent stakeholder group had recency but lacked longevity. Taking this into account, the researcher reviewed the recommended stakeholders from each of the superintendents' lists and selected four to six participants to be part of the research study. The superintendents shared their initial preference of stakeholders from the provided list. Those individuals were contacted first by the researcher. Each member of the stakeholder group selected for the study also received a letter of invitation and consent (see Appendix C). The researcher did not need to ask either superintendent for additional stakeholder names as the initial selection achieved at least four stakeholders willing to participate in the study. The LBDQ instrument guidelines recommended a participant group size of four to ten individuals.

Data Collection

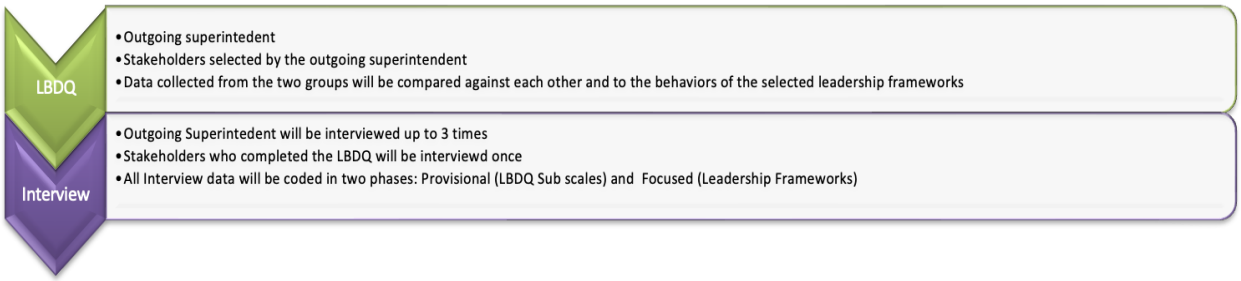
The data collection methods used for the research were interviews, observations, and the facilitation of the LBDQ. Figure 3-2 represents the process that the researcher followed in collecting and analyzing the data during the research study.

Figure 3-2

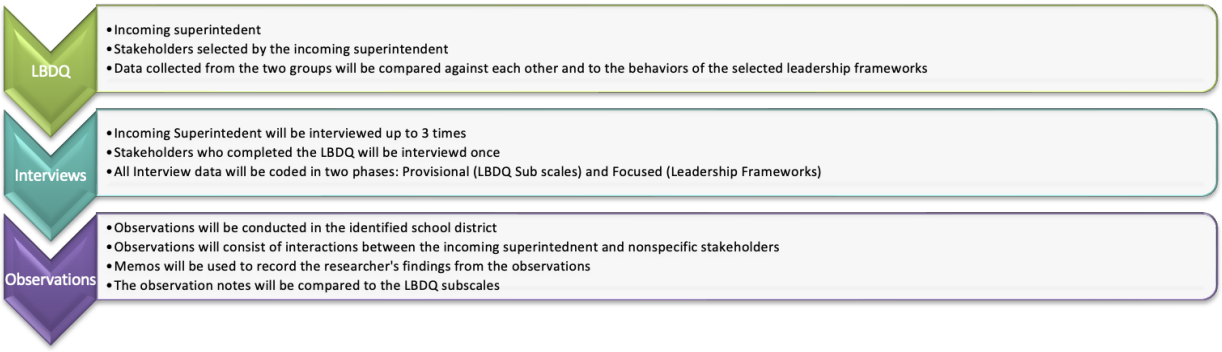
Data Collection and Analysis Process



- Outgoing superintendent data will be collected first due to the individual no longer being in that leadership role and to ensure recollections from the superintendent and stakeholders are as accurate as possible.



- Sub question 2: What leadership framework(s) best characterizes the leadership behaviors of the recently hired incoming superintendent?
    - Incoming superintendent LBDQ and interviews will be done second allowing for more interaction between the incoming superintendent and the stakeholders to have occurred.



- Sub question 3: In what ways and to what extent was the transition influenced by leadership characteristics of the outgoing superintendent, leadership characteristics of the incoming superintendent, and

congruence/alignment between them?

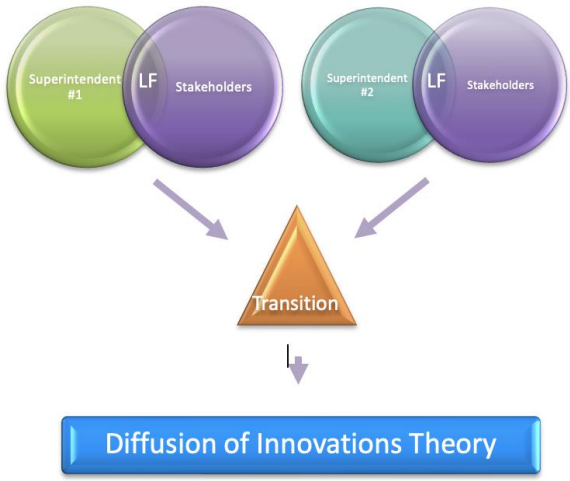


Figure 3-2 shows the steps taken by the researcher to address the research question and each of the sub questions in the study. Sub question 1 and 2 entailed similar processes with the difference being the use of observations of the incoming superintendent. There was no purpose or need to observe the outgoing superintendent. The researcher began the data collection process with the outgoing superintendent. The reason for this order ensured memories and recollections of the outgoing superintendent to not become clouded with too much time passing and allowed the incoming superintendent at least 90 days to transition into the district. The outgoing superintendent was contacted and signed permission to participate in the study and selected their represented stakeholders. Once these tasks had been completed, the stakeholders were contacted to seek their permission to participate in the study. The outgoing superintendent was asked to come up with four to ten staff member names in the event someone would decline. The outgoing superintendent was the first to take part in the LBDQ and was interviewed once by the researcher. Next, the identified stakeholders completed the LBDQ and their interviews. The interviews were transcribed, coded, and LBDQ's were scored to give the researcher further information to complete the remaining interview with the outgoing superintendent at the end of

the study. Once this portion had been completed, the same process was followed with the incoming superintendent and their stakeholders. Following the completion of the interviews and surveys, the researcher began observations of the new superintendent. The placement of observations at the end was purposeful to allow the researcher an opportunity to identify important leadership behaviors in the actual setting. The incoming superintendent also participated in a final interview with the researcher. Sub question 3 compared the data collected for both the outgoing and incoming superintendents to assess the effect of their leadership behaviors during the transition. The transition was also examined through the lens of Diffusion of Innovations Theory.

Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire

The LBDQ was administered to both the outgoing superintendent and the incoming superintendent. The LBDQ was administered to the incoming superintendent after their first 90 days in the office. Permission to use the LBDQ was granted to the researcher through The Ohio State University (see Appendix D). Stakeholders selected by both the long-serving and new superintendent also completed the LBDQ. The outgoing and incoming leaders were asked to aid in the selection of the individuals who they felt knew them best. Therefore, the LBDQ provided data from the outgoing superintendent, selected stakeholders for the outgoing and incoming superintendent, and the incoming superintendent to gain perceptions about leadership behaviors. Prior to administering the LBDQ, the researcher conducted a self-cognitive lab using the LBDQ tool. This allowed the researcher to think out loud as they answered the LBDQ and to check for understanding of the subscale terms and definitions as referred to in the LBDQ. The researcher was able to provide advance clarification for terms or definitions that needed clarification to participants by observing this process.

To score the LBDQ, the researcher had to transfer the selections of the participants on the LBDQ to the record sheet. The subscale scores acquired from the individual stakeholders remained as individual data. Once the scores had been transferred to the score sheet, they could be added together, and the sum of the subscale signified the level of the respondent behavior as described by the subscale. It was important to note the LBDQ was administered prior to the interviews conducted with the incoming superintendent, long-serving superintendent, and the selected stakeholder groups. This allowed the researcher to use the interviews as a type of member checking to better interpret and understand the ratings achieved in the LBDQ surveys. The results of the LBDQ were compared with existing data from other research to gain insight on possible trend comparisons across studies. For this study, the results were not used to compare the former and current superintendent. The subscales (see Appendix E) were used as a guide for the researcher during the interviews and the observations.

Interviews

Using interviewing to generate data allowed the researcher to experience the conversation. By the end of transcribing the interviews, the researcher had listened to the recorded interviews multiple times. Data analysis is interpretive (Corbin & and Strauss, 2008). The researcher was the translator of the respondents' words and actions (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The researcher remained flexible, while staying open to the various stories told and illustrated during interviews.

For the interviews conducted in this research study, the researcher formatted questions by utilizing the subcategories from the LBDQ. The purpose of this research study was to gain insight as to what leadership behaviors were exhibited by the outgoing superintendent and the incoming superintendent during the leadership transition. The outgoing superintendent was

interviewed two times using slightly different questions geared around their leadership (see Appendix F). The incoming superintendent was interviewed two times to collect data to answer the research question and sub question (see Appendix G). The questions that were asked during interviews with stakeholders (see Appendix H) were meant to gather information on the behaviors of both the outgoing and incoming superintendent. The stakeholder group was interviewed once on their perceptions of the superintendent who selected them. The researcher conducted interviews face-to-face and using the Zoom virtual platform depending on the preference of the superintendent and individual stakeholder. The answers were recorded along with memos being taken during the interview. The recordings were transcribed, and both the recordings and memos were examined in the coding process specifically looking for language directly related to the leadership frameworks identified and referred to in the literature review.

Observation

After the initial 90-day transition period, the researcher visited the school district and observed meetings and activities involving the incoming superintendent. These observations were used to assess what was currently happening in the district, to take field notes to gauge the level of cooperation between staff and the new superintendent, and informally assess interactions with stakeholders to reflect on the leadership behaviors of the incoming superintendent. The goal of the observations was to allow the researcher to take field notes to better understand the setting. The researcher focused on leadership behaviors and practices of the new superintendent while observing in the rural school district setting. The success of the leader was not measured. Using existing frameworks from distributive, transformational, servant, and adaptive leadership, the researcher observed and collected data on these observed experiences in relation to the alignment with the above-mentioned leadership frameworks. The purpose of the observations was to

identify situations and provide examples of leadership behaviors of the incoming superintendent. The interactions used for observations varied in length and purpose and the criteria for observations was simply to witness the superintendent's interactions and involvement with district staff and patrons. Observations were dictated by both the schedule of the researcher and the accessibility of and permission of the new superintendent.

Data Management and Analysis

The information gathered from the interviews was coded. Following the directive from Bryant (2019), it is important for doctoral researchers to not be apprehensive about the coding process and to move quickly during it. This advice moved the researcher to engage in data analysis and helped the researcher maintain closeness to the data. Provisional coding was used during the first phase of the coding process to identify LBDQ subscale language from the interview transcripts. The second phase consisted of focused coding of the statements that were collected during the first phase of coding and then linked those statements to behaviors associated with the leadership frameworks.

First Cycle Coding

For this study, the researcher utilized provisional coding because the researcher had identified leadership behavior terms to isolate the data. Provisional coding is also known as *a priori* coding (Saldaña, 2021). The leadership behaviors identified in the interviews drove the first phase of coding. Key words and phrases were those that related to leadership behaviors in the LBDQ subscales.

Second Cycle Coding

Focused coding was utilized during the second phase and was effective in organizing the data and codes developed to this point in the process (Saldaña, 2021). Focused coding allowed

the researcher to select the most common or frequent categories mentioned and make decisions on the categories for the remainder of the study (Saldaña, 2021). In this case, the researcher grouped all the leadership behavior terms identified during the first phase of coding from the interviews and linked them to the leadership frameworks best aligned based on the action words. The words were then compared to the identified leadership framework categories for research development and identified what leadership behaviors were most found in this case study. The provisional coding to the leadership frameworks in the second cycle coding process generated thematic organization of the data typical to qualitative research. The focused coding method gave the researcher the ability to further organize their work and focus directly on the identified parts of the superintendent leadership transition process.

Observation Memos

The use of memo writing is described as fundamental in grounded theory research (Lempert, 2007). Memo writing from the observations was utilized throughout the data analysis process and specifically used when reviewing field notes from the observations to keep the researcher connected with the data. Through this connection, the researcher was able to find patterns, sort, analyze, and code data. The use of memos provided a product to examine that portrayed the internal conversation of the researcher as they interacted with the data. Early in the observation process, memos lacked connection, but as the process continued, memos were sorted and constructed in a coherent pattern (Lempert, 2007). The memos in this process were developed from directional to in-depth ideas constructed from immersion in the data. The coding tools used for this phase of data management and analysis for the study are represented in Appendix I.

Data Representation

The data representation used for this study presented the prominent leadership frameworks used by school district leaders to describe how an incoming superintendent in a rural school district leads following a long-serving superintendent. By the end of data analysis, the incoming superintendent's experiences were viewable through the development of characteristics cycled through multiple coding methods. The identified behaviors were compared to existing behaviors belonging to transformational, servant, distributive, and adaptive leadership frameworks using a graphic similar to the pilot study but updated and aligned more closely to behaviors for each of the frameworks (see Appendix J).

Data representation occurred through a comparison and contrast approach to assess any differences between leadership frameworks that represented alignment to the leadership behaviors derived from the data in this study and that best explained the transition of the superintendents. If differences existed, the behaviors were categorized as a unique leadership framework. Only one example was coded to a unique leadership framework. The researcher attempted to best understand the prominent subscale ratings from the LBDQ, the alignment of the second cycle interview coding with the four leadership frameworks and analyzed how the LBDQ data and coded interview data intersected to determine the most representative leadership framework(s) or unique framework that best described the leadership behaviors exhibited by the superintendents during transition. The researcher intended to learn more about how the data from the LBDQ and the qualitative data from the interviews and observations intersected. The interpretations of the researcher did not warrant any adjustments to the initial crosswalk of the LBDQ and the four leadership frameworks based on the data derived from the study (see Appendix K).

Ethics

The research study was submitted through the Kansas State Institutional Review Board (IRB). Upon approval by the IRB, ethical considerations for the study included the treatment of participants and their contributions to the study. Acknowledging the possible existing relationship between the participants and researcher based on exposure in various professional capacities was important to ensure that the participants were treated in a manner that protected their identity and contributions. Participants remained anonymous and were given pseudonyms for anything written during the research or data collection process. District names and other identifiable information were also changed. District non-identifying information such as enrollment and staff numbers remained the same and were not changed. Upon completion of the study, interview transcripts and any other materials were stored for three years and at the end of that term will be deleted from the researcher's computer along with any specialized program used during the data collection and analysis portions of the process. Recording from devices used during the interview portions were also deleted and no copies of the interviews were kept following the required three-year period. Ethics in relation to the guidelines of grounded theory stress the importance of the researcher's responsibility to exhaustively examine all literature to ensure that the research added to the scholarship already in existence in the field of educational leadership (Charmaz, 2014). The researcher spent dedicated time in reviewing and synthesizing related literature along with necessary time in sorting and analyzing the data and subsequent determination of themes to ensure saturation. The researcher, with certainty, ensured the uniqueness of the scope of this research and offers reassurance that the study was conducted with an ethical and professional approach.

Trustworthiness and Credibility

The standards of quality for this dissertation had been established to maintain an exemplary level by basing them off the eight criteria explained in Tracy's "Qualitative quality: Eight "Big-Tent" criteria for excellent qualitative research" (2010). The first criteria used to assess the quality of this study was the determination of whether this was a worthy topic. To be considered a worthy topic, the study must be relevant, timely, significant, and interesting (Tracy, 2010). The topic for the research study met these criteria because the research topic lacked an abundance of research. The second standard that needed to be met is the topic must be considered rich in rigor. To achieve this standard, the study must of an abundance of time in the field, theoretical constructs, and data collection processes (Tracy, 2010). The research study was aligned to four leadership frameworks commonly referred to in research journals. The researcher utilized a variety of data collection and analysis methods to ensure the data collected was valid and allowed for the coding of a unique leadership style outside of the four leadership frameworks selected for review. A thorough process allowed the researcher to draw conclusions from the findings. Sincerity, the ability of the researcher to remain transparent and reflexive was the third measure (Tracy, 2010). The researcher was forthcoming about his involvement in professional settings with the selected participants. The researcher had also been purposeful in the explanation of the methods used and why those decisions were made. The study met the fourth requirement of credibility because data triangulation was employed, and the researcher outlined actionable steps for transparency (Tracy, 2010). The fifth requirement, resonance, had been met through the transferability of the findings to other settings with similar situations. The findings of the research contributed to understanding leadership behaviors of superintendents involved in transitioning a district and a field of research lacking data and existing research. This satisfied

the significant contribution requirement (Tracy, 2010). Ethics, the seventh of the criteria, was appeased through the consideration given to the professional relationship existing between the identified members of the study and the researcher (Tracy, 2010). Finally, the study displayed meaningful coherence through the completion of the stated dissertation study purpose (Tracy, 2010).

In addition to Tracy's (2010) quality control measures, tentative interpretations were tested using recommended techniques for promoting trustworthiness and credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Triangulation was used to corroborate the data collected in this mixed methods study by collecting data from multiple sources including the LBDQ, interviews, and observations (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). The use of triangulation allowed the researcher to check his work and compare it to data collected from both a qualitative method and a quantitative method lens (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). The use of observations as part of the triangulation process was appropriate because of the lack of knowledge surrounding the subject being studied (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Using multiple sources of data could result in contradictory data being collected. In this situation, the researcher was mindful of his use of negative case study analysis and understood the potential of contradiction among the stakeholders and the superintendents. Negative case analysis had the ability to create deeper connections to the respondents and the data collected (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). To prevent misinformation, the researcher employed member checking through discussion of the previous interviews and follow up on transcripts generating questions (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). It was important to the researcher that the information collected was accurate.

Summary

Using the stated purpose and research questions, the researcher studied a selected school district's past and present leadership to find answers to the study's research questions. Tracy's (2010) qualitative criteria served as a guide to achieve a high standard of work using a methodological approach generated from constructivist grounded theory. The setting studied was determined by criterion-based purposeful sampling. The data collection methods were the implementation of the LBDQ, interviews, and observations. The data was analyzed using coding, memos, a record sheet to determine the ratings from the LBDQ, and a comparison to existing leadership frameworks. Data collected and analyzed was portrayed in a case study format. The researcher had established a process that ensured ethical work and practices to provide accurate study results.

Chapter 4 - Research Study Results

Introduction

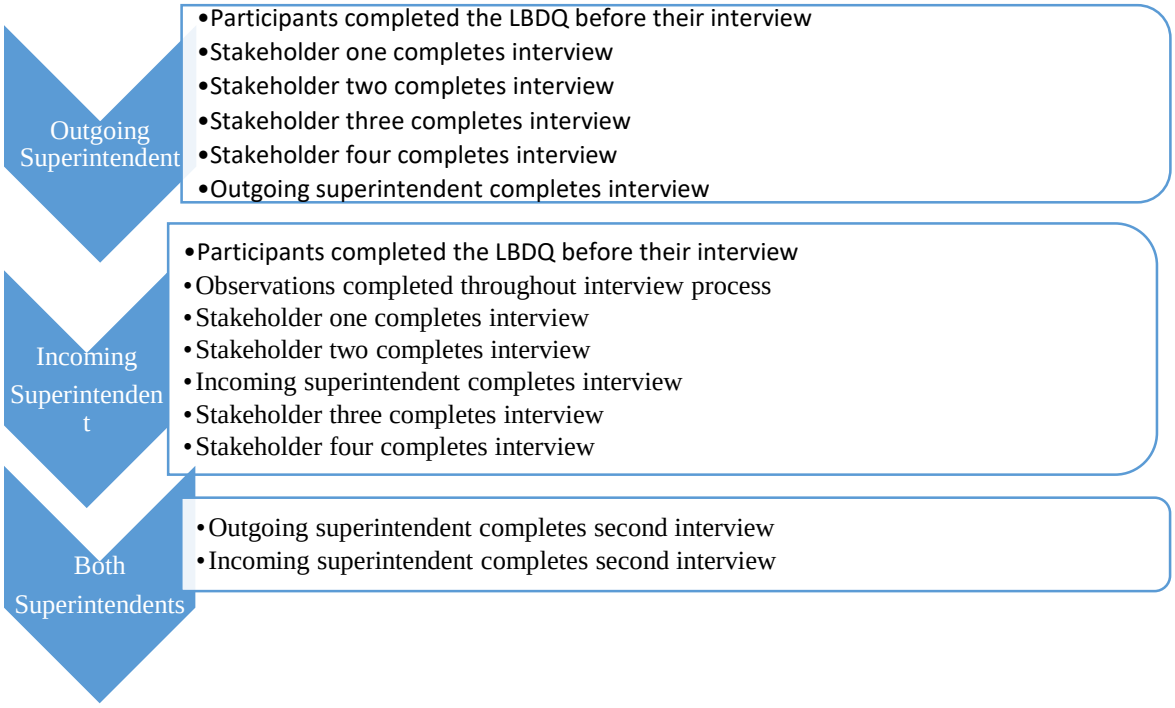
In Chapter 4, an overview of the research study results highlighting the data collected and analyzed for each individual superintendent and the selected stakeholders will be shared. The results are organized by the order of the research questions. The first section will address the first research question pertaining to the outgoing superintendent LBDQ data, interview data, and the cumulative results. The second section will address research question two and the results as they apply to the incoming superintendent. This section will also include LBDQ data, interview data, observations, and cumulative results. The final section will consist of results relevant to research question three describing the influences that both superintendent leadership behaviors had on the transition.

