

Leadership stability in relation to board-superintendent alignment:
A selective analysis of board and superintendent co-governance pillars in Kansas

by

Chad A. Krug

B.S., Washburn University, 1999
M.S., University of Kansas, 2004

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

2020

Abstract

Leadership stability matters, especially at the district level, for frequent superintendent turnovers can have disruptive effects on staff morale, student performance, and organizational finance (e.g., Alsbury, 2008; Banicki & Pacha, 2011; Diem, Frankenberg, & Cleary, 2015; Grissom & Andersen, 2012; Grissom & Mitani, 2016). Optimally, the school board and superintendent would work orchestrally to provide quality and equitable education to all children as the core of district governance, while attending to other stakeholders' needs within the district and local communities. Yet, research consistently points to the role confusion associated with the complexities of the superintendent-board arrangement for high turnover in superintendency, due to power structures and issues such as micromanaging involved in such relationships (e.g., Brunner, 1998; Cole & Holland, 2017; Mountford, 2004). This study reported here examined the notion of superintendent-board leadership alignment and its effects on the district leadership stability. Equally important if not more is that this study tested such an underlying structure of (mis)alignment, using a self-designed survey instrument.

The population for this study was the public school superintendents of Kansas and their respective board presidents. Participants completed an online survey that contained demographic items and items on leadership preferences across five pillars of effectiveness. The four guiding research questions were: (a) How do superintendents perceive their leadership preferences? (b) How do school board presidents perceive the boards' leadership preferences? (c) To what extent does the level of alignment of superintendent-board leadership preferences impact the tenure of the district superintendent?, and (d) What are the relationships between district size measured by student enrollment and the level of alignment of superintendent-board leadership preferences?

Of the 282 possible superintendents, 202 completed the questionnaire; and out of the 286 possible board presidents, 158 completed the questionnaire. There were 133 pairs of superintendents and board presidents; in other words, the pair served in the same school district. The validity and reliability of the survey were measured, using exploratory factor analysis and Cronbach's alphas. Logistic regressions and simple correlation analyses were conducted to examine relationships between alignment and superintendent tenure as well as district size and alignment.

The exploratory factor analysis results revealed that there were five factors, that is, five possible underlying tenets for board-superintendent leadership alignment. They were named as "Two-way communication," "Alignment through mission and vision," "Collegiality and collaboration," "Student achievement and quality instruction," and "Procedural." Only Factor 2, "Alignment through mission and vision" was found to be significantly related to superintendent tenure. In terms of district size's effects on leadership alignment, only Factor 3, "Centering on collegiality and collaboration" was found to be have a significant relationship with district size. From this study's findings, recommendations are offered to improve superintendent and board member governance structures as well as the focus on aspects of the shared governance role necessary to increase district stability.

Keywords: alignment, board of education, board president, governance teams, superintendent, leadership preferences, pillars, stability, tenure

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Approved by:

Major Professor
Dr. Jia Liang

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Acknowledgements

I wish also to extend the deepest thank you to my wife and family. Kate, Cole, Addy, and Ty have endured many nights without their husband and father. While this time cannot be rewound, it