Study Overview

The results from the analysis of data from the outgoing and incoming superintendents and their respective stakeholder groups are presented below. The data collected in the study using the LBDQ was compared to data from a study by Mehdinezhad and Sardarzahi (2016) utilizing the LBDQ. The comparison showed that the results collected in this study aligns similarly to the results collected in the study by Mehdinezhad and Sardarzahi (2016). Figure 4-1 details the order of the data collection for the outgoing superintendent and stakeholder groups, the incoming superintendent, and stakeholders, and second interviews conducted with the outgoing and incoming superintendents. Each participant completed the LBDQ before their interview was conducted. The presentation of the results in chapter four follows this same sequence.

Figure 4-1

Data Collection Process



Data was collected first from the outgoing superintendent and stakeholder group members. The data collection process for the outgoing superintendent took one month to complete due to varying schedule demands. The first interview focused on the details the outgoing superintendent took to prepare the district for their departure. With the outgoing superintendent's help, the list of potential stakeholders was narrowed to stakeholders who had worked with the outgoing superintendent the longest. Only one of the selected stakeholders was still serving in the district at the time of the data collection process.

The incoming superintendent group was not surveyed or interviewed until the outgoing superintendent and stakeholder group data collection process was finished. This data collection process took two and a half weeks to complete. The first interview for the incoming superintendent focused on their leadership and behavior style. The incoming superintendent

supplied a list of four stakeholder candidates. Each of these individuals worked in the district and held leadership positions. Incoming superintendent stakeholders also reviewed the interview questions before the interview, and some took notes to help them provide more detailed answers to the questions during the interview. Unlike the outgoing superintendent group, the incoming superintendent group required reassurance of the confidentiality practices of the study and that the purpose of the study was not to find issues, but to assess the transition and not the new superintendent's effectiveness. Each time this was stated during the interview, the participants seemed to be more willing to share openly.

The final portion of the results presented in chapter four answers research question three, which is focused on the effects each superintendent's behaviors had on the transition. In this section, the second interview results are included for each superintendent which were conducted at the conclusion of the research study. Two interviews for each superintendent provided sufficient results for the study. For the second and final round of interviews, the outgoing superintendent was interviewed first followed by the incoming superintendent. The second interview for both superintendents focused on the transition. The order for the following sections and tables will begin with the outgoing superintendent and end with the incoming superintendent.

Outgoing Superintendent Data Collection

Identified stakeholders for the outgoing superintendent data collection process consisted of individuals who had served the school district in classified, certified, and volunteer roles. Only one of the stakeholders still worked for the school district in which the study took place. The purpose of the data collection process was to collect data to find an answer to the research

question: What leadership framework(s) best characterizes the leadership behaviors of the long-serving outgoing superintendent?

The results are displayed starting with the outgoing superintendent and followed by each individual stakeholder. The data collection process consisting of the LBDQ survey and interview was conducted individually with each stakeholder. Therefore, the results are presented from each individual perspective. The LBDQ results are contained in tables and each subscale was calculated to show the percentage of points that the participant assigned to each subscale. The significance of this percentage is only to interpret the number of points assigned to each subscale. The higher the percentage, the stronger the connection to the outgoing superintendent behavior and that specific subscale behavior. The interview data will follow the LBDQ data table in each section, which follows the same order of the data collection process.

Outgoing Superintendent LBDQ Results

The LBDQ results from the outgoing superintendent's individual LBDQ survey are presented in Table 4-1. The results included in Table 4-1 are the point total allotted by the outgoing superintendent for each subscale and the percentage of points allotted out of the total available points. The percentage of each subscale represents the amount of subscale behaviors recorded by the participant. A higher percentage represents the subscale behaviors frequently used. Table 4-1 also includes a description of each subscale.

Table 4-1

Outgoing Superintendent LBDQ Results

1. Representation (Speaks and acts as representative of the group) – **21 out of 25 (84%)**	7. Role Assumption (Actively exercises the leadership role rather than surrendering it to others) – **38 out of 50 (76%)**
2. Demand Reconciliation (Reconciles conflicting demands and reduces disorder to system) –	8. Consideration regards the comfort, well-being, status, and contributions of followers) –

18 out of 25 (72%)	**39 out 50 (78%)**
3. Tolerance of Uncertainty (Able to tolerate uncertainty and postponement without anxiety or upset) – **34 out 50 (68%)**	9. Production Emphasis (Applies pressure for productive output) – **29 out of 50 (58%)**
4. Persuasiveness (Uses persuasion and argument effectively; exhibits strong convictions) – **38 out of 50 (76%)**	10. Predictive Accuracy (Exhibits foresight and ability to predict outcome accurately) – **20 out 25 (80%)**
5. Initiation of Structure (Clearly defines own role, and lets followers know what is expected) – **38 out of 50 (76%)**	11. Integration (Maintains a closely knit organization; resolves intermember conflicts) – **19 out of 50 (76%)**
6. Tolerance and Freedom (Allows followers scope for initiative, decision, and action) – **39 out of 50 (78%)**	12. Superior Orientation (Maintains cordial relations with supervisors; has influence with them; is striving for higher status) – **37 out of 50 (74%)**

The percentages from the outgoing superintendent on the survey are lower than the totals from the individual stakeholders. The outgoing superintendent scored highest on their self-assessment in the categories of representation, predictive accuracy, role assumption, persuasiveness, initiation of structure, integration, and tolerance and freedom. There are more than five categories because some of them received the same percentages.

Outgoing Superintendent LBDQ Results and Leadership Frameworks

Each subscale was assigned to a leadership framework based on their similarities to behaviors associated within each leadership framework. Based on research of each LBDQ subscale and leadership framework, it was observed that the behaviors belonging to specific LBDQ subscales could also be observed in specific leadership frameworks. The shared behaviors between LBDQ subscales and the leadership frameworks was compiled into a chart (see Appendix K) and used to connect results from the LBDQ and the interviews to the transformational, servant, distributive, and adaptive leadership frameworks. Based on that tool,

the outgoing superintendent's LBDQ data shows the outgoing superintendent utilized behaviors in each of the leadership frameworks. Transformational and distributive leadership frameworks resulted in the highest number of occurrences amongst the four leadership frameworks.

Outgoing Superintendent First Interview

First Cycle Coding.

The first cycle coding method used for all participants in the research study was provisional coding or *a priori* coding (Saldaña, 2021). Key words and phrases from the interview transcripts that represented LBDQ subscales were identified during this phase. After the first cycle coding, the outgoing superintendent's interview transcripts exhibited traits on nine out of twelve subscales. Those subscales included representation, demand reconciliation, persuasiveness, initiation of structure, role assumption, consideration, production emphasis, integration, and superior orientation. Throughout the interview, the outgoing superintendent spoke about communication and relationships that they had forged during their tenure in the district. These relationships had also developed with entities outside of the district resulting in positions held with outside organizations. This superintendent was well known throughout the state and spoke of instances of communication between legislators, education leaders, and other superintendents. These examples led to the finding that representation was a behavior trait they exhibited. The outgoing superintendent shared experiences as an early career educator which provided evidence of demand reconciliation behaviors when faced with increased work from outside pressures. Recognizing the work and accomplishments of staff was something that the superintendent had done on a frequent basis during their career. This resulted in the selection of consideration as a behavior that the leader had exhibited during their career. Communication was referred to multiple times during the interview with the outgoing superintendent. As the outgoing

superintendent talked about communication, they spoke about work advocating for their district with state legislators, which led to marking persuasiveness as a leadership behavior. Persuasiveness could also be found in experiences in negotiations and bond issue elections. The superintendent shared they did delegate tasks but mentioned they were always present during projects and kept in close communication with project managers. The subscale selected was initiation of structure because of the proximity that the superintendent kept with others when they were working on building projects. This proximity allowed the superintendent to stay in close contact to gauge productivity. This focus and stated habits also made a strong case for the selection of production emphasis and role assumption. When asked how they would characterize the district during their tenure, the superintendent agreed with the phrase "close knit". The superintendent said that there had been very little turnover during his tenure and that led to trust amongst school staff. His ability to stay connected with staff also helped to solve any internal staff conflicts, which is a characteristic of integration. Finally, the outgoing superintendent stated that they had a good relationship with the board of education. They shared disagreements happened, but the respect between the leadership groups enabled them to move forward. The superintendent did not state a desire to advance to another position outside of the district, but the strong relationship between superintendent and the board of education exemplified the leadership characteristic of superior orientation.

Second Cycle Coding.

Focused coding was used for the second cycle of coding for each participant during this study. The purpose of this cycle was to identify the leadership framework that encompassed the LBDQ subscale behaviors from the first cycle of coding. The results from the second coding cycle showed that the leadership behaviors the superintendent had utilized most closely aligned

to the transformational and distributive leadership frameworks. To find the relationship between the LBDQ subscales and four leadership frameworks, the definitions of the LBDQ subscales were compared to key words and phrases for each framework. To be coded as transformational leadership, the outgoing superintendent could have shown traits in representation, tolerance of uncertainty, persuasiveness, tolerance of freedom, role assumption, production emphasis, and predictive accuracy. The outgoing superintendent described behaviors belonging to representation, persuasiveness, role assumption, and production emphasis. Therefore, the superintendent scored higher in the distributive leadership framework. To qualify for that framework, the superintendent would have to show behavior traits in the following subscales: reconciliation, persuasiveness, initiation of structure, production emphasis, predictive accuracy, and integration. The outgoing superintendent described behaviors in all those subscales except predictive accuracy. There were subscale behaviors that led to scoring in all four frameworks, but distributive leadership was the dominating framework followed closely by transformational leadership.

Stakeholder One LBDQ Results

The LBDQ results from stakeholder one's individual LBDQ survey is presented in Table 4-2. The results included in Table 4-2 are the point total allotted by stakeholder one for each subscale and the percentage of points allotted out of the total available points. The percentage of each subscale represents the amount of subscale behaviors observed by the participant. A higher percentage represents those subscale behaviors being frequently observed. Table 4-2 includes a description of each subscale.

Table 4-2

Stakeholder One LBDQ Results

1. Representation (Speaks and acts as representative of the group) – **23 out of 25 (92%)**	7. Role Assumption (Actively exercises the leadership role rather than surrendering it to others) – **42 out of 50 (84%)**
2. Demand Reconciliation (Reconciles conflicting demands and reduces disorder to system) – **25 out of 25 (100%)**	8. Consideration regards the comfort, well-being, status, and contributions of followers) – **39 out of 50 (78%)**
3. Tolerance of Uncertainty (Able to tolerate uncertainty and postponement without anxiety or upset) – **43 out of 50 (86%)**	9. Production Emphasis (Applies pressure for productive output) – **38 out of 50 (76%)**
4. Persuasiveness (Uses persuasion and argument effectively; exhibits strong convictions) – **44 out of 50 (88%)**	10. Predictive Accuracy (Exhibits foresight and ability to predict outcome accurately) – **22 out of 25 (88%)**
5. Initiation of Structure (Clearly defines own role, and lets followers know what is expected) – **48 out of 50 (96%)**	11. Integration (Maintains a closely knit organization; resolves intermember conflicts) – **24 out of 25 (96%)**
6. Tolerance and Freedom (Allows followers scope for initiative, decision, and action) – **44 out of 50 (88%)**	12. Superior Orientation (Maintains cordial relations with supervisors; has influence with them; is striving for higher status) – **43 out of 50 (86%)**

Stakeholder one identified representation, demand reconciliation, persuasiveness, initiation of structure, tolerance and freedom, predictive accuracy, and integration as the top subscales in the behaviors of the outgoing superintendent. The participant's percentages were much higher than the outgoing superintendent rated themselves, but in addition, stakeholder one felt they observed a variety of behaviors based on the numbers.

Stakeholder One LBDQ Results and Leadership Frameworks

Stakeholder one's LBDQ data identified behaviors belonging to transformational leadership and distributive leadership higher in occurrence than servant or adaptive. One

subscale that contained behaviors found in distributive leadership frameworks is the initiation of structure. The outgoing superintendent established parameters allowing their stakeholders to take on duties and reach results with minimal support.

Stakeholder One Interview Results

First Cycle Coding.

Stakeholder one shared early on during the interview they had many experiences with the outgoing superintendent. The outgoing superintendent had been a factor in the startup of stakeholder one's career and had given them many opportunities to advance their career. Both individuals still stay connected, and the outgoing superintendent was viewed as a mentor to stakeholder one. During the interview, stakeholder one was complimentary of the behaviors that the outgoing superintendent exhibited during their time working together.

During the first cycle of coding, the results showed that stakeholder one identified the same sub scale behaviors as the outgoing superintendent. As with the outgoing superintendent's interview, communication and transparency were identified as two fundamentals of his leadership from the perspective of stakeholder one. Stakeholder one stated that there was a clear direction, and they knew what was expected of them based on frequent conversations with the outgoing superintendent. Stakeholder one said they had autonomy to lead their constituents, but the outgoing superintendent was there to offer support or address challenges that came up. Stakeholder one and the outgoing superintendent had built a relationship of openness and trust, attributed to prior experience working for the outgoing superintendent.

Second Cycle Coding.

Since the subscales were the same from the outgoing superintendent and stakeholder one interviews, the second cycle coding process was not as intensive. It was clear that stories and

recollections exemplified the outgoing superintendent utilized behaviors that could be related to all four frameworks, but transformational leadership and distributive leadership were predominant. During parts of the interview discussing the outgoing superintendent's ability to share ownership in decisions with their stakeholders, the responses from stakeholder one showed the superintendent utilized multiple leadership frameworks depending on the person and situation. In this instance, when dealing with tasks that effected more than stakeholder one, the outgoing superintendent utilized distributive leadership as evidenced by the parameters and expectations established by the outgoing superintendent before sending stakeholder one out to lead their building. In an individual setting, the outgoing superintendent utilized transformational leadership through mentoring and reflection on stakeholder one's performance. The transformational leadership traits, as shared by stakeholder one, portrayed the outgoing superintendent as a mentor and a close professional colleague.

Stakeholder Two LBDQ Results

The LBDQ results from stakeholder two's individual LBDQ survey are presented in Table 4-3. The results included in Table 4-3 are the point total allotted by stakeholder two for each subscale and the percentage of points allotted out of the total available points. The percentage of each subscale represents the amount of subscale behaviors observed by the participant. A higher percentage represents those subscale behaviors frequently observed. Table 4-3 includes a description of each subscale.

Table 4-3

Stakeholder Two LBDQ Results

1. Representation (Speaks and acts as representative of the group) – **23 out of 25 (92%)**	7. Role Assumption (Actively exercises the leadership role rather than surrendering it to others) – **38 out of 50 (76%)**
2. Demand Reconciliation (Reconciles conflicting demands and reduces disorder to system) – **21 out of 25 (84%)**	8. Consideration regards the comfort, well-being, status, and contributions of followers) – **47 out of 50 (94%)**
3. Tolerance of Uncertainty (Able to tolerate uncertainty and postponement without anxiety or upset) – **37 out of 50 (74%)**	9. Production Emphasis (Applies pressure for productive output) – **42 out of 50 (84%)**
4. Persuasiveness (Uses persuasion and argument effectively; exhibits strong convictions) – **45 out of 50 (90%)**	10. Predictive Accuracy (Exhibits foresight and ability to predict outcome accurately) – **21 out of 25 (84%)**
5. Initiation of Structure (Clearly defines own role, and lets followers know what is expected) – **47 out of 50 (94%)**	11. Integration (Maintains a closely knit organization; resolves intermember conflicts) – **22 out of 25 (88%)**
6. Tolerance and Freedom (Allows followers scope for initiative, decision, and action) – **43 out of 50 (86%)**	12. Superior Orientation (Maintains cordial relations with supervisors; has influence with them; is striving for higher status) – **47 out of 50 (94%)**

Stakeholder two's LBDQ results are the first occurrence of superior orientation being rated as a top five category. Superior orientation is described as maintaining cordial relations and influence with superiors and striving for higher status. The percentage of Initiation of structure was again rated as one of the higher subscales in the LBDQ by this stakeholder. Stakeholder two also identified the outgoing superintendent as exhibiting behaviors in the representation subscale.

Stakeholder Two LBDQ Results and Leadership Frameworks

The superior orientation subscale was not identified as having any relationship to the four identified leadership frameworks, so it was assigned the category of unique leadership

framework. Another difference in leadership framework results was that adaptive leadership was not identified once during this stakeholder's LBDQ results. Holding constant with the previous LBDQ results, transformational leadership and distributive leadership were the highest rated categories for the outgoing superintendent. Initiation of structure and representation were frequently observed and are representative of transformational and distributive leadership.

Stakeholder Two Interview Results

First Cycle Coding.

Stakeholder two and the outgoing superintendent had a long-standing relationship as both served in their respective positions for an extended period. Stakeholder two, based on their position, was not privy to the day-to-day operations, but was aware of the direction of the district, policy decisions, and management of large-scale projects. Stakeholder two was present for in-depth conversations that occurred over the years that affected the community both in and out of the school. This individual also witnessed the outgoing superintendent's ability to manage communication within and outside of the school environment on topics such as finance and policy.

Like the previous interviews, there was consistency within the first cycle coding results, between the outgoing superintendent and stakeholder two. For stakeholder two, although from a differing perspective, responses contained wording such as trust, communication, and transparency. Stakeholder two had shared the aforementioned traits were built over time as both individuals had navigated situations where they had to rely on each other and spent a lot of time working together. Due to the dynamics of the position stakeholder two held, they mentioned more behaviors relating to the subscale of integration. Stakeholder two mentioned that the outgoing superintendent spent time communicating in the community to ensure messages were

clear. They also stated the outgoing superintendent focused on sharing information to aid in decision making. Stakeholder two mentioned times when the outgoing superintendent had to navigate individuals who had agendas that were not in line with the direction of the outgoing superintendent, but those instances were met with the outgoing superintendent addressing the concerns on an individual basis. The outgoing superintendent did not let these situations fester even though they were not rectified every time.

Second cycle coding.

Transformational leadership and distributive leadership were the predominant factors from second cycle coding. Integration, frequently mentioned in this interview, showed that in this relationship, the outgoing superintendent utilized traits that fell within servant leadership. The interview with stakeholder two was evidence again that the outgoing superintendent varied the behaviors they used by individual situations.

Stakeholder Three LBDQ Results

The LBDQ results from stakeholder three's individual LBDQ survey are presented in Table 4-4. The results included in Table 4-4 are the point total allotted by stakeholder three for each subscale and the percentage of points allotted out of the total available points. The percentage of each subscale represents the amount of subscale behaviors observed by the participant. A higher percentage represents those subscale behaviors being frequently observed. Table 4-4 includes a description of each subscale.

Table 4-4

Stakeholder Three LBDQ Results

1. Representation (Speaks and acts as representative of the group) – **22 out of 25 (88%)**	7. Role Assumption (Actively exercises the leadership role rather than surrendering it to others) – **41 out of 50 (82%)**
2. Demand Reconciliation (Reconciles conflicting demands and reduces disorder to system) – **23 out of 25 (92%)**	8. Consideration regards the comfort, well-being, status, and contributions of followers) – **46 out of 50 (92%)**
3. Tolerance of Uncertainty (Able to tolerate uncertainty and postponement without anxiety or upset) – **39 out of 50 (78%)**	9. Production Emphasis (Applies pressure for productive output) – **33 out of 50 (66%)**
4. Persuasiveness (Uses persuasion and argument effectively; exhibits strong convictions) – **45 out of 50 (90%)**	10. Predictive Accuracy (Exhibits foresight and ability to predict outcome accurately) – **22 out of 25 (88%)**
5. Initiation of Structure (Clearly defines own role, and lets followers know what is expected) – **44 out of 50 (88%)**	11. Integration (Maintains a closely knit organization; resolves intermember conflicts) – **25 out of 25 (100%)**
6. Tolerance and Freedom (Allows followers scope for initiative, decision, and action) – **45 out of 50 (90%)**	12. Superior Orientation (Maintains cordial relations with supervisors; has influence with them; is striving for higher status) – **42 out of 50 (84%)**

Stakeholder three's LBDQ percentages identified new perspectives in the data not encountered from previous stakeholder results. Stakeholder three described the outgoing superintendent's behavior in their interview. The data follows that description. The outgoing superintendent was perceived to be a leader who worked to keep a close-knit organization. Stakeholder three scored integration at a high percentage.

Stakeholder Three LBDQ Results and Leadership Frameworks

Stakeholder three specifically labeled the outgoing superintendent's leadership as servant during the interview and the results from the LBDQ highlighted a higher amount of servant

leadership behaviors than transformational. The other high scoring category was distributive leadership. The subscale of integration falls into both servant and distributive leadership. This relationship exists because of the leader's emphasis on management of individuals in servant leadership and multiple groups working together in distributive leadership. To achieve results in a distributive leadership model, it is important to keep the system working cohesively.

Stakeholder Three Interview Results

First Cycle Coding.

The relationship between stakeholder three and the outgoing superintendent had been built over time much like the previous two stakeholders. Stakeholder three had served in the district as an educator for an extended period. They spent time working with the superintendent during their time as a teacher, principal, and superintendent. This individual had the ability to observe the professional growth of the superintendent. Stakeholder three said that the first thing they noticed was the growth in the outgoing superintendent's temperament. They commented that the outgoing superintendent had developed the skills necessary for decision-making at the executive leader level. However, stakeholder three appreciated that the superintendent never forgot where they started from.

The same subscales were selected from the LBDQ, but like stakeholder two, integration and consideration were predominant in the accounts of their experience with the outgoing superintendent. Living in the same community meant that stakeholder three had opportunities to observe the outgoing superintendent in coaching and roles within the community. Stakeholder three stated it was evident that the outgoing superintendent was mindful of the needs of teachers in the buildings and acknowledged the important work of teachers and contributions of staff. If needs arose, the outgoing superintendent responded by addressing any challenges or obstacles.

One specific instance of this was during negotiations. The outgoing superintendent was clear about the district's position and resources and the options available to staff, and never withheld information. Stakeholder three felt that the outgoing superintendent was cognizant of the teaching staff's needs and worked to find solutions to allow them to be their best. Stakeholder three was also aware of times when the superintendent had to handle difficult staffing situations but stated that this was something the superintendent was willing to do. Stakeholder three felt that the environment was stable due to both the superintendent's efforts and the low turnover during his tenure.

Second Cycle Coding.

Like stakeholder two, transformational leadership and distributive leadership were evident during the second coding cycle, but stakeholder three specifically mentioned that the superintendent exhibited servant leadership characteristics. Throughout the interview, stakeholder three mentioned behaviors that were representative of integration and consideration subscales. The relationship between the outgoing superintendent and stakeholder three showcased examples of resource allocation and supportive conditions that allowed each to be effective. According to stakeholder three, the outgoing superintendent was focused on ensuring that the processes in the building were operating smoothly. The outgoing superintendent did not shy away from conversations that were difficult. Being transparent and open was a behavior that was perceived on numerous occasions from stakeholder three's vantage point. Stakeholder three also mentioned the superintendent's tendency to put their whole self into their work as something they had witnessed throughout the superintendent's tenure. Stakeholder three felt that this was who the superintendent was and that they had a bond with the community and district.

Stakeholder Four LBDQ Results

The LBDQ results from stakeholder four's individual LBDQ survey are presented in Table 4-5. The results included in Table 4-5 are the point total allotted by stakeholder four for each subscale and the percentage of points allotted out of the total available points. The percentage of each subscale represents the amount of subscale behaviors observed by the participant. A higher percentage represents those subscale behaviors being frequently observed. Table 4-5 includes a description of each subscale.

Table 4-5

Stakeholder Four LBDQ Results

1. Representation (Speaks and acts as representative of the group) – **25 out of 25 (100%)**	7. Role Assumption (Actively exercises the leadership role rather than surrendering it to others) – **44 out of 50 (88%)**
2. Demand Reconciliation (Reconciles conflicting demands and reduces disorder to system) – **23 out of 25 (92%)**	8. Consideration regards the comfort, well-being, status, and contributions of followers) – **44 out of 50 (88%)**
3. Tolerance of Uncertainty (Able to tolerate uncertainty and postponement without anxiety or upset) – **40 out of 50 (80%)**	9. Production Emphasis (Applies pressure for productive output) – **37 out of 50 (74%)**
4. Persuasiveness (Uses persuasion and argument effectively; exhibits strong convictions) – **46 out of 50 (92%)**	10. Predictive Accuracy (Exhibits foresight and ability to predict outcome accurately) – **20 out of 25 (80%)**
5. Initiation of Structure (Clearly defines own role, and lets followers know what is expected) – **48 out of 50 (96%)**	11. Integration (Maintains a closely knit organization; resolves intermember conflicts) – **24 out of 25 (96%)**
6. Tolerance and Freedom (Allows followers scope for initiative, decision, and action) – **44 out of 50 (88%)**	12. Superior Orientation (Maintains cordial relations with supervisors; has influence with them; is striving for higher status) – **49 out of 50 (98%)**

The results collected from stakeholder four's LBDQ show a high occurrence from their perspective of the outgoing superintendent's ability to work with their superiors. This resulted in another score for a unique leadership framework but does not provide enough evidence to show that this unique leadership trait can stand on its own. The superintendent scored high in representation, integration, and initiation of structure.

Stakeholder Four LBDQ Results and Leadership Frameworks

Stakeholder four's results identify distributive leadership as the most frequently referenced framework in the outgoing superintendent's behaviors. These results are interesting based on the vantage point that the stakeholder had in working with the outgoing superintendent. Stakeholder four was not in a leadership role, but their positioning within the district hierarchy allowed them to view the organization in the same way as the outgoing superintendent. Both the outgoing superintendent and stakeholder four were responsible for district wide operations. This vantage point for stakeholder four allowed them to observe the outgoing superintendent working with multiple groups within the district on a variety of projects at the same time.

Stakeholder Four Interview Results

First Cycle Coding.

Stakeholder four, like most of the selected stakeholders by the outgoing superintendent, had a long tenure in the district. Stakeholder four shared accounts of the two of them spending large amounts of time together and working near one another. Stakeholder four, like stakeholder three, was able to watch the growth of the superintendent from the time starting as an educator to the eventual position of superintendent. The area that stakeholder four cited as the most growth was the decision making of the superintendent. Stakeholder four said principals, in general, tended to make quicker decisions without having a grasp of the whole picture. Stakeholder four

was able to experience the leadership behaviors of the outgoing superintendent at both the district and building level.

Stakeholder four shared the same identified subscales as all the other respondents, but during their interview, shared experiences that related to demand reconciliation and initiation of structure. Stakeholder four witnessed the superintendent behind the scenes where few were able to observe. During these times, the superintendent stressed expectations and made decisions that aligned to systemic production. The superintendent created clear expectations and routine and made sure that the administrative team knew the end goal for each project. Stakeholder four also shared that the superintendent spent time communicating with their administrative team to work through challenges and ensure the administration knew how to navigate certain situations. Communication and transparency were frequently mentioned during this interview.

Second Cycle Coding.

Like stakeholder three, stakeholder four specifically mentioned servant leadership during the interview. From their perspective and through the process of coding, servant leadership guided interactions with the teaching staff and community. For stakeholder four, a distributive leadership approach was used based on the capacity of stakeholder four's position. Stakeholder four and the superintendent seemed to work as a team. Stakeholder four knew the parameters they could work within and with this understanding, stakeholder four made decisions congruent with the direction of the superintendent. Trust between the two was apparent during the interview.

Cumulative Outgoing Superintendent Results

The table below is designed to provide a cumulative view of each of the participants' LBDQ results side by side. Table 4-6 includes the individual scores of each participant, the

standard deviation of the stakeholder group only, the standard deviation of the stakeholder group with the superintendent included, and the alignment of their answers. The lower the number in standard deviation means the answers between the groups are closer and more accurate. A negative number in superintendent and stakeholder alignment shows that the stakeholder group scored the outgoing superintendent lower in that subscale.

Table 4-6

Cumulative Outgoing Superintendent LBDQ Results

COLUMN 1	COLUMN 2					COLUMN 3	COLUMN 4	COLUMN 5	COLUMN 6
CATEGORIES	OUTGOING SUPT	S1	S2	S3	S4	STAKEHOLDER AVG	STAKEHOLDER STANDARD DEVIATION	STAKEHOLDER+ SUPT STANDARD DEVIATION	SUPT/STAKEHOLDER Alignment
Representation	21	23	23	22	25	23.25	4.79583152	4.69041576	-2.25
Demand Reconciliation	18	25	21	23	23	23	4.58257569	4.79583152	-5
Tolerance of Uncertainty	34	43	37	39	40	39.75	6.08276253	6.244998	-5.75
Persuaviness	38	44	45	45	46	45	6.70820393	6.70820393	-7
Initiation of Structure	38	48	47	44	48	46.75	6.8556546	6.63324958	-8.75
Tolerance and Freedom	39	44	43	45	44	44	6.55743852	6.70820393	-5
Role Assumption	38	42	38	41	44	41.25	6.164414	6.40312424	-3.25
Consideration	39	39	47	46	44	44	6.8556546	6.78232998	-5
Production Emphasis	29	38	42	33	37	37.5	6.4807407	5.74456265	-8.5
Predictive Accuracy	20	22	21	22	20	21.25	4.58257569	4.69041576	-1.25
Integration	19	24	22	25	24	23.75	4.69041576	5	-4.75
Superior Orientation	37	43	47	42	49	45.25	6.8556546	6.4807407	-8.25
TOTAL							5.93432685	5.90683967	-5.395833333

Table 4-6 presents LBDQ results for the outgoing superintendent and their selected stakeholders. Results for the outgoing superintendent range from a low of 18 (for Demand Reconciliation) to a high of 39 (for Tolerance and Freedom and Consideration), while results for the stakeholders range from a low of 20 (for stakeholder 4 on Predictive Accuracy) to a high of 48 (for stakeholder 1 on Initiation of structure). The range of values are consistent with results reported in the published study using the LBDQ (Mehdinezhad & Sardarzahi, 2016). The standard deviations for both the stakeholder group and the stakeholder group + superintendent are also consistent with published results, suggesting the responses are relatively normal. To

assess the degree of alignment between stakeholder and superintendent perceptions, the stakeholder average for each LBDQ category was compared with outgoing superintendent result for the same category (see the column Superintendent/Stakeholder Alignment). Results of this comparison indicate that superintendent are lower on all measures. Those categories with the largest differences (i.e., least closely aligned) are Initiation of Structure (-8.75 difference), Production Emphasis (-8.5 difference), and Superior Orientation (-8.25 difference). Categories with the smallest differences (i.e., most closely aligned) are Predictive Accuracy (-1.25) and Integration (-4.75).

Cumulative Outgoing Superintendent and Stakeholders First Cycle Interview Coding

Table 4-7 contains the results collected during the first cycle coding. Each of the written transcripts were coded to find behaviors mentioned during the interviews that represented the twelve subscales of the LBDQ. Unlike the results from the LBDQ, the results from the interviews were organized in subscales and frameworks based on the interpretation of the researcher and the literature. The table displays the individual subscales in the column to the left in the table. Each stakeholder is represented in Table 4-7 and their results can be read vertically by following the columns.

Table 4-7

Cumulative Outgoing Superintendent First Cycle Interview Coding Results

LBDQ Sub-Sections	Outgoing Superintendent	Stakeholder 1	Stakeholder 2	Stakeholder 3	Stakeholder 4
Representation Demand	X	X	X	X	X
Reconciliation	X	X	X	X	X
Tolerance of Uncertainty					
Persuasiveness	X	X	X	X	X
Initiation of Structure	X	X	X	X	X

Tolerance and Freedom					
Role Assumption	X	X	X	X	X
Consideration	X	X	X	X	X
Production Emphasis	X	X	X	X	X
Predictive Accuracy					
Integration	X	X	X	X	X
Superior Orientation	X	X	X	X	X

Table 4-7 represents a summary of the first cycle coding conducted for the outgoing superintendent and stakeholder group during the data analysis. This coding was arrived at by going back and listening to the recording of each interview for specific behaviors that could be categorized by each subscale. The result of this coding showed that each of the stakeholders mentioned behaviors that could be categorized by the same LBDQ subscales. Each of the stakeholders had a professional relationship in some capacity for an extended period with the outgoing superintendent. The stakeholder group and the outgoing superintendent had spent a considerable amount of time together and the stakeholders had developed a knowledge of the leadership behaviors the outgoing superintendent had employed. From the outgoing superintendent's perspective, they developed knowledge and initiated actions of what leadership behaviors the stakeholders responded to. The results of the first cycle coding show a group of participants who have familiarity with each other.

Cumulative Outgoing Superintendent and Stakeholders Second Cycle Interview Coding

Table 4-8 displays the data collected during the second cycle of coding. This data represents the relationship between the LBDQ subscales, and the four leadership frameworks selected for this study. The "X" in each box represents a mark for the superintendent and each individual stakeholder. Each LBDQ subscale could represent multiple leadership frameworks.

An example of this is the subscale of persuasiveness. Persuasiveness as a behavior could be found in both transformational leadership and distributive leadership frameworks.

Table 4-8

Cumulative Outgoing Superintendent Second Cycle Interview Coding Results

LBDQ Sub-Sections	**Transformational Leadership Behaviors**	**Servant Leadership Behaviors**	**Distributive Leadership Behaviors**	**Adaptive Leadership Behaviors**	**Unique Leadership Behaviors**
Representation Demand	XXXXX				
Reconciliation			XXXXX	XXXXX	
Tolerance of Uncertainty					
Persuasiveness	XXXXX		XXXXX		
Initiation of Structure			XXXXX		
Tolerance and Freedom					
Role Assumption	XXXXX			XXXXX	
Consideration		XXXXX			
Production Emphasis	XXXXX		XXXXX	XXXXX	
Predictive Accuracy					
Integration		XXXXX	XXXXX		
Superior Orientation					XXXXX

Table 4-8 represents the leadership frameworks that align with each of the LBDQ subscales. Based on research of each LBDQ subscale and leadership framework, it was observed that the behaviors belonging to specific LBDQ subscales could also be observed in specific leadership frameworks. The shared behaviors between LBDQ subscales and the leadership frameworks were used to connect results from the LBDQ and the interviews to the transformational, servant, distributive, and adaptive leadership frameworks. The LBDQ subscales fit in a variety of leadership frameworks. None of the subscales fit in all four of the leadership frameworks and only one of the subscales did not fit in any of the frameworks. This resulted in a fifth framework, termed by the researcher, to be included in the study as a unique leadership framework. The unique leadership framework is listed, but only contains behaviors

belonging to the superior orientation category. Superior orientation includes behaviors that allow the leader to interact respectfully with their superiors. In this study, the superiors would be the school board. Each of the stakeholders mentioned that the outgoing superintendent had a productive relationship with the board of education from their perspective. The five X's in Table 4-8, represent the outgoing superintendent and each of the four stakeholders.

Alignment of Outgoing Superintendent LBDQ Results, Interview Results, and Leadership Frameworks

The results from both the LBDQ and the interviews show that the outgoing superintendent operated within all four leadership frameworks, but primarily utilized behaviors specific to transformational leadership and distributive leadership. The outgoing superintendent's ability to work well with the board of education also contributed to establishing a unique leadership framework. The leadership behaviors mentioned in the interviews were an ability to be transparent and detailed in communication with staff. The outgoing superintendent showed consideration for everyone, and this same consideration was felt in the community. The outgoing superintendent made their feelings known, established expectations, and solved issues that existed in the school district. Their performance could be linked to each of the four leadership frameworks, but the outgoing superintendent also based their leadership response on who they were dealing with. The outgoing superintendent was viewed as a mentor by stakeholder one, a servant and advocate by stakeholder two and three, and a leader who distributed leadership to those around them by stakeholder four. The stakeholders perceived the outgoing superintendent as present in all decisions and knowledgeable of the inner workings of the district. The outgoing superintendent was viewed by stakeholders and self-described as invested in the district and community. A particular finding from the data collection process showed the relationships the

outgoing superintendent had in the schools and community. Communication was a tool used frequently by the outgoing superintendent and these communication channels spread through the community. This behavior appears to be supported by the superintendent's visibility and involvement in all aspects of the district.

Incoming Superintendent Data Collection

Identified stakeholders for the incoming superintendent data collection process were made up of individuals who had served the school district in classified and certified roles. Each individual stakeholder served in leadership capacities. The purpose of this process was to collect data to find an answer to the research question: What leadership framework(s) best characterizes the leadership behaviors of the recently hired incoming superintendent?

Incoming Superintendent LBDQ Results

The LBDQ results from the incoming superintendent individual LBDQ survey are presented in Table 4-9. The results included in Table 4-9 are the point total allotted by the incoming superintendent for each subscale and the percentage of points allotted out of the total available points. The percentage of each subscale represents the amount of subscale behaviors recorded by the incoming superintendent. A higher percentage represents those subscale behaviors frequently used. Table 4-9 includes a description of each subscale.

Table 4-9

Incoming Superintendent LBDQ Results

1. Representation (Speaks and acts as representative of the group) – **15 out of 25 (60%)**	7. Role Assumption (Actively exercises the leadership role rather than surrendering it to others) – **40 out of 50 (80%)**
2. Demand Reconciliation (Reconciles conflicting demands and reduces disorder to system) – **22 out of 25 (88%)**	8. Consideration regards the comfort, well-being, status, and contributions of followers) – **43 out of 50 (86%)**

3. Tolerance of Uncertainty (Able to tolerate uncertainty and postponement without anxiety or upset) – **43 out of 50 (86%)**	9. Production Emphasis (Applies pressure for productive output) – **22 out of 50 (44%)**
4. Persuasiveness (Uses persuasion and argument effectively; exhibits strong convictions) – **30 out of 50 (60%)**	10. Predictive Accuracy (Exhibits foresight and ability to predict outcome accurately) – **25 out of 25 (100%)**
5. Initiation of Structure (Clearly defines own role, and lets followers know what is expected) – **30 out of 50 (60%)**	11. Integration (Maintains a closely knit organization; resolves intermember conflicts) – **20 out of 25 (80%)**
6. Tolerance and Freedom (Allows followers scope for initiative, decision, and action) – **37 out of 50 (74%)**	12. Superior Orientation (Maintains cordial relations with supervisors; has influence with them; is striving for higher status) – **33 out of 50 (66%)**

Table 4-9 contains the LBDQ results from the incoming superintendent's individual survey response. Like the outgoing superintendent, the incoming superintendent rated themselves lower than what their selected stakeholders rated them. Following the same process used for the outgoing superintendent, the five highest categorical percentages were utilized to determine the subscale and leadership framework relationship. The incoming superintendent scored highest on their self-assessment in the areas of predictive accuracy, demand reconciliation, tolerance of uncertainty, production emphasis and role assumption.

Incoming Superintendent LBDQ Data and Leadership Frameworks

Using the results from data collection, the incoming superintendent's LBDQ results show that they utilized behaviors in each of the leadership frameworks, but transformational and adaptive leadership frameworks resulted in the highest number of occurrences. Distributive leadership was the third highest total. The incoming superintendent LBDQ data aligns with their ability to listen and mentor the staff they serve. The lowest score on the incoming superintendent LBDQ was production emphasis. This is interesting that it was scored so low by the incoming

superintendent since several tasks inherited by the incoming superintendent required the completion of projects such as a facility bond issue and civil rights audit. Through the interviews and observations, the word "pressure" was identified as a possible deterrent for the incoming superintendent to select high point totals for this subscale. The incoming superintendent mentioned in interviews their desire to mentor instead of pressuring or micromanaging.

Incoming Superintendent LBDQ Results, Observation Notes, and Leadership Frameworks

Table 4-10 displays the in-person observations of the incoming superintendent interacting with stakeholders. The information included in Table 4-10 details the setting and audience of the interaction, the LBDQ subscale behaviors observed along with the corresponding leadership frameworks that relate to those specific LBDQ subscales, and the observation notes. The information underlined in Table 4-10 includes the specific observed behaviors.

Table 4-10

Incoming Superintendent Observation Notes

Setting	**Subscale Behavior**	**Notes**

Athletic Cooperative Meeting
• 10/11/23
• Group included board members and administration from both groups
	• Tolerance of Uncertainty
	  ○ Transformational
	  ○ Servant
	  ○ Adaptive
	• Tolerance and Freedom
	  ○ Transformational
	  ○ Servant
	  ○ Adaptive
	• Consideration
	  ○ Servant
		• Discussed athletic scheduling and cooperative agreement
		• High school principal and athletic director led meeting for their district
		• Asked informational / clarifying questions and offered ideas to facilitate solutions

Special Education Cooperative Meeting
• 10/20/23
• Group included area superintendents/The meeting was led by the special education cooperative
	• Representation
	  ○ Transformational
	• Tolerance of Uncertainty
	  ○ Transformational
	  ○ Servant
	  ○ Adaptive
		• The superintendent represented their district and their special education needs such as staffing
		• Discussed a topic that was not going to result in a quick solution and

	• Tolerance and Freedom
	  ○ Transformational
	  ○ Servant
	  ○ Adaptive
		had to be tabled, but continued collaborating with superintendents regarding staff member
		• The superintendent was knowledgeable of what the district needed and how the program in question had been conducted and what district staff they were going to utilize their expertise

Industrial Leader Collaboration Meeting
• 10/24/23
• Meeting contained administration from area districts along with aircraft industry administration
	• Representation
	  ○ Transformational
	• Tolerance of Uncertainty
	  ○ Transformational
	  ○ Servant
	  ○ Adaptive
	• Tolerance and Freedom
	  ○ Transformational
	  ○ Servant
	  ○ Adaptive
	• Consideration
	  ○ Servant
		• Discussed student post-secondary success and the superintendent shared ideas about ways to integrate programming for students into the district
		• The topics discussed are not going to be solved immediately and this is an ongoing project and the superintendent has a plan to continue working on the discussion
		• Presented ideas of what the district could offer and what staff might be able to facilitate
		• Spoke of collaboration, not commanding staff in the district and was mindful of resources available to the staff such as time

Principals Meeting
• 12/5/23
• Superintendent met with principals of each school
	• Demand Reconciliation
	  ○ Distributive
	  ○ Adaptive
	• Initiation of Structure
	  ○ Distributive
		• Meeting was structured and had an order following previous meetings

• Held Monthly at the same time	• Tolerance and Freedom
	  ○ Transformational
	  ○ Servant
	  ○ Adaptive
	• Role Assumption
	  ○ Transformational
	  ○ Adaptive
	• Consideration
	  ○ Servant
	• Production Emphasis
	  ○ Transformational
	  ○ Distributive
	  ○ Adaptive
		• Facilitated the meeting and kept it moving
		• Allowed for staff input and gave them ownership to take on discussed tasks
		• Provided feedback to administrative staff based on their ideas
		• Past district actions were considered when making decisions
		• Moved on through the agenda as plans of action were developed
		• Ended the meeting with the question, "What can I do for you?"

Table 4-10 highlights the observations of the incoming superintendent during the data collection process. The results align with the findings in the LBDQ and interview results. The incoming superintendent utilized multiple LBDQ subscale behaviors seemingly based on their audience. The incoming superintendent maintained supportive behaviors of listening and offering solutions to obstacles groups encountered. The incoming superintendent was careful not to overextend their employees by over committing in meetings involving outside district stakeholders.

Incoming Superintendent First Interview Results

First Cycle Coding.

The first cycle coding method used for all participants in the research study was provisional coding or *a priori* coding (Saldaña, 2021). Key words and phrases from the interview transcripts that represented LBDQ subscales were identified during this phase. Throughout the interview with the incoming superintendent, the incoming superintendent talked about entering a district that they did not have any knowledge of. They also shared because they decided not to

spend more time in the new district during the months following their selection to their new post, they did not have familiarity with the new district because they had not spent a considerable amount of time in the district prior to the official start date. The decision to respectfully close out their previous position meant that they approached their new position by initially relying on current staff. This could be seen in the behaviors identified during the first coding cycle. The incoming superintendent identified behaviors that belonged to the subscales of tolerance of uncertainty, tolerance of freedom, consideration, and integration. The incoming superintendent spent time working with staff closest to them and setting up processes that fit their way of thinking, leadership style, and ways of interacting comfortably with them. The incoming superintendent observed individuals around them and asked questions of those individuals. The incoming superintendent had inherited a recently approved bond issue along with another significant project to complete a civil rights audit. The size of these projects and the unfamiliarity of the district lent itself to the decision of the incoming superintendent to lean on the existing administrative team to carry out their assigned duties. The incoming superintendent had a background of being involved as an official mentor to novice building principals, so the skills that the incoming superintendent used in this role were also utilized in the transition to their new position. The incoming superintendent spent time asking questions about past and present situations within the district, looked through materials left by the outgoing superintendent, and stayed in communication with the administrative team to stay informed. Transparency in the communication and decision making of the incoming superintendent were important to the administrative team. This was evident in the frequent meetings with administration, individuals involved in the bond issue and civil rights audit, and in dealing with staff issues.

Second cycle coding.

Focused coding was used for the second cycle of coding for each participant during this study. The purpose of this cycle was to identify the leadership framework that encompassed the LBDQ subscale behaviors from the first cycle coding. Like the results of the LBDQ, the incoming superintendent was unassuming and did not feel they used any one behavior or leadership framework. The percentages were low in the LBDQ and they talked a lot about the uncertainty of their knowledge of the district and how that dictated their actions. The incoming superintendent and stakeholder results from both the LBDQ and interviews varied and signified that there had only been a short amount of time to build relationships. The uncertainty and newness of the environment dictated the behaviors utilized by the incoming superintendent. The observations of the incoming superintendent reaffirmed the findings from the LBDQ and the interviews. Identified leadership behaviors included listening, frequent and transparent communication, delegation, and problem solving. The incoming superintendent results highlight their ability to stay fluid in the choice and use of specific leadership frameworks. In both the LBDQ and interviews, the incoming superintendent showed a variety of behaviors from each of the framework, most frequently using communication, listening, and questioning.

Stakeholder One LBDQ Results

The LBDQ results from stakeholder one's individual LBDQ survey are presented in Table 4-11. The results included in Table 4-11 are the point total allotted by stakeholder one for each subscale and the percentage of points allotted out of the total available points. The percentage of each subscale represents the amount of subscale behaviors observed by the participant. A higher percentage represents those subscale behaviors being frequently observed. Table 4-11 includes a description of each subscale.

Table 4-11

Stakeholder One LBDQ Results

1. Representation (Speaks and acts as representative of the group) – **21 out of 25 (84%)**	7. Role Assumption (Actively exercises the leadership role rather than surrendering it to others) – **45 out of 50 (90%)**
2. Demand Reconciliation (Reconciles conflicting demands and reduces disorder to system) – **25 out of 25 (100%)**	8. Consideration regards the comfort, well-being, status, and contributions of followers) – **46 out of 50 (92%)**
3. Tolerance of Uncertainty (Able to tolerate uncertainty and postponement without anxiety or upset) – **44 out of 50 (88%)**	9. Production Emphasis (Applies pressure for productive output) – **35 out of 50 (70%)**
4. Persuasiveness (Uses persuasion and argument effectively; exhibits strong convictions) – **47 out of 50 (94%)**	10. Predictive Accuracy (Exhibits foresight and ability to predict outcome accurately) – **22 out of 25 (88%)**
5. Initiation of Structure (Clearly defines own role, and lets followers know what is expected) – **46 out of 50 (92%)**	11. Integration (Maintains a closely knit organization; resolves intermember conflicts) – **24 out of 25 (96%)**
6. Tolerance and Freedom (Allows followers scope for initiative, decision, and action) – **45 out of 50 (90%)**	12. Superior Orientation (Maintains cordial relations with supervisors; has influence with them; is striving for higher status) – **46 out of 50 (92%)**

Stakeholder one identified demand reconciliation, integration, persuasiveness, initiation of structure, consideration, and superior orientation as the top subscales in the behaviors of the incoming superintendent. Stakeholder one scores are much higher than the incoming superintendent self-scoring. In addition, this stakeholder rated the incoming superintendent higher than the other stakeholders on the LBDQ. These LBDQ results make sense based on the professional relationship between the incoming superintendent and stakeholder one. Additionally, their interactions required guidance from the incoming superintendent and follow through from the stakeholder. Production emphasis was the lowest scored subscale, which highlights the other highly scored subscales.

Stakeholder One LBDQ Results and Leadership Frameworks

Stakeholder one's results classified the behaviors utilized by the incoming superintendent as distributive. Each of the leadership frameworks were represented in the results, but the only leadership framework other than distributive leadership that was identified by a specific subscale was servant leadership. Consideration is individually associated with servant leadership. Each of the other identified subscales contained distributive leadership behaviors along with other leadership frameworks.

Stakeholder One Interview Results

First Cycle Coding.

Stakeholder one had been working with the incoming superintendent the longest out of the selected stakeholders. Their time working together began before the incoming superintendent was under contract. They worked on the largest project that the incoming superintendent faced, the bond issue construction project. The incoming superintendent and stakeholder one also had offices in the same building, the only stakeholder to have that type of proximity. Stakeholder one shared that they worked closely with the incoming superintendent and had been in communication daily on construction and staff issues. Both the incoming superintendent and stakeholder one arrived in the school district within a matter of months. Stakeholder one had different experiences with the incoming superintendent due to the nature of their job. Stakeholder one cited times that the incoming superintendent set parameters and portrayed themselves as the leader of the group and did not relinquish power. Stakeholder one felt that the incoming superintendent cared about staff workload and was considerate of their time and energy.

The main differences between stakeholder one and the rest of the stakeholder group was that stakeholder one spent a considerable amount of time with the incoming superintendent in

formal meetings and dealing with issues that needed quick resolutions. Stakeholder one also had limited experience in the district, so this created a situation where decisions needed to be made by the incoming superintendent. The researcher assimilated this decision-making pattern to determine role assumption and production emphasis as unique to stakeholder one's perceptions during the interview. Stakeholder one also shared instances where the incoming superintendent exhibited demand reconciliation, tolerance and freedom, consideration, and integration.

Second Cycle Coding.

Based on the perceptions of stakeholder one, the incoming superintendent showed behaviors in the distributive leadership category along with adaptive leadership. Both stakeholder one and the incoming superintendent were working through a bond issue for the first time. This required the incoming superintendent to spend a lot of time using behaviors specific to adaptive leadership such as frequent communication with participants and seeking information to make good decisions related to construction.

Stakeholder Two LBDQ Results

The LBDQ results from stakeholder two's individual LBDQ survey is presented in Table 4-12. The results included in Table 4-12 are the point total allotted by stakeholder two for each subscale and the percentage of points allotted out of the total available points. The percentage of each subscale represents the amount of subscale behaviors observed by the participant. A higher percentage represents those subscale behaviors being frequently observed. Table 4-12 includes a description of each subscale.

Table 4-12

Stakeholder Two LBDQ Results

1. Representation (Speaks and acts as representative of the group) – **20 out of 25 (80%)**	7. Role Assumption (Actively exercises the leadership role rather than surrendering it to others) – **40 out of 50 (80%)**
2. Demand Reconciliation (Reconciles conflicting demands and reduces disorder to system) – **22 out of 25 (88%)**	8. Consideration regards the comfort, well-being, status, and contributions of followers) – **43 out of 50 (86%)**
3. Tolerance of Uncertainty (Able to tolerate uncertainty and postponement without anxiety or upset) – **42 out of 50 (84%)**	9. Production Emphasis (Applies pressure for productive output) – **27 out of 50 (54%)**
4. Persuasiveness (Uses persuasion and argument effectively; exhibits strong convictions) – **42 out of 50 (84%)**	10. Predictive Accuracy (Exhibits foresight and ability to predict outcome accurately) – **20 out of 25 (80%)**
5. Initiation of Structure (Clearly defines own role, and lets followers know what is expected) – **40 out of 50 (80%)**	11. Integration (Maintains a closely knit organization; resolves intermember conflicts) – **21 out of 25 (84%)**
6. Tolerance and Freedom (Allows followers scope for initiative, decision, and action) – **48 out of 50 (96%)**	12. Superior Orientation (Maintains cordial relations with supervisors; has influence with them; is striving for higher status) – **35 out of 50 (70%)**

Stakeholder two scored the incoming superintendent consistently across all subscales except for production emphasis and superior orientation. There was a range of high scores amongst the subscales that aligned to the interview responses by stakeholder two. The lowest score in the LBDQ survey for this stakeholder was production emphasis. This perception was evident in the interview based on how the incoming superintendent embraced stakeholder two's quest for advancement. Stakeholder two was seeking district leadership experiences and the incoming superintendent provided opportunities for district level leadership responsibilities for stakeholder two. One example of this was the civil rights audit completed by the district. The

incoming superintendent shared ownership of this task with stakeholder two to benefit their learning about district level work.

Stakeholder Two LBDQ Results and Leadership Frameworks

Stakeholder two's responses to the LBDQ were even in all four leadership categories, but servant leadership appeared in the results most frequently. The identification of servant leadership was again determined by the selection of the LBDQ subscale of consideration. The behaviors of caring and checking on the well-being of the stakeholder were well documented. In this instance, the stakeholder was an early career administrator with interest in moving into district leadership. The incoming superintendent made themselves available to assist and support stakeholder two. This was also apparent in the observation results.

Stakeholder Two Interview Results

First Cycle Coding.

The results from the coding of stakeholder two's interview showed similarities with stakeholder one's description in the areas of demand reconciliation, tolerance and freedom, consideration, and integration. Stakeholder two mentioned the ability of the incoming superintendent to communicate clearly and to ask questions about the processes that had been utilized in the district. Having worked with the outgoing superintendent, stakeholder two mentioned the two superintendents were different in their styles and communication. The incoming superintendent approached situations tentatively and asked for feedback versus the outgoing superintendent operating with a direct approach and long-time knowledge of the district and community. Stakeholder two mentioned the incoming superintendent tried to be visible and often checked on stakeholder two. Stakeholder two observed the incoming superintendent interact with the board of education and shared this was another observable difference between

the two superintendents. The incoming superintendent engaged the board of education differently by actively asking for their thoughts and input. The incoming superintendent shared information with the board of education on a frequent basis as compared to an "as needed" basis by the outgoing superintendent as reported by stakeholder two. Stakeholder two shared that the incoming superintendent had delegated some duties to stakeholder two once stakeholder two shared interest in developing skills in district level work. Stakeholder two knew of personnel issues the incoming superintendent had to resolve due to conflicts. They stated that the incoming superintendent had a calm demeanor, sought out information, and was solution oriented.

During the observations of the incoming superintendent, multiple stakeholders were involved in these settings. In two of these scenarios, stakeholder two was allowed to share input and information with the group. The incoming superintendent delegated duties to stakeholder two ranging from filing reports, providing feedback, and guiding group progress. In another meeting, the incoming superintendent stayed reserved and listened while stakeholder two shared information from previous years. The incoming superintendent waited to interject information until needed or the discussion had stalled. Through their actions, the incoming superintendent found stakeholder two to be someone who could be utilized for necessary information and tasks as they continued to expand their knowledge of district leadership.

Second Cycle Coding.

In the interview, stakeholder two described behaviors specific to the incoming superintendent's willingness to let stakeholder two be involved in aspects of district level administration to increase exposure because of their aspirations to the superintendency. This type of leadership was represented by both servant and transformational leadership. Stakeholder two also identified the incoming superintendent's ability to gather information regarding

unfamiliar situations when asked to provide input. In this way, the incoming superintendent showed adaptive leadership skills.

Stakeholder Three LBDQ Results

The LBDQ results from stakeholder three's individual LBDQ survey are presented in Table 4-13. The results included in Table 4-13 are the point total allotted by stakeholder three for each subscale and the percentage of points allotted out of the total available points. The percentage of each subscale represents the amount of subscale behaviors observed by the participant. A higher percentage represents those subscale behaviors frequently observed. Table 4-13 includes a description of each subscale.

Table 4-13

Stakeholder Three LBDQ Results

1. Representation (Speaks and acts as representative of the group) – **22 out of 25 (88%)**	7. Role Assumption (Actively exercises the leadership role rather than surrendering it to others) – **40 out of 50 (80%)**
2. Demand Reconciliation (Reconciles conflicting demands and reduces disorder to system) – **22 out of 25 (88%)**	8. Consideration regards the comfort, well-being, status, and contributions of followers) – **42 out of 50 (84%)**
3. Tolerance of Uncertainty (Able to tolerate uncertainty and postponement without anxiety or upset) – **39 out of 50 (78%)**	9. Production Emphasis (Applies pressure for productive output) – **29 out of 50 (58%)**
4. Persuasiveness (Uses persuasion and argument effectively; exhibits strong convictions) – **36 out of 50 (72%)**	10. Predictive Accuracy (Exhibits foresight and ability to predict outcome accurately) – **19 out of 25 (76%)**
5. Initiation of Structure (Clearly defines own role, and lets followers know what is expected) – **45 out of 50 (95%)**	11. Integration (Maintains a closely knit organization; resolves intermember conflicts) – **19 out of 25 (76%)**
6. Tolerance and Freedom (Allows followers scope for initiative, decision, and action) – **45 out of 50 (95%)**	12. Superior Orientation (Maintains cordial relations with supervisors; has influence with them; is striving for higher status) – **37 out of 50 (74%)**

Stakeholder three's LBDQ results identified the incoming superintendent using behaviors belonging to the subscale of representation. Stakeholder three also scored the incoming superintendent high in demand reconciliation, consideration, initiation of structure, and tolerance and freedom. Like previous stakeholders, stakeholder three scored production emphasis as the lowest subscale for the incoming superintendent. This could be a result of the positions of each stakeholder selected by the incoming superintendent. The stakeholders were in positions of leadership and received guidance and expectations to oversee staff with fidelity and accountability.

Stakeholder Three LBDQ Data and Leadership Frameworks

Stakeholder three's subscale results were scored evenly showing the number of appearances for each of the leadership frameworks. Each one of the leadership frameworks was identified validating the incoming superintendent's ability to select their leadership behaviors based on the individual and situation. The results show that the incoming superintendent was not using one set of behaviors. Their mentorship style promoted behaviors across all four leadership frameworks.

Stakeholder Three Interview Results

First Cycle Coding.

The interview with stakeholder three mirrored findings of demand reconciliation, tolerance of freedom, consideration, and integration. Two new subscales were described during the interview. The first was initiation of structure. Stakeholder three shared that the incoming superintendent asked questions, listened, and then guided with the appropriate direction. One example was purchasing a playground. Instead of telling them where and how to purchase the materials, the incoming superintendent sat down with stakeholder three and provided an

opportunity for them to learn about the process. The distinction between the roles was apparent, however, acquiring knowledge from the incoming superintendent was the focus of the interaction. Stakeholder three also felt that the incoming superintendent forecasted upcoming situations. One example of this leadership behavior was the incoming superintendent setting up and holding frequent meetings to make sure everyone was on the same page with the bond issue. Stakeholder three said there was a distinct difference between the two superintendents in the amount of involvement in decision making. The incoming superintendent listened to input and involved multiple group members in the decision-making process. The incoming superintendent also focused on transparent communication, much like the outgoing superintendent, but the approach and amount of involvement was different.

Stakeholder three mentioned they understood the expectations of the incoming superintendent. The researcher had the opportunity to observe a meeting between stakeholder three and the incoming superintendent. In that meeting, the incoming superintendent engaged stakeholder three in sharing ideas for gifts and awards for the teaching staff. Stakeholder three shared district history and information related to the topics. Both stakeholder three and the incoming superintendent engaged in conversation more than the other participants in the meeting.

Second Cycle Coding.

Stakeholder three mentioned frequent interactions with the incoming superintendent and visits to find out what supports stakeholder three felt they needed. The incoming superintendent used behaviors from servant leadership and distributive leadership frameworks in these encounters. Stakeholder three mentioned the incoming superintendent took an active role in providing support when they had to make decisions or acquire resources for projects. The

leadership behavior was not from a production emphasis standpoint, but in supporting and mentoring the stakeholder in navigating new situations.

Stakeholder Four LBDQ Results

The LBDQ results from stakeholder four's individual LBDQ survey are presented in Table 4-14. The results included in Table 4-14 are the point total allotted by stakeholder four for each subscale and the percentage of points allotted out of the total available points. The percentage of each subscale represents the amount of subscale behaviors observed by the participant. A higher percentage represents those subscale behaviors frequently observed. Table 4-14 includes a description of each subscale.

Table 4-14

Stakeholder Four LBDQ Results

1. Representation (Speaks and acts as representative of the group) – **22 out of 25 (88%)**	7. Role Assumption (Actively exercises the leadership role rather than surrendering it to others) – **37 out of 50 (74%)**
2. Demand Reconciliation (Reconciles conflicting demands and reduces disorder to system) – **19 out of 25 (76%)**	8. Consideration regards the comfort, well-being, status, and contributions of followers) – **46 out of 50 (92%)**
3. Tolerance of Uncertainty (Able to tolerate uncertainty and postponement without anxiety or upset) – **43 out of 50 (86%)**	9. Production Emphasis (Applies pressure for productive output) – **29 out of 50 (58%)**
4. Persuasiveness (Uses persuasion and argument effectively; exhibits strong convictions) – **33 out of 50 (66%)**	10. Predictive Accuracy (Exhibits foresight and ability to predict outcome accurately) – **16 out of 25 (64%)**
5. Initiation of Structure (Clearly defines own role, and lets followers know what is expected) – **37 out of 50 (74%)**	11. Integration (Maintains a closely knit organization; resolves intermember conflicts) – **18 out of 25 (72%)**
6. Tolerance and Freedom (Allows followers scope for initiative, decision, and action) – **40 out of 50 (80%)**	12. Superior Orientation (Maintains cordial relations with supervisors; has influence with them; is striving for higher status) – **39 out of 50 (78%)**

Stakeholder four, like the other stakeholders, scored the incoming superintendent lowest in production emphasis. Another interesting facet of data from stakeholder four was distributive leadership was not identified in the top LBDQ categories. The numerical results aligned with interview statements made by stakeholder four citing the incoming superintendent offering support while allowing the stakeholder to independently complete their duties. Stakeholder four had frequently lower scores in the subscales than any of the other stakeholders. These lower scores supported the independent nature of stakeholder four's day to day duties. Transformational leadership and servant leadership were seen most in this stakeholder's results. The LBDQ results also showed superior orientation being one of the top scores amongst the subscale results.

Stakeholder Four LBDQ Results and Leadership Frameworks

Transformational leadership and servant leadership were seen most in this stakeholder's results. The LBDQ results also showed superior orientation being one of the top scores amongst the subscale results. The results in Table 4-14 highlight the incoming superintendent's ability to utilize behaviors that give ownership of tasks to other stakeholders. Stakeholder four's day to day duties were outside of the classroom and school day in many instances, so the numbers suggested that the incoming superintendent provided stakeholder four the necessary freedom to make decisions without the incoming superintendent's involvement. This freedom additionally helped the stakeholder grow professionally and learn from their experiences.

Stakeholder Four Interview Results

First Cycle Coding.

The interview with stakeholder four included demand reconciliation, initiation of structure, tolerance and freedom, consideration, and integration. The interview also identified a

new behavior subscale, representation. Stakeholder four's position was unique in the district. Stakeholder four served in a role primarily operated outside of school hours and the classroom. Stakeholder four shared that the interactions between them had been specific to supports, expectations, and information. Stakeholder four reported infrequent opportunities for interaction. When stakeholder four and the incoming superintendent worked together, it often included board members and members from the community, requiring the incoming superintendent to assume a leadership demeanor. Stakeholder four's interactions were not described as mentoring like previous stakeholder interactions. Interactions during the interview were described as setting expectations, establishing what was needed from the incoming superintendent, and other information needed by both stakeholder four and the incoming superintendent.

During an observation, there was not much interaction between the incoming superintendent and stakeholder four. The incoming superintendent let stakeholders two and four share thoughts and navigate discussions during the observed meeting. The incoming superintendent interjected thoughts and ideas when obstacles were brought up, but much of the discussion was led by stakeholder two and four. During the interview, this stakeholder shared they had felt close to the outgoing superintendent and had spent a considerable amount of time working with them. Stakeholder four also shared that the outgoing superintendent had a clear need related to the work because of the roles they each had.

Second Cycle Coding.

Like the LBDQ data for stakeholder four, the second cycle coding did not reveal that the incoming superintendent spent time in distributive leadership. They were viewed using transformational and servant leadership behaviors. Stakeholder four said the incoming superintendent's involvement was driven by support and not production. It was clear that

stakeholder four had clear duties for which they were responsible to oversee and carry out. Based on the nature of stakeholder four's position, adaptive leadership was also a leadership framework evident in the interview and LBDQ data due to the incoming superintendent's lack of familiarity with stakeholder four's responsibilities.

Cumulative Incoming Superintendent Results

Table 4-15 provides a cumulative view of each of the participants' LBDQ results side by side. The table includes the list of subscales (column one), individual scores of each participant (column two), the average of the four stakeholder responses by subscale (column three), the standard deviation of the stakeholder group only (column four), the standard deviation of the stakeholder group with the superintendent included (column five), and the alignment of their answers (column six). The lower the number in columns four and five means the answers between the groups are more closely aligned. A negative number in column six shows the stakeholder group scored the incoming superintendent higher in that subscale.

Table 4-15

Cumulative Incoming Superintendent Results

COLUMN 1	COLUMN 2					COLUMN 3	COLUMN 4	COLUMN 5	COLUMN 6
CATEGORIES	OUTGOING SUPT	S1	S2	S3	S4	STAKEHOLDER AVG	STAKEHOLDER STANDARD DEVIATION	STAKEHOLDER+ SUPT STANDARD DEVIATION	SUPT/STAKEHOLDER Alignment
Representation	15	21	20	22	22	21.25	4.47213595	4.69041576	-6.25
Demand Reconciliation	22	25	22	22	19	22	4.69041576	4.69041576	0
Tolerance of Uncertainty	43	44	42	39	43	42	6.4807407	6.244998	1
Persuaviness	30	47	42	36	33	39.5	6.4807407	6	-9.5
Initiation of Structure	30	46	40	45	37	42	6.32455532	6.70820393	-12
Tolerance and Freedom	37	45	48	45	40	44.5	6.92820323	6.70820393	-7.5
Role Assumption	40	45	40	40	37	40.5	6.32455532	6.32455532	-0.5
Consideration	43	46	43	42	46	44.25	6.55743852	6.4807407	-1.25
Production Emphasis	22	35	27	29	29	30	5.19615242	5.38516481	-8
Predictive Accuracy	15	22	20	19	16	19.25	4.47213595	4.35889894	-4.25
Integration	20	24	21	19	18	20.5	4.58257569	4.35889894	-0.5
Superior Orientation	33	46	35	37	39	39.25	5.91607978	6.08276253	-6.25
TOTAL							5.70214411	5.66943822	-4.583333333

Table 4-15 presents LBDQ results for the incoming superintendent and their selected stakeholders. Results for the incoming superintendent range from a low of 15 (for Representation) to a high of 43 (for Tolerance of Uncertainty and Consideration), while results for the stakeholders range from a low of 19 (for stakeholder 3 on Predictive Accuracy) to a high of 48 (for stakeholder 2 on Tolerance and Freedom). The range of values are consistent with results reported in a published study using the LBDQ (Mehdinezhad & Sardarzahi, 2016). The standard deviations for both the stakeholder group and the stakeholder group + superintendent are also consistent with published results, suggesting that the responses are relatively normal.

To assess the degree of alignment between stakeholder and superintendent perceptions, the stakeholder average for each LBDQ category was compared with outgoing superintendent result for the same category (see the column Superintendent/Stakeholder Alignment). Results of this comparison indicate that the incoming superintendent is lower on all but two measures (Demand Reconciliation and Tolerance of Uncertainty). Those categories with the largest differences (i.e., least closely aligned) are Tolerance and Freedom (-7.5 difference), Persuasiveness (-9.5 difference). Categories with the smallest differences (i.e., most closely aligned) are Role Assumption (-0.5) and Integration (-0.5).

Cumulative Incoming Superintendent and Stakeholders First Cycle Interview Coding Results

Table 4-16 contains the data collected during the first cycle of coding. During the first cycle of coding, each of the written transcripts were coded to find behaviors mentioned during the interviews that represented the twelve subscales of the LBDQ. The table displays the individual subscales in the column to the left in the table. Each stakeholder is represented in Table 4-16 and their data can be read vertically following the columns.

Table 4-16

Cumulative Incoming Superintendent First Cycle Interview Coding Results

LBDQ Sub-Sections	Incoming Superintendent	Stakeholder 1	Stakeholder 2	Stakeholder 3	Stakeholder 4
Representation Demand					X
Reconciliation		X	X	X	X
Tolerance of Uncertainty	X				
Persuasiveness					
Initiation of Structure				X	X
Tolerance and Freedom	X	X	X	X	X
Role Assumption		X			
Consideration	X	X	X	X	X
Production Emphasis		X			
Predictive Accuracy				X	
Integration	X	X	X	X	X
Superior Orientation					

Table 4-16 represents the first cycle coding conducted for the incoming superintendent group during the data analysis. This coding was implemented using the same process as the outgoing superintendent, identifying leadership behaviors and categorizing these behaviors to each subscale. The result of this coding linked the observed behaviors of the incoming superintendent by the individual stakeholders to the LBDQ subscales. The incoming superintendent started their position on July 1st. Before the start of the incoming superintendent's contract, there had been minimal contact between the incoming superintendent and the stakeholders. The limited time together was an interesting factor in analyzing the interview data. The results of the first cycle coding indicated the group of participants did not have an

abundance of familiarity with each other, however, similar score results were noted. Due to the stakeholders' roles and duties in the district, they had frequent interactions with the incoming superintendent.

Cumulative Incoming Superintendent and Stakeholders Second Cycle Interview Coding Results

Table 4-17 displays the data collected during the second cycle of coding. These results represent the relationship between the LBDQ subscales, and the five leadership frameworks selected for this study. Unlike the results from the LBDQ, the results from the interviews were organized in subscales and frameworks based on the interpretation of the researcher and the literature. The "X" in each box represents the individual stakeholder. Each LBDQ subscale potentially represents multiple leadership frameworks. An example of this is the subscale of persuasiveness. Persuasiveness as a behavior could be found in both transformational leadership and distributive leadership frameworks.

Table 4-17

Cumulative Incoming Superintendent Second Cycle Interview Coding Results

LBDQ Sub-Sections	Transformational Leadership Behaviors	Servant Leadership Behaviors	Distributive Leadership Behaviors	Adaptive Leadership Behaviors	Unique Leadership Behaviors
Representation Demand	X				
Reconciliation			XXXX	XXXX	
Tolerance of Uncertainty	X	X		X	
Persuasiveness					
Initiation of Structure			XX		
Tolerance and Freedom	XXXXX	XXXXX		XXXXX	
Role Assumption	X			X	
Consideration		XXXXX			
Production Emphasis	X		X	X	
Predictive Accuracy	X		X	X	
Integration		XXXXX	XXXXX		
Superior Orientation					

Table 4-17 represents the LBDQ subscales assigned to the leadership framework that each set of leadership behaviors by the incoming superintendent and stakeholders noted through the data collection process. For the incoming superintendent, the LBDQ results along with the second cycle coding, showed that the incoming superintendent utilized all four of the frameworks. The incoming superintendent utilized each leadership framework, but each individual stakeholder had different experiences and therefore noted different leadership behaviors. The incoming superintendent seemed to have selected their behaviors and actions based on the setting and individual they were working with. As an example, based on the differences in job responsibilities and level of interaction, stakeholder one had less independence in duties than stakeholder four. Therefore, their perceptions of the incoming superintendent's leadership behaviors were different.

Alignment of Incoming Superintendent LBDQ Results, Interview Results, and Leadership Frameworks

The LBDQ and the interview results show the incoming superintendent utilized behaviors in all four leadership frameworks. The level of use of each framework described by both the LBDQ data and the interview data showed that the incoming superintendent chose their behaviors based on the individual factors in each setting. The behaviors that were mentioned in the interviews included an ability to listen, provide transparent communication, and offer support. The level of support depended on the individual stakeholder. Stakeholder one, two, and three experienced a different level of support than stakeholder four based on their duties. The incoming superintendent had experience as a mentor and utilized these skills and leadership behaviors during the transition into the district. The incoming superintendent also shared that

initial time in the district was spent analyzing collected information and organizing their workspaces to fit their leadership style and preferences.

The incoming superintendent aligned with transformational and servant leadership based on the LBDQ and interview results. The incoming superintendent utilized behaviors from distributive leadership and adaptive leadership as they encountered new situations. The incoming superintendent recognized talents and knowledge of individuals within the district who provided valuable insights and skills to help in these new situations. When the incoming superintendent used a distributive or adaptive model, they set clear expectations. The incoming superintendent had the most communication with their administrative team. Through data analysis, the mentoring skill set that the incoming superintendent used previously in another superintendency was evident. The leadership behaviors used in mentoring have similar emphasis and goals as represented in all four of the leadership frameworks. The needs of the individual dictated the decision and use of leadership behaviors associated with transformational or servant leadership. Stakeholder two seemed to need transformational leadership based on their professional aspirations. Stakeholder three benefitted from a servant leadership approach based on what they encountered during the school year along with the direct effects of the bond issue on their school building.

Combined Results of Influence on the Transition between Superintendents

In Table 4-18, the results are organized to show a comparison between the incoming and outgoing superintendents, the incoming superintendent and outgoing superintendent stakeholder groups, and the overall alignment. The comparison of data is meant to measure the alignment between the groups through their responses. The alignment in responses may have occurred for a

variety of reasons ranging from the level of contact between group members to communication channels utilized by each district leader.

Table 4-18

Combined Effect on the Transition between Superintendents

COLUMN 1	COLUMN 2	COLUMN 3	COLUMN 4
DIFFERENCES BETWEEN OUTGOING & INCOMING SUPTS.	SUPT DIFFERENCE	STAKEHOLDER DIFFERENCE	OVERALL ALINGMENT
Representation	6	2	4
Demand Reconciliation	-4	1	-5
Tolerance of Uncertainty	-9	-2.25	-6.75
Persuaviness	8	5.5	2.5
Initiation of Structure	8	4.75	3.25
Tolerance and Freedom	2	-0.5	2.5
Role Assumption	-2	0.75	-2.75
Consideration	-4	-0.25	-3.75
Production Emphasis	7	7.5	-0.5
Predictive Accuracy	5	2	3
Integration	-1	3.25	-4.25
Superior Orientation	4	6	-2
TOTAL	1.666666667	2.479166667	-0.8125

Table 4-18 shows the differences between outgoing and incoming superintendents and between their respective stakeholder groups. Column one lists the subscales for the LBDQ. Column two contains the difference between the answers of the outgoing and incoming superintendent on the LBDQ. A negative value in this column means that the incoming superintendent scored themselves higher in this subscale category. Column three represents the difference between the stakeholder groups. Similarly, a negative value means that the incoming superintendent stakeholder group scored the incoming superintendent higher than the outgoing superintendent scored their respective superintendent. Column four shows the difference between how the superintendents scored themselves and the stakeholder scores. The scores show the overall alignment between the groups. A positive number means the outgoing superintendent scored higher in that category from their self-rating and their stakeholder ratings than the

incoming superintendent received from their self-rating and stakeholder ratings. Results in Table 4-18 show that there was more alignment between the incoming superintendent and their stakeholder group than the outgoing superintendent and their stakeholder group. This finding is interesting because of the difference in time working together but may be explained by the stakeholders selected by each superintendent. In addition, some time had passed between the outgoing superintendent and their opportunity to work together with their stakeholders.

Second Interview for the Outgoing and Incoming Superintendent Aligned to the Leadership Frameworks

The researcher combined the results from the first interview and the second interview for both the outgoing and incoming superintendents and then applied the leadership behavior frameworks to address the final research question. “In what ways and to what extent was the transition influenced by leadership characteristics of the outgoing superintendent, leadership characteristics of the incoming superintendent, and congruence/alignment between them?” The second interview provided the focus for this inquiry, but the researcher reflected on the first interviews to inform and complete the analysis.

Each superintendent was individually interviewed a second time and asked to describe the transition experience. The outgoing superintendent was asked to describe the process starting from the time they decided to retire to the end of the first semester of the first year of their retirement. The incoming superintendent was asked to start at the point when they accepted the position to the end of the first semester of their first year in their new role.

The outgoing superintendent shared during the second interview that once the announcement was made to the board of education, the process of finalizing projects and tasks began. A bond issue for the district was imminent and the outgoing superintendent stated that

they did not want to leave a significant undertaking such as passing a bond issue for the incoming superintendent. The outgoing superintendent shared their goal was to allow a fresh start for the incoming superintendent and the district. They wanted to take on the large task of a bond issue election and initial steps so the incoming superintendent could work on developing relationships with stakeholders.

The incoming superintendent explained in the second interview their desire to serve each district they led by first completing their work and tenure in the district they were leaving and provide an optimal entry point for the newly hired superintendent for this district, and then shift effort to the new district. This mirrored the effort of the outgoing superintendent as they also wanted to finish up work in the district they were retiring from and provide the best possible situation for the new superintendent as they began their tenure. The incoming superintendent shared that the information left by the outgoing superintendent put them in a position where they did not have to find and seek out information. The information was readily available and afforded them an opportunity to focus on building relationships with key staff during the initial transition. The incoming superintendent also cited the timing of the school year. Their start date was July 1st, so this meant they had time to ease into the position and gain an understanding of the previous leadership and direction of the outgoing superintendent. The following paragraphs will map out the transition between superintendents and the data collected to address research question three.

The outgoing superintendent had shared with the board of education that they were going to retire a year and a half before they retired. The outgoing superintendent knew the climate for hiring superintendents and wanted to ensure the district was able to select a replacement from a sizeable pool of applicants. It was vital to the outgoing superintendent to ensure they had time to

lead the district through a bond issue for facility upgrades. The outgoing superintendent felt that this would be a difficult undertaking for the district during a leadership transition and felt that the bond issue had a better chance of being passed while they still held their position due to their knowledge of facility needs and long history in the district. The outgoing superintendent did not want to put another leader in the position of trying to get a bond issue passed when they were beginning their tenure. The outgoing superintendent understood community values and the varied opinions that might be expressed. Therefore, they wanted to take the brunt of possible community brushback.

Community knowledge of their impending retirement allowed the outgoing superintendent to begin the process of wrapping up tasks and projects, while preparing staff, administration, and board members for new leadership. The outgoing superintendent met with individuals to close out outstanding needs and offered support to the school board during the selection process of a new superintendent. The outgoing superintendent was careful not to overstep and did not want to dictate who was chosen during the process. The board of education did, however, ask the outgoing superintendent to share their opinion on which of the candidates might fit better with the school district. Once the selection was made, the outgoing superintendent continued to end their involvement with the district and not leave anything undone. The outgoing superintendent did make themselves available to the incoming superintendent once they were selected. This availability continued into the first year with the outgoing superintendent staying mindful of who and what they talked with and about. The outgoing superintendent did not want to overstep or get in the way of a clean transition. The outgoing superintendent also invited the incoming superintendent to events that community, staff, and board of education members would be at to symbolize the beginning of new leadership

and that they were working together to make the transition smooth. Some of the events that the new superintendent attended included facility recognition and the outgoing superintendent's last board meeting.

The incoming superintendent, upon being named to their new post, first attended to wrapping up important tasks and projects and preparing the district for a new superintendent in the district they were leaving, much like the outgoing superintendent did. This decision limited the opportunities for the newly hired superintendent to begin working in their new district. The incoming superintendent shared that they had spoken with the outgoing superintendent several times and reviewed information left for them on a zip drive. In addition, the incoming superintendent visited the district on multiple occasions. Stakeholder three mentioned the incoming superintendent held an administrative retreat for current administrators in the district.

The incoming superintendent emphasized they wanted to be respectful of their previous district and to also respect the outgoing superintendent as they wrapped up their tenure in the district. The incoming superintendent did not want to take away from the departure and any recognition that the outgoing superintendent was due. Once the new position started on July 1st, the incoming superintendent spent time communicating with individuals and learning about the processes and people they would work closest with while staff were away on summer vacation.

The incoming superintendent reported communication had slowed down with the outgoing superintendent after the first few months, but also reiterated that the outgoing superintendent was available for questions anytime. Early in the incoming superintendent's tenure, the board of education requested that the outgoing superintendent come to a board meeting to ensure that the board was heading in the same direction that the outgoing superintendent had intended. This was a request that the incoming superintendent was amenable

to, but both the outgoing and incoming superintendent did not want this to be something that occurred on a frequent basis. An important transition experience for both superintendents was the openness in communication with the board of education. The outgoing superintendent mentioned they were sometimes approached and asked for input on certain topics by board or community members. The outgoing superintendent knew it was important to be cautious and clear in these interactions and conversations to prevent confusion. The incoming superintendent also understood the situation and was open to involvement from the outgoing superintendent in situations such as social outings. They also worked to ensure that involvement from the outgoing superintendent was appropriate with official communication coming from them once the transition was underway. The outgoing superintendent had displayed behaviors from transformational and distributive leadership frameworks throughout their career. The incoming superintendent adapted to this situation and chose behaviors from the four leadership frameworks based on the situation or individual to lead appropriately based on the needs of the situation. The incoming superintendent's ability to weave in and out of leadership styles allowed for them to address the challenges that develop in a unique situation such as the studied transition.

Summary

The transition between the two superintendents in this study highlighted differences in styles, leadership abilities, and response to specific situations and individuals within the district. Closing out the tenure of the outgoing superintendent required them to set expectations and to apply pressure to staff to get projects to a point they could be finished or taken over by the incoming superintendent. The knowledge of internal and external stakeholders in the district allowed the outgoing superintendent to provide a foundation to guide individuals with a direction they could begin a new school year and manage the process of learning expectations of a new

superintendent. The incoming superintendent's ability to listen and react accordingly to new information aligned to a multi leadership framework approach allowing for them to behave appropriately based on the situation and individual they were working with. The incoming superintendent approached the new position with a learning perspective and being comfortable in leading in new territory. The focus of the incoming superintendent appeared to be balanced with working at the individual level as well as with whole groups. The new superintendent set clear expectations when necessary and used their mentoring background to serve, support, and respond. The researcher noted the incoming superintendent's behaviors in December of their first year continued to align with these skill sets and leadership style.

Chapter 5 - Findings and Conclusions

Chapter 5 will discuss the findings of the research study. Specifically, the findings are detailed from the data collection and data analysis of the LBDQ results of both outgoing and incoming superintendents and stakeholder groups, interviews of both outgoing and incoming superintendents and stakeholder groups, and the observations of the incoming superintendent as aligned with the study's research questions. The researcher will also review the differences and similarities between the outgoing and incoming superintendent data from the LBDQ, interviews, and observations. The findings gathered from the research study will also be discussed as connected to the theoretical framework of Diffusions of Innovations Theory. The findings and alignment to the theoretical framework will influence the recommendations for future research and implications for practice at the end of Chapter 5.

The purpose of the study was to examine the transition in a rural midwestern school district from a long-serving superintendent to a recently hired superintendent from outside the district. The focus will be on superintendent leadership behaviors and how the observed behaviors of the two superintendents influenced the stability and opportunity for change and integration of new ideas during leadership transition. The study identified and described salient organizational and cultural leadership characteristics observed in superintendent behaviors before and after the change in superintendents, and compared, contrasted, and synthesized those observations to generate insights about the transition in leadership.

Connections to Theoretical Framework

The framework used as the basis for the study's theoretical framework was the Diffusion of Innovations Theory (Rogers, 2003). In this section, the researcher will list the findings pertaining to each of the research questions followed by their relationship to the Diffusion of

Innovations Theory and the recommendations and implications that can be inferred from the findings. Specifically, the findings align with the four main elements of the Diffusion of Innovations Theory. These elements include innovation, communication channels, time, and social system (Rogers, 2003). Innovation consists of anything perceived as new (Rogers, 2003). In this study, the incoming superintendent was new to the district. Communication channels had been established by the outgoing superintendent and allowed for information to be shared in a certain way (Rogers, 2003). The incoming superintendent assessed current communication channels and developed alternative channels that fit their leadership style and preferences. Both superintendents had different amounts of time in the district resulting in varying levels of knowledge, thus affecting understanding of communication channels and staff acceptance of the innovation (Rogers, 2003). Finally, the social system under Diffusion of Innovations Theory is termed as units working together to solve a problem (Rogers, 2003). In this study, the social system consisted of the school district, which was not limited to employees, but any individual who had interactions with the school system. Under both superintendents, the parts of the social system they interacted with differed.

Connections to the Research Questions

The findings from the study are organized based on the research questions. The study results were collected from mixed methods strategies of data collection including survey results of superintendents and stakeholders, interviews with superintendents and stakeholders, and observation of the incoming superintendent only. The data collected was analyzed through comparison and contrast of survey responses, coding the interview responses, and comparing observations to interview data and coding. Each finding connects to the Diffusion of Innovations Theory, serving as the study's theoretical framework (Rogers, 2003).

Research Question

How and in what ways is the transition from a long-serving superintendent to a recently hired superintendent in a Midwestern rural school district influenced by the leadership behaviors exhibited by each?

The results of the study show the behaviors of the two superintendents influenced the transition between leadership tenures. The outgoing superintendent exhibited behaviors from the transformational and distributive leadership frameworks. These behaviors influenced the transition to the incoming superintendent through the completion of unfinished projects and the closing of open-ended tasks. The outgoing superintendent communicated and offered resources to the incoming superintendent to aid in an efficient transition. The incoming superintendent utilized behaviors found in all four leadership frameworks. The incoming superintendent selected their behaviors based on the individual and situation. The incoming superintendent weaved in and out of leadership frameworks allowing for their adaptation to their surroundings and the ability to maneuver with the unknowns of a new superintendent position and school district. The incoming superintendent's behaviors allowed for the development of relationships with key identified stakeholders to assist in the communication with the various parts of the district. The behaviors of the incoming superintendent were driven by their focus on stewardship towards the district and its community members.

Research Sub-Question One.

What leadership framework(s) best characterizes the leadership behaviors of the long-serving outgoing superintendent?

The outgoing superintendent utilized various leadership frameworks based on the situation and individual. The outgoing superintendent exhibited behaviors appropriately

described by behaviors included in the transformational and distributive leadership frameworks. Transformational leadership behaviors include a conviction to vision and mission, moral and ethical conduct, collaborative goal setting, and influencing staff growth (Hoy & Miskel, 2012). Distributive leadership includes clear communication of the vision, identification and support of staff initiatives, identification of individual staff skills, and the ability to coordinate multiple tasks and teams (Hoy & Miskel, 2012). The outgoing superintendent served in this district for over thirty years in different capacities. The length of tenure created an ability for the outgoing superintendent to acquire knowledge of both the school district and the community over a long period of time. Knowledge of the organization is a factor in the theoretical framework used for this study (Rogers, 2003). Through acquired knowledge, the outgoing superintendent developed an awareness of the priorities of the community. This awareness allowed the outgoing superintendent opportunities to exhibit the different behaviors seen through the transformation leadership framework lens. The outgoing superintendent was able to develop a vision and mission for the school district. During their tenure, they established priorities and work aligning to the vision and goals of the district. By using the vision of the district as a driver for decisions, the outgoing superintendent was able to build consistency. This consistency in decision-making and alignment to the vision and goals of the district allowed the outgoing superintendent to build a track record perceived by staff as prioritizing the district and its patrons over personal gain. This was evident in multiple stakeholders labeling the superintendent as a steward. The consistency in decision making and the direction of leadership for the district allowed the superintendent both individually and through their leadership team to include staff in collaborative decision-making practices, which in turn, built ownership in the district. Stakeholder input resulted in respect for diverse ideas, the district being able to manage change

and pivot when needed, and limit staff turnover as mentioned during interviews with the outgoing superintendent's selected stakeholders.

The selection of transformational leadership and not servant leadership to describe the outgoing superintendent comes down to the difference between the two leadership frameworks. As described by Hoy and Miskel (2012), servant leadership is a variant of transformational leadership. Comparing the behaviors between transformational and servant leadership, transformational leadership includes the knowledge and use of the vision or mission of the organization (Hoy & Miskel, 2012). Transformational leadership puts the leader as the conductor for change and the stakeholders benefit individually from the guidance and direction of the leader. A servant leader first focuses on the stakeholder (Hoy & Miskel, 2012). Stakeholder needs are considered, and actions are implemented based on the information gained from the individual or group. Transformational leaders need to have a knowledge of the overall direction of the organization and work within those established boundaries, which result in individual growth. True servant leadership is the opposite order, individual growth and support leading to positive effects on the organization (Hoy & Miskel, 2012). A knowledge of the individuals and organizational history allows for consistent sharing of ideas from leadership to staff (Rogers, 2003). The outgoing superintendent had served in the same district for over thirty years resulting in an understanding of the priorities that existed in the community. This understanding allowed them to make decisions following the blueprint that existed and to influence stakeholder growth within that blueprint, resulting in the labeling of their behaviors as transformational leadership.

Data analysis also identified distributive leadership as an additional and important framework to describe the behaviors utilized by the outgoing superintendent. Like transformational leadership, distributive leadership is focused on the leader's ability to utilize an

understanding of individual staff members skills, but the focus of the framework is on achieving results (Hoy & Miskel, 2012). Individual growth can occur in distributive leadership, but the leader's focus is on outcomes for the organization (Hoy & Miskel, 2012). In distributive leadership, the leader clearly communicates the vision of the organization. When distributive leadership does not work, the expectations of the leader are not communicated in a way the stakeholders understand, resulting in the outcomes not being met. Understanding the social network of the district and the communication paths allows for expectations to be spread throughout the organization (Rogers, 2003). The leader is responsible for identifying and supporting staff during the process. Part of the support process in distributive leadership is the leader being deliberate in the selection process of staff and the duties they are assigned to carry out. The leader is responsible for the coordination of individuals and teams assigned to a project. In distributive leadership, depending on the project size, multiple individuals or teams work on the same project in different aspects.

The outgoing superintendent was able to successfully lead the school district for over sixteen years as the superintendent. In concert with distributive leadership, the outgoing superintendent managed teams simultaneously including administrators, educators, and classified staff. The knowledge of the individuals by the outgoing superintendent enhanced their ability to lead these groups towards the set outcomes created by the board of education. A comment made by each of the interviewed stakeholders in this study was their perception that the outgoing superintendent's communication skills were exceptional. The outgoing superintendent was detailed in their directives and established clear expectations for processes. As a leader, the outgoing superintendent listened and aided the staff in navigating challenges that developed. The outgoing superintendent's ability to communicate allowed initiatives during their tenure to move

forward successfully. The ability to communicate with stakeholders with leadership behaviors described in the transformational leadership and distributive leadership frameworks aligned with stakeholder data highlighted by completion of initiatives and staff growth.

Research Sub-Question Two.

What leadership framework(s) best characterizes the leadership behaviors of the recently hired incoming superintendent?

The incoming superintendent utilized behaviors that could be seen in all four leadership frameworks. The leadership behaviors noted in the study's findings show the incoming superintendent going in and out of all four leadership frameworks depending on the individual and situation. When the incoming superintendent chose to use transformational or servant leadership behaviors, those included listening before sharing ideas, influencing staff growth, supportive decision making for stakeholders, and building strong relationships (Hoy & Miskel, 2012). The incoming superintendent and stakeholders both cited the incoming superintendent's ability to listen and collect information on issues as a strength that enhanced their ability to gain knowledge. The incoming superintendent had a history of serving in a mentor role and continued the use of those practices during the first months on the job. The mentoring practices consisted of listening, using questions to gather information, and providing feedback to help stakeholders achieve without the incoming superintendent asserting themselves into the situation. These mentoring practices were spoken of favorably by each of the stakeholders interviewed and were evident during observations. As referenced in the study's theoretical framework, data collected in the study showed the incoming superintendent's ability to build relationships along with their desire to establish relationships further outside of their immediate group of contacts as they worked to expand their involvement and influence in the social network of the district (Rogers,

2003). During interviews, the incoming superintendent shared that service was a focal point of their leadership. They stated service was a driver during their prior leadership positions at the building and district level. An attitude of service prompted the incoming superintendent to finish their work in the exiting district and dictated decisions and behaviors in the new district setting. Observations showed the incoming superintendent putting the school district and its patrons first. Decisions were made for the patrons and staff. This action was witnessed by the researcher's observations during one meeting. The incoming superintendent did not offer any new ideas, but simply tried to help all individuals work together to continue progress in developing a positive athletic arrangement.

An additional leadership framework identified during data collection and analysis were behaviors categorized within the distributive leadership framework. The distributive leadership behaviors the incoming superintendent used included the leader clearly communicating the vision to stakeholders, identifying and supporting staff initiatives, recognizing skills of individuals, and the ability to coordinate multiple tasks and teams (Hoy & Miskel, 2012). In this study, the incoming superintendent continued projects and practices left in place by the outgoing superintendent. The incoming superintendent made the decision to first understand, and then continue where the past leader left off. This allowed projects to evolve naturally while gradually incorporating the incoming superintendent's influence on the direction of the project. This decision by the incoming superintendent highlighted their ability to understand change and realize they were perceived as an innovation to the district (Rogers, 2003). An example of this occurred during early discussions with the recently approved bond issue. The board of education asked for the outgoing superintendent to attend a board meeting to share thoughts on the original intent of the bond issue and to reaffirm the direction of the project. The incoming superintendent

was amenable to this request and communicated with the outgoing superintendent to ensure the original goals were being met. This provided an exchange of knowledge between both leaders. The incoming superintendent assumed a supportive role for staff tasked with undertaking certain aspects of the project. The incoming superintendent lacked time to develop a deep knowledge of some of these projects and several times, allowed other staff members to take the lead on specific events ranging from athletics to audits. In each scenario, the incoming superintendent maintained a distance that allowed staff members to have ownership in the process while also offering support and reaffirming established expectations were being met. The focus of the incoming superintendent prioritized individual support and ensured accountability for outcomes for these established projects. The ability of the incoming superintendent to identify individual skills and manage multiple tasks was evident during one of the observations with the administrative team. The incoming superintendent interacted with each administrator in a unique way based on previous interactions and gathered information on the current state of those projects. Communication flowed among the administrative team. The incoming superintendent's abilities to manage and delegate allowed time for acclimation to the new district while also utilizing existing knowledge possessed by staff knowledgeable about the school district.

The incoming superintendent's leadership behaviors also associated with adaptive leadership. A leader exhibiting adaptive behaviors can balance multiple priorities while achieving results, utilize strategic plans to guide change and direction, improvise, and embrace diverse views (Heifetz et al., 2009). The newness of the incoming superintendent's surroundings created a situation that was unfamiliar. In this study, the incoming superintendent had to spend time collecting information. Unlike the outgoing superintendent who had knowledge and experience of their setting, the incoming superintendent had to navigate the unknown and fill in

knowledge gaps before they led their constituents in a certain direction. The incoming superintendent stakeholder group cited several instances during interviews and on the LBDQ, the new superintendent possessed an ability to be open and accepting of the unknown. The incoming superintendent asked questions and listened during observations and in interview responses in the same manner, exhibiting adaptive leadership (Heifetz et al., 2009). These behaviors were also perceived as effective by stakeholders in the interviews and LBDQ. The stakeholder responses also showed they acknowledged the various projects and situations the incoming superintendent needed to respond to and manage while learning a new district and community. The leadership behavior used most by the incoming superintendent based on stakeholder reports was frequent communication. Frequent communication gave the incoming superintendent an ability to learn in a short amount of time and be able to understand the communication structure in existence and mold it into what worked for them. An exhibited adaptive behavior of embracing diverse views was frequently cited in stakeholder comments (Heifetz et al., 2009).

Research Sub-Question Three.

In what ways and to what extent was the transition influenced by leadership characteristics of the outgoing superintendent, leadership characteristics of the incoming superintendent, and congruence/alignment between them?

Both superintendents' leadership behaviors affected the transition between the two superintendent tenures. The outgoing superintendent primarily displayed transformational leadership and distributive leadership. This was evidenced by their announcement of retiring over a year and a half before they officially left the position. This allowed time for the outgoing superintendent to prepare staff and close out important tasks before the transition occurred and the start of the incoming superintendent's contract. The outgoing superintendent shifted their

focus from achievement to preparation for the unknown. The incoming superintendent displayed distributive, service, and adaptive leadership behaviors. The behaviors the incoming superintendent utilized consisted of frequent communication and listening. Because the outgoing superintendent worked to get things in order along with priming internal and external stakeholders for the upcoming change in leadership, the incoming superintendent seemed to pick up where the outgoing superintendent left off. These actions were evident through the incoming superintendent's communication with the outgoing superintendent, immediate communication with stakeholders, and immersion into existing district data and artifacts. The outgoing superintendent arranged existing procedures in a way that the incoming superintendent could understand and translate into future decisions and actions.

The superintendents were able to shrink the gap that existed between them and allow for clear ending and starting points for the tenures. From each superintendent's perspective, they had a responsibility to complete their leadership story in each of the districts impacted by the change and to ensure a smooth and respectful transition. For the outgoing superintendent, their communication with stakeholders had to reflect their impending exit. This meant they had to close tasks out and limit opinions and sharing situational information. When questions or concerns arose, each superintendent reminded stakeholders they were no longer the superintendent and their role had changed. They encouraged stakeholders to communicate with the new incoming superintendents. The incoming superintendent displayed a respectfulness towards the way things had been done under the previous leader. Sweeping changes were not evidenced. By establishing their preferred way of doing things, evolutionary change rather than revolutionary change manifested for a smoother transition (Burke, 2018). Both leaders recognized their new role and starting point. The outgoing superintendent remained available to

the incoming superintendent. The incoming superintendent communicated with the outgoing superintendent as needed. Both leaders allowed the district to remain open to influence and new information. The practices displayed by both superintendents allowed the district and community to navigate a transition free of disruptions caused by abrupt changes.

Differences and Similarities between Outgoing and Incoming Superintendent Data

The LBDQ data shows differences between the outgoing and incoming superintendent. The first area of difference is between the self-ratings of the superintendents. The outgoing superintendent rated themselves higher than the incoming superintendent in the following areas: representation, persuasiveness, initiation of structure, and production emphasis. The incoming superintendent rated themselves higher in demand reconciliation, tolerance of uncertainty, role assumption, and consideration. The areas of tolerance and freedom, superior orientation, and integration were close in ratings by each superintendent but did not have a substantial difference between the two superintendents. Both superintendent results aligned with the data acquired from their personal interviews and the incoming superintendent observations. The LBDQ subscales highest for the outgoing superintendent highlighted the leadership behaviors of representing the district, persuading groups to move in the same direction as the district vision and developing parameters to ensure outcomes. The incoming superintendent subscales fit their role as a mentor. The incoming superintendent offered support to their stakeholders to help with the demands they faced, considered their individual needs by listening, faced uncertainty with confidence, demonstrated ease in working towards task completion over time, and shared the leadership role with their staff depending on the situation.

The stakeholder LBDQ response differences between the two superintendent groups showed the outgoing superintendent group scored the outgoing superintendent higher than the

incoming stakeholder group scored the new superintendent. An interesting part is the subscale ratings by the incoming superintendent and their selected stakeholders were closer in alignment. Tolerance of uncertainty, role assumption, and consideration were identified as the higher rated subscales for the incoming superintendent. This data confirms the incoming stakeholder group recognized the mentor style of leadership the incoming superintendent utilized. When comparing both stakeholder groups' responses, the incoming superintendent received higher ratings in seven out of the twelve subscales. The recency of interactions between the incoming superintendent and their stakeholder group could be a factor in these scores as the stakeholders selected for the outgoing superintendent had not worked together for multiple years. Another factor in this difference in scoring could be the leadership behaviors exhibited by the incoming superintendent. Their desire to employ mentoring behaviors increased the involvement between the incoming superintendent and their stakeholder group. They met frequently and discussed the needs of the projects they were working on. The incoming superintendent also communicated with the teaching and classified staff through the administrative team, the same people selected to participate in the stakeholder group. The outgoing superintendent chose individuals from various positions in the district operation which portrayed them in a different light during the stages of data collection.

The alignment between the stakeholder group answers and the superintendent self-ratings was an area of interest for the researcher. Both superintendents shared the greatest amount of misalignment in persuasiveness, initiation of structure, and production emphasis. In each of these areas, the superintendents scored themselves lower than the stakeholder scores revealed. Looking deeper at the first misalignment of persuasiveness, the difference in alignment for the incoming superintendent was a difference of nine and a half points compared to the outgoing

superintendent difference of seven points. The study collected data to measure the perceptions of leadership behaviors. A possible explanation for this misalignment between the respective superintendents and their stakeholders could be the interpretation of the word persuasiveness. For a superintendent, persuasion could mean not being truthful or having to sell a particular idea to the stakeholders. Reflecting on the interview data, both superintendents seemed to pride themselves in transparent communication. Both felt they were effective communicators and held the best interest of their stakeholders at heart. This could explain the low score. Another possibility for the alignment could be the tendency of both superintendents to underrate themselves. There was no category that the outgoing superintendent gave themselves a higher score than the stakeholders. The incoming superintendent scored themselves higher than the stakeholder average on two out of the twelve subscales. The subscales of initiation of structure and production emphasis were also misaligned between the responses of the superintendents and their stakeholders. Much like the possibilities with the subscale of persuasions misalignment, these could have also been a difference in interpretation. Depending on the position of the stakeholder, initiation of structure and production emphasis behaviors could be viewed as desired. Stakeholder interviews for both superintendents showed a level of satisfaction from the individual stakeholder perceptions. The subscales of production emphasis and initiation of structure gave each of them a direction and an expectation of the desired result. From the outgoing and incoming superintendent perspectives, they both used the word servant in describing their leadership. As a servant, the thought of focusing on the outcome and providing directives does not align. In the case of this research study, the stakeholders appreciated those behaviors from their respective superintendents.

Looking at the data collected from the LBDQ shows the outgoing superintendent stakeholders were closer in standard deviation than the incoming superintendent stakeholder group. Reasons for this result could include having more time to work and learn with the outgoing superintendent or consistency of the superintendent's leadership behaviors with all groups of stakeholders in the district. The incoming superintendent group with a higher standard deviation could also show the variety of methods the incoming superintendent used to work with their stakeholders. It could also indicate the incoming superintendent frequently chose leadership behaviors based on the individual they found themselves engaged in a task with. Combining the standard deviations of both groups changes the data. The lower score belongs to the incoming superintendent group. The researcher initially thought time would have given the outgoing superintendent group a lower standard deviation, but this was not the case. The incoming superintendent's frequent interaction and communication with their stakeholders seems to have increased familiarity with their stakeholders. Time appears to be a factor in the response alignment between both groups but indicates the longer a group works together does not necessarily equate with increased knowledge of a superintendent's leadership behaviors. Instead, the time apart seems to lower the knowledge of those behaviors and in the case of the incoming superintendent, longevity had less impact than frequency of communication. Knowledge of leadership behaviors can be acquired in a short amount of time if there are substantive interactions between the leader and their stakeholders.

Implications for Practice

Implications for practice were developed from data collected during the research study and the connections made in the findings to the theoretical framework Diffusion of Innovations Theory (Rogers, 2003). Through reflecting on the experiences of both superintendents and

analyzing it through the theoretical framework, the following implications for practice during superintendent transition are offered: 1) respectful communication needs to be developed between the outgoing and incoming superintendents; 2) the outgoing superintendent should identify stakeholders who can serve in a supportive role for the incoming superintendent; 3) the incoming superintendent needs to prioritize building a system for frequent communication; 4) the incoming superintendent should select leadership behaviors based on the situation or individual, 5) experience matters in superintendent transition, and 6) increasing knowledge and skills in leadership preparation programs is important.

Respectful Communication between Superintendents

The first implication derived from the findings of the research is ongoing support and communication from the outgoing superintendent can be productive but needs to be managed so that both superintendents are comfortable in how communication is occurring with stakeholders in the district. In this research setting, the knowledge of the community, school district, individuals and groups, and past experiences were viewed as a value by the incoming superintendent. The information left behind by the outgoing superintendent, both written and verbal, was utilized by the incoming superintendent. Communication between these individuals was slow at first due to the incoming superintendent's decision to focus on closing out their tenure in their previous school district. This did not matter because of the outgoing superintendent's organization and diligence in leaving files and making themself available for contact from the incoming superintendent as needed.

It is important for an outgoing superintendent to manage their communication, not only with the incoming superintendent, but also when engaging with community members. The outgoing superintendent has both the challenge and opportunity to allow for a new voice and

different ideas to be shared in the district. For the outgoing superintendent, a focus on supporting the incoming superintendent through openness and sharing information proved invaluable. The incoming superintendent was able to refer to previous practices that helped unlock answers to some of the questions that accompany a new position. The outgoing superintendent should also be mindful of their conversations with members of the district and community. The ability of an outgoing superintendent to stay neutral in their comments can minimize the impact on the incoming superintendent by not swaying opinions and creating rifts in the communication between stakeholders. The outgoing superintendent upon the completion of their tenure should separate themselves from the role of superintendent and limit any comments that could affect the new direction and stability of the district. The outgoing superintendent in this study mentioned having to be careful about sharing too much or giving their opinion when asked questions or during conversations. Separation does not mean conversations should not happen, but the content of a conversation needs to remain neutral.

For the incoming superintendent, the ability to remain open to sharing of information is an important piece to the transition between superintendents as noted in the study's theoretical framework (Rogers, 2003). The incoming superintendent should listen to what is said, not to guide, but to inform their decision making and to create knowledge. In the research study, there was an instance of the incoming superintendent feeling apprehensive about a request by the school board to invite the outgoing superintendent to an upcoming board meeting to discuss bond project progress. The incoming superintendent, having feelings about the request, communicated openly with the board, and discussed future requests. For the incoming superintendent, this was an important action because it allowed both the incoming superintendent and the school board the opportunity to discuss their expectations and wishes in the relationship. Another important

factor was the willingness of the outgoing superintendent to avoid any perception of overstepping. The initial stage of the incoming superintendent's tenure is important to establish norms and parameters that limit anyone feeling awkward or offended. Not only does the incoming superintendent need to establish communication and share new ideas while protecting traditions, but they must also set boundaries for those in the community and district. There is a balancing act for an incoming superintendent between being open to ideas and suggestions and establishing the direction of their leadership and tenure. Maintaining a working relationship with the outgoing superintendent can make visible and illustrate what the community needs to see in retaining important traditions. Identifying an individual who can share knowledge and traditions is an important task for a new superintendent.

Identify Key Stakeholders for Support

Identifying individuals who can be a helpful resource to the incoming superintendent is necessary. Developing communication with these individuals needs to be a priority. Key stakeholders may be different depending on the superintendent. In this study, the stakeholder group selected by the outgoing superintendent was different from the group selected by the incoming superintendent. Some of the reasons for this difference were length of tenure, in district versus out-of-district hire, physical placement of office and workload, and difference in staff makeup. The outgoing superintendent had a much larger group to choose from for their stakeholder group than the incoming superintendent due to the length of time in the district. Each of the superintendents had uniquely identified individuals acknowledged as people who were helpful and trustworthy.

For an incoming superintendent, these individuals can fill in gaps important to understanding the history of the district, respected traditions, and prioritizing duties. Key

stakeholders can also offer a listening ear, supportive advice, and be an advocate amongst the staff. Regardless of the role, selection of key stakeholders for an incoming superintendent is a task that will aid in communication of their ideas and suggestions while generating a support system in a new professional environment. A recommendation for an incoming superintendent is to select individuals who hold both a presence with the existing district staff and whose goals align with theirs. Both superintendents selected individuals who held positions in the hierarchy of the school district. This is a powerful tool when selected stakeholders are individuals who can influence the level of support from the staff.

Develop a System of Communication

Developing a system of consistent, accurate, and transparent communication between the incoming superintendent and stakeholders needs to be a priority. Depending on the physical location of a superintendent's office in the district, regular communication may take on different forms such as personal or technologically based. Regardless, regular communication with school staff is essential. The method with which communication occurs is dependent on the factors associated with the superintendent's position. Regular communication with the school board and other advisory groups is recommended. The amount of communication that is needed from an incoming superintendent varies based on expectations by each group they serve, but eliminating gaps between communication needs to be a priority. Staying in communication with stakeholders or creating a system to ensure accurate communication helps an incoming superintendent spread directives and dispel misnomers, while also getting input from stakeholders. When communication stops, confusion will follow. In the absence of communication, others will step in to supplant the leader's voice. Being new in a district is a precarious position considering all the possible missteps that can occur. When following a long tenured superintendent, it is

important for an incoming superintendent to remember there will be apprehension and anxiety about the change. A change in leadership is like any other change, having numbers creates support (Burke, 2018). The numbers of supporters only grows if a communication system exists to recruit those supporters.

Exercise Individual and Situational Based Leadership Behaviors

Incoming superintendent leadership behaviors need to be based on the individual and situation so that interactions can remain fluid from the standpoint of an incoming superintendent. During the research study, the superintendents could not name the specific leadership framework, but they each could explain why they led a certain way. The stakeholders rarely described a specific leadership framework, but they could identify the behaviors that their respective superintendent utilized. Incoming superintendents are entering an expansive environment that can be daunting. By following the recommendation of basing leadership behaviors based on individual or situational needs, the enormity of a new position can be lessened. Focusing energy on one person or small group is different than trying to lead an entire district at once. Each stakeholder in an organization is different and requires leadership that fits a moment in time (Rogers, 2003).

Leadership is an evolving process and requires behaviors and actions to evolve as well. In retrospect, stakeholder responses of incoming superintendent behaviors revealed patterns in this study, but each stakeholder additionally described the incoming superintendent's ability to gather information to make an appropriate response as a strength. A factor in the ability of the studied superintendents to transition between tenures was an ability to continue to learn and develop their leadership behaviors to fit the setting they were in. For the outgoing superintendent, they had to earn skills to lead when not in the superintendency. The incoming superintendent had to

manage perceptions around what past leadership had been along with managing their leadership behaviors to fit unfamiliar situations. Continued growth and staying mindful of experiences can aid an incoming superintendent's ability to learn to lead as the situation warrants. It is strongly recommended to not lead as you want, but to lead as the situation warrants.

Experience Matters

The research study highlighted the experience of both the outgoing superintendent and the incoming superintendent. The outgoing superintendent's extensive experience in the district resulted in a deep understanding of community values and traditions along with establishing strong relationships across stakeholder groups over time. These experiences, complimented by the longevity of this superintendent's tenure, resulted in a "tight knit" community family. The outgoing superintendent demonstrated consistent and respected leadership decisions. The incoming superintendent had much less experience but had served in the superintendency in a previous school district. With this prior experience, the incoming superintendent had opportunities to reflect on when making leadership decisions in the new setting. Although neither superintendent specifically mentioned leadership frameworks by name during the study, they understood the behaviors and intent of these leadership frameworks. Therefore, having experience matters and shaped the results of this study. Superintendents transitioning between districts must find ways to effectively leave and enter school districts and learn from past leadership experience to position themselves for successful transition. For newly positioned superintendents, seasoned mentors who can address the "gap" in experience and other professional organization support to build networks are critical during the first year on the job.

Leadership Preparation

Leadership preparation programs specializing in educational leadership present an advantageous opportunity to teach future superintendents important skills as they move into district leadership positions. The leadership behaviors identified in the four leadership frameworks used in this study provide important knowledge and dispositions as new superintendents embark on their first journey. Both superintendents in this study carried out leadership actions respected by their stakeholders and in response to varied situations aligned to these noted leadership frameworks. A greater emphasis in teaching prospective superintendents about transformational, servant, distributive, and adaptive leadership gives a new superintendent additional insight into utilizing appropriate behaviors as identified in these frameworks as they encounter new people and begin to establish their own leadership style in a new setting.

An additional insight into leadership preparation gleaned from this study includes coaching skills. The incoming superintendent's previous experience and training in coaching practices proved to be valuable in the transition and these behaviors were utilized frequently. Furthermore, stakeholders perceived these skills to be effective in initial encounters with staff and the community. For prospective superintendents, an opportunity to learn and practice coaching skills allows a new leader to navigate the magnitude of situations, determine next steps, and manage communication with staff.

Along with knowledge of the leadership frameworks and coaching skills, understanding dynamics typical in career transitions relative to one's own leadership experiences, provides a prospective superintendent the ability to be better prepared and equipped with a toolbox of approaches during the transition itself. Each school district is unique. New superintendents must be able to forecast, identify key stakeholders, and continually reflect on their own individual

leadership style and skills while assessing how initial leadership actions are being perceived and accepted in the new district. Implementing these practices in leadership preparation programs could include curriculum enhancements, field experiences, and observations. In addition, encouraging new district leaders to spend time increasing knowledge in emotional intelligence, leading change, consistent messaging and communication, and self-reflection could be beneficial. The observed superintendents in this study had experiences to draw from. In preparing candidates for the superintendency, building habits in self-reflection, understanding their own strengths, utilization of key behaviors from the leadership frameworks, and knowing more about coaching skills, can build resiliency important to the job and the interactions a new district leader might expect to encounter. Opportunities to practice leadership behaviors and reflect on anticipated reaction of stakeholders in different professional settings during leadership preparation will benefit new superintendents in future district leadership roles.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on this research study, the following recommendations for future research have been identified to further explore superintendent transitions.

Recommendation One

The researcher studied a specific school environment, size, and tenure of identified superintendents, along with a relatively short time (i.e., four months) for the new superintendent to transition. Future studies could include urban and suburban districts along with various sizes of school districts. The types of transitions that occur in districts are individualized based on environmental factors. Nationally, there are a wide range of districts that bring their own unique aspects. This study narrowed its focus to a small, rural school district, but transitions will occur

differently based on the individual characteristics of each district studied. The opportunities for study in these areas are vast.

Recommendation Two

Years of experience for the incoming superintendent could be studied as there have been vacancies filled by superintendent candidates with no previous experience as a superintendent. The factor of experience could present itself in multiple forms in terms of leadership performance by a superintendent. One instance of this same study and the difference the length of tenure makes is if an incoming superintendent with no experience attempts to follow a long tenured superintendent. This phenomenon has inherent challenges that deserve further exploration. An incoming superintendent is inherently unique, and many factors exist that can influence leadership behaviors and superintendent transition. As found in this study, experience proved to be helpful for the incoming superintendent. The large number of superintendent position openings and subsequent transitions carries a wide array of effects on each individual superintendent and district transition.

Recommendation Three

Another factor for further study is the area of superintendent gender. The study examined distinct qualities that worked for a long tenure of a male superintendent. The incoming superintendent, a female leader, faced different challenges. Future research could pose an abundance of questions and possibilities. The same study could be utilized to examine the effect gender played in perceptions by the stakeholders and superintendents themselves. Do the behaviors change if it is a female superintendent who is being replaced or is new? The question of the effect gender has on perceptions could inform superintendent transition as a future research topic.

Recommendation Four

Superintendent communication, a professionally evaluated behavior for superintendents, is an area that would benefit from further exploration. The researcher mentioned frequency, transparency, and type of communication in this study, but not any one instance in depth. The ability to communicate was highlighted frequently in this study as a behavior both superintendents used in their role. Communication was also shown to be a tool that influences staff in and out of transitions by the Diffusion of Innovations theory (Rogers, 2003). A deeper look into the effects of communication along with the study of effective superintendents and how they use communication would provide future leaders and practitioners with a guide into developing their communication skills.

Recommendation Five

Alongside communication, the different relationships that exist during a transition is another avenue to investigate further. This study identified the need for an incoming superintendent to identify individuals with whom they communicated for knowledge of the new district. The depth of the relationship differs based on the type of individual and their role in the district. In this study, the outgoing and incoming superintendents selected stakeholders with different positions in the district. A comparable and representative group of stakeholders across varied positions for the outgoing and incoming superintendent may be important to consider. Being able to identify stakeholders within a district who could move the momentum of an innovation in a positive direction is a knowledge base that is important to investigate for future leaders. Possible relationships could include the board and superintendent, the superintendent and administrative team, the superintendent and staff, the superintendent and community committees, and the superintendent and their relationship with professional service centers.

Recommendation Six

One aspect stands out in all these possible future research paths, effectiveness. This research study did not examine effectiveness. A future direction for research could be to take the identification of leadership behaviors a step further and assess the effectiveness of certain leadership traits. The result could be an accumulation of leadership practices accompanied by data allowing future leaders to pick and choose their leadership methods based on effectiveness. Another aspect for research is the study of leader effectiveness in certain environments such as a transition between superintendents. Knowing who and what is performing effectively could create blueprints for further study to be emulated by future leaders.

Conclusion

The findings from this research study exhibited multiple takeaways proved to be factors in the transition between superintendents in this small, rural Midwestern district. The outgoing superintendent was found to have implemented behaviors in most of the subscales resulting in the use of behaviors specific to all four of the leadership frameworks. The outgoing superintendent was found to frequently use behaviors in transformational and distributive leadership frameworks. The incoming superintendent, like the outgoing superintendent, utilized behaviors from all four leadership frameworks and exhibited behaviors in all twelve of the LBDQ subscales. The incoming superintendent was found to weave in and out of the four leadership frameworks depending on the situation. The incoming superintendent was also found to make leadership behavior selections based on the situation and individual. Both superintendents used behaviors that affected the transition resulting in shared information, the development of district knowledge of past practices, the ability to build a communication system, and the identification of key individuals to aid in the sharing of information with district

stakeholders. Additional findings showed the incoming superintendent and their stakeholders had less standard deviation in their responses than the outgoing superintendent group. The researcher inferred from this finding if the selection of key stakeholders is done in a way to create a working knowledge of meaningful behaviors, the amount of time needed for an incoming superintendent to establish themselves in the district and the communication and social structures is reduced. The recommendations drawn from the findings provide superintendents transitioning into small, rural school districts with a roadmap for successful practices. Recommendations for future studies include exploring transitions in other settings, time frames, superintendent characteristics, and superintendent tenures. This study showcases the ability to communicate with stakeholders for an incoming superintendent transitioning into a small, rural school district is important. An incoming superintendent's ability to communicate with their new district will allow them to navigate change more naturally, or evolutionary, develop communication channels to ensure accurate information related to change and leadership actions, provide opportunities to listen to stakeholders, have the time needed to establish their leadership, and build relationships to further establish their leadership and impact in the district.

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Appendix A - Outgoing Superintendent Invitation and Consent

Letter of Invitation to Participate in a Research Study August 2023

Title of Study: A case study of superintendent leadership behaviors: Bridging the transition between a new and long-serving superintendent

Principal Investigators: Donna Augustine-Shaw, Ed.D., Associate Professor, Department of Education Leadership, College of Education, Kansas State University

Student Principal Investigator: Daniel Farley, Doctoral Student, College of Education, Kansas State University

Dear Participant,
I, Daniel Farley, from the Department of Educational Leadership in the College of Education, Kansas State University, invite you to participate in a research project entitled, "A case study of superintendent leadership behaviors: Bridging the transition between a new and long-serving superintendent".

The purpose of this study is to examine the leadership behaviors of a rural superintendent during the transition period following the retirement of a long-serving superintendent. In addition, the study will identify the leadership framework(s) most closely aligned to the leadership behaviors of the new superintendent as derived from the findings of the study.

The expected duration: Up to 3 45–60-minute face-to-face interviews and participation in completing the Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire. The interviews will be recorded using a recording device provided by the researcher. The recording will be uploaded to the researcher's password protected computer and will be stored until the dissertation process has been completed. Upon completion of the dissertation process, the recordings will be deleted, and any transcripts will be shredded.

The location of these interviews will be in the natural setting: the specific participant's office or preferred location. The times and dates of the interviews and completion of the questionnaire will be determined by the participant.

This research should benefit the district leadership in understanding the identified leadership behaviors of the outgoing superintendent. Benefits of the study will also extend to other school districts undergoing a superintendent transition. To maximize the use of the information collected from this study, identifiers of participants will be removed from the identifiable private information and after such removal, the information could be used for future research studies or distributed to another investigator for future research studies without additional informed consent.

If you have any pertinent questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Kansas State University of Research Compliance Office at 203 Fairchild Hall Manhattan KS, 66502; at 785-532-3224; 785-532-3278 fax; or comply@k-state.edu.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me (see below for contact information).

Thank you,

Daniel Farley, Doctoral Student, College of Education, Kansas State University, 620-440-1972
dmfarley@ksu.edu

I understand this project is research, and that my participation is voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent at any time, and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits, or academic standing to which I may otherwise be entitled. I, _____, consent to participating in the described study on _____, 2023.

Appendix B - New Superintendent Invitation and Consent

Letter of Invitation to Participate in a Research Study August 2023

Title of Study: A case study of superintendent leadership behaviors: Bridging the transition between a new and long-serving superintendent

Principal Investigators: Donna Augustine-Shaw, Ed.D., Associate Professor, Department of Education Leadership, College of Education, Kansas State University

Student Principal Investigator: Daniel Farley, Doctoral Student, College of Education, Kansas State University

Dear Participant, :
I, Daniel Farley, from the Department of Educational Leadership in the College of Education, Kansas State University, invite you to participate in a research project entitled, "A case study of superintendent leadership behaviors: Bridging the transition between a new and long-serving superintendent".

The purpose of this study is to examine the leadership behaviors of a rural superintendent during the transition period following the retirement of a long-serving superintendent. In addition, the study will identify the leadership framework(s) most closely aligned to the leadership behaviors of the new superintendent as derived from the findings of the study.

The expected duration: one to three 45–60-minute face-to-face interviews, observation(s) in selected leadership scenarios within the district, and completion of the Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire. The interviews will be recorded using a recording device provided by the researcher. The recording will be uploaded to the researcher's password protected computer and will be stored until the dissertation process has been completed. Upon completion of the dissertation process, the recordings will be deleted, and any transcripts will be shredded.

The location of these interviews will be in the natural setting: the specific participant's office or building. The times and dates of the interviews, observation(s), and questionnaire completion will be determined by the participant.

This research should benefit the district leadership in understanding the identified leadership behaviors of the outgoing and new superintendent. Benefits of the study will also extend to other school districts undergoing a superintendent transition. To maximize the use of the information collected from this study, identifiers of participants will be removed from the identifiable private information and after such removal, the information could be used for future research studies or distributed to another investigator for future research studies without additional informed consent.

If you have any pertinent questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Kansas State University of Research Compliance Office at 203 Fairchild Hall Manhattan KS, 66502; at 785-532-3224; 785-532-3278 fax; or comply@k-state.edu.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me (see below for contact information).

Thank you,

Daniel Farley, Doctoral Student, College of Education, Kansas State University, 620-440-1972
dmfarley@ksu.edu

I understand this project is research, and that my participation is voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent at any time, and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits, or academic standing to which I may otherwise be entitled. I, _____, consent to participating in the described study on _____, 2023.

Appendix C - Stakeholder Invitation and Consent

Letter of Invitation to Participate in a Research Study August 2023

Title of Study: A case study of superintendent leadership behaviors: Bridging the transition between a new and long-serving superintendent

Principal Investigators: Donna Augustine-Shaw, Ed.D., Associate Professor, Department of Education Leadership, College of Education, Kansas State University

Student Principal Investigator: Daniel Farley, Doctoral Student, College of Education, Kansas State University

Dear Participant, :
I, Daniel Farley, from the Department of Educational Leadership in the College of Education, Kansas State University, invite you to participate in a research project entitled, "A case study of superintendent leadership behaviors: Bridging the transition between a new and long-serving superintendent".

The purpose of this study is to examine the leadership behaviors of a rural superintendent during the transition period following the retirement of a long-serving superintendent. In addition, the study will identify the leadership framework(s) most closely aligned to the leadership behaviors of the new superintendent as derived from the findings of the study.

The expected duration: one 45–60-minute face-to-face interview and completion of the Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire. The interviews will be recorded using a recording device provided by the researcher. The recording will be uploaded to the researcher's password protected computer and will be stored until the dissertation process has been completed. Upon completion of the dissertation process, the recordings will be deleted, and any transcripts will be shredded.

The location of the interview and questionnaire completion will be in a natural setting comfortable for the participant. The times and dates of the interview and questionnaire completion will be determined by the participant.

This research should benefit the district leadership in understanding the identified leadership behaviors of the outgoing superintendent. Benefits of the study will also extend to other school districts undergoing a superintendent transition. To maximize the use of the information collected from this study, identifiers of participants will be removed from the identifiable private information and after such removal, the information could be used for future research studies or distributed to another investigator for future research studies without additional informed consent.

If you have any pertinent questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Kansas State University of Research Compliance Office at 203 Fairchild Hall Manhattan KS, 66502; at 785-532-3224; 785-532-3278 fax; or comply@k-state.edu.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me (see below for contact information).

Thank you,

Daniel Farley, Doctoral Student, College of Education, Kansas State University, 620-440-1972
dmfarley@ksu.edu

I understand this project is research, and that my participation is voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent at any time, and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits, or academic standing to which I may otherwise be entitled. I, _____, consent to participating in the described study on _____, 2023.

Appendix D - Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire Permission

Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire Permission

Below is the permission that the researcher received from the Max M. Fisher College of Business to use the Leadership Behavior Discussion Questionnaire (LBDQ) for the dissertation study entitled: "A case study of superintendent leadership behaviors: Bridging the transition between a new and long-serving superintendent". Included in the permission is the 1957 Shortform manual and the LBDQ form.

The Leadership Initiative at Max M. Fisher College of Business thanks you for requesting access to the LBDQ materials for academic purposes. You will find two PDF documents hyperlinked below this message. You are free to use these documents to advance your study.*

The Leadership Initiative provides evidence-based leadership in many forms, including workshops, webinars, conferences, certificated leadership programs and Lead Read Today – a platform that provides leadership and management best practices to assist current or emerging leaders. Upon completion of your study, we would be happy to publish your findings and the practical implications for leaders or organizations on this platform. Please contact our team at leadership@osu.edu if you are interested in writing an article for Lead Read Today.

We wish you success with your study!

Sincerely,

The Leadership Initiative team

*Materials: (*These documents are owned by Max M. Fisher College of Business at The Ohio State University.)*

1957 lbdq shortform manual

Lbdq formxii self

Appendix E - LBDQ Subscales

Definition of the Subscales - *Taken from the LBDQ manual

Each subscale is composed of either five or ten items. A subscale is necessarily defined by its component items and represents a rather complex pattern of behaviors. Brief definitions of the subscales are listed below:

1. Representation - speaks and acts as the representative of the group. (5 items)
2. Demand Reconciliation - reconciles conflicting demands and reduces disorder to system. (5 items)
3. Tolerance of Uncertainty- is able to tolerate uncertainty and postponement without anxiety or upset. (10 items)
4. Persuasiveness - uses persuasion and argument effectively; exhibits strong convictions. (10 items)
5. Initiation of Structure - clearly defines own role, and lets followers know what is expected. (10 items)
6. Tolerance and Freedom - allows followers scope for initiative, decision and action. (10 items)
7. Role Assumption - actively exercises the leadership role rather than surrendering leadership to others. (10 items)
8. Consideration - regards the comfort, well-being, status, and contributions of followers. (10 items)
9. Production Emphasis-applies pressure for productive output. (10 items)
10. Predictive Accuracy- exhibits foresight and ability to predict outcome accurately. (5 items)
11. Integration - maintains a closely knit organization; resolves inter- member conflicts. (5 items)
12. Superior Orientation - maintains cordial relations with superiors; has influence with them; is striving for higher status. (10 items)

Appendix F - Outgoing Superintendent Interview Protocol

Outgoing Superintendent Interview Protocol

The below questions will be asked in an interview with the outgoing superintendent. The interviews will be recorded, transcribed, coded, and stored for the three-year time frame following publication of the dissertation study. These questions will also serve as the basis for follow-up interviews as the researcher determines is necessary.

1. In what ways did you advocate for the well-being of the school district? What methods did you use to persuade and educate others on the reality of situations you addressed?
2. Describe the behaviors you used in situations where you were aware of the demands on staff and worked to improve those situations so the necessary tasks could be completed?
3. Are you able to control your emotions? What behaviors did you use to stay calm in stressful situations?
4. How did you communicate the roles and responsibilities of groups and individuals in the school district? Within these roles, did you allow for the freedom for individual staff members to make decisions on how best to reach desired outcomes? Did you ever have to step into a situation to correct the process to ensure the desired outcome was achieved? If so, describe the leadership behaviors you employed.
5. Did you ever step out of your role of leader and allow someone else to lead the situation? From your perspective, how was the relationship between you and the school board? What behaviors did you use to influence this relationship?
6. In what ways did you recognize staff for productive outcomes and individual successes?
7. Were you able to forecast challenges and obstacles before they occurred? What practices did you utilize to be able to do this?
8. In your perspective, would you consider the school district a tight knit organization under your leadership? If not, how would you describe it? What

behaviors did you employ during your leadership that increased your perspective and your ability to understand the stakeholders and the school district?

Appendix G - Incoming Superintendent Interview Protocol

New Superintendent Interview Protocol

The below questions will be asked in an interview with the incoming superintendent. The interviews will be recorded, transcribed, coded, and stored for the three-year time frame following publication of the dissertation study. These questions will also serve as the basis for follow-up interviews as the researcher determines is necessary.

1. In what ways have you advocated for the well-being of the school district? What methods have you used or plan to use to persuade and educate others on the reality of situations you are addressing?
2. Describe the behaviors you have used in situations where you were aware of the demands on staff and worked to improve those situations so the necessary tasks could be completed?
3. Are you able to control your emotions? What behaviors do you use to stay calm in stressful situations?
4. How do you communicate the roles and responsibilities of groups and individuals in the school district? Within these roles, do you allow for the freedom for individual staff members to make decisions on how best to reach the desired outcomes? Have you had to step into a situation to correct the process to ensure the desired outcome was achieved? If so, describe the leadership behaviors you employed.
5. Have you stepped out of your role of leader and allowed someone else to lead the situation? From your perspective, how has the relationship been between you and the school board? What behaviors did you use to influence this relationship and allow for the leadership capacity to develop in the school board?
6. In what ways have you recognized staff for productive outcomes and individual successes?
7. Have you been able to forecast challenges and obstacles before they occurred during your first 90 days? What practices did you utilize to be able to do this or plan to utilize?

8. In your perspective, would you consider the school district that you inherited a tight knit organization? If not, how would you describe it? What behaviors have you employed during your leadership that have increased your perspective and your ability to understand the stakeholders and the school district?

Appendix H - Stakeholder Interview Protocol

Stakeholder Interview Protocol

The below questions will be asked in interviews with stakeholders regarding the outgoing superintendent. The interviews will be recorded, transcribed, coded, and stored for the three-year time frame following publication of the dissertation study.

1. In what ways did you observe the outgoing superintendent advocating for the well-being of the school district? What methods did you see the superintendent use to persuade and educate others on the reality of the situations they had to deal with?
2. Describe situations that you observed the outgoing superintendent being aware of the demands on staff and working to improve those situations so the necessary tasks could be completed?
3. Is the outgoing superintendent able to control their emotions? How have you witnessed the outgoing superintendent being able to stay calm in stressful situations?
4. How did the outgoing superintendent communicate the roles and responsibilities of groups and individuals in the school district? Within these roles, did the outgoing superintendent allow for the freedom for individual staff members to make decisions on how best to reach desired outcomes? Did you ever witness the superintendent needing to step into a situation to correct the process to ensure the desired outcome was achieved?
5. Did you ever experience a time where the outgoing superintendent stepped out of their role as superintendent and allowed someone else to lead the situation? From your perspective, how was the relationship between the school board and the outgoing superintendent. What influenced your perspective?
6. In what ways did the outgoing superintendent recognize staff for productive outcomes and individual successes?
7. Did the outgoing superintendent seem to be able to forecast challenges and obstacles before they occurred? In what ways did you witness them doing this?

8. In your perspective, would you consider the school district a tight knit organization under the outgoing superintendent's leadership? If not, how would you describe it? What behaviors of the outgoing superintendent led to your perspective?

Appendix I - Theoretical Coding Tools

LBDQ

LBDQ Sub-Sections	**Incoming/Outgoing Superintendent**	**Stakeholder 1**	**Stakeholder 2**	**Stakeholder 3**	**Stakeholder 4**
Representation Demand					
Reconciliation					
Tolerance of Uncertainty					
Persuasiveness					
Initiation of Structure					
Tolerance and Freedom					
Role Assumption					
Consideration					
Production Emphasis					
Predictive Accuracy					
Integration					
Superior Orientation					

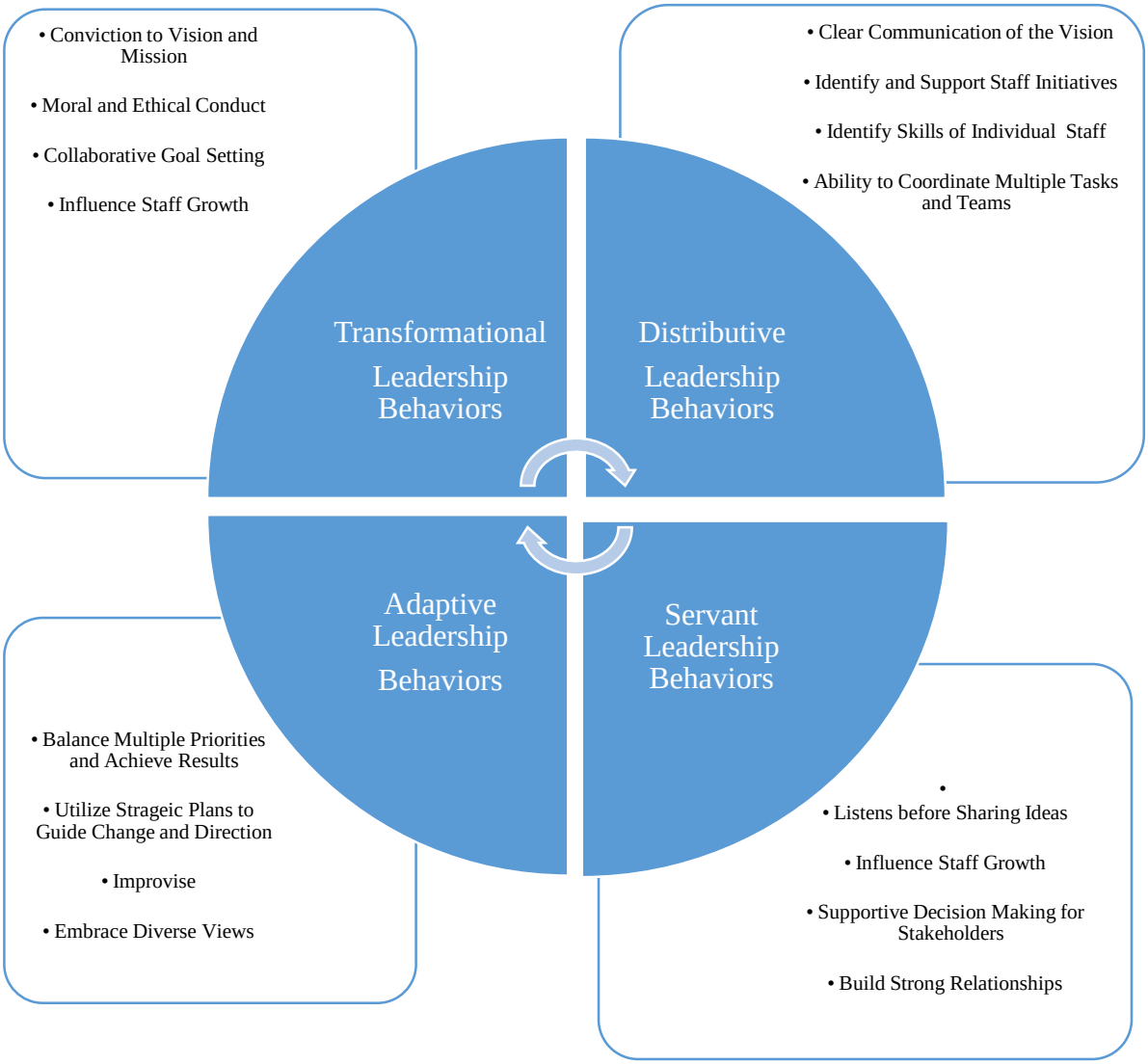
First and Second Cycle Interview Coding

LBDQ Sub-Sections	**Transformational Leadership Behaviors**	**Servant Leadership Behaviors**	**Distributive Leadership Behaviors**	**Adaptive Leadership Behaviors**	**Unique Leadership Behaviors**
Representation Demand					
Reconciliation					
Tolerance of Uncertainty					
Persuasiveness					
Initiation of Structure					
Tolerance and Freedom					
Role Assumption					
Consideration					
Production Emphasis					
Predictive Accuracy					
Integration					
Superior Orientation					

LBDQ Sub-Scale Observation Notes

Setting / Superintendent Role	Subscale Behavior	Notes

Appendix J - Comparison of Leadership Frameworks



Appendix K - Initial Crosswalk of LBDQ Subscale Ratings and the Four Leadership Frameworks

LBDQ Sub-Sections	Transformational Leadership	Servant Leadership	Distributive Leadership	Adaptive Leadership
Representation Demand	X			
Reconciliation			X	X
Tolerance of Uncertainty	X	X		X
Persuasiveness	X		X	
Initiation of Structure			X	
Tolerance and Freedom	X	X		X
Role Assumption	X			X
Consideration		X		
Production Emphasis	X		X	X
Predictive Accuracy	X		X	X
Integration		X	X	
Superior Orientation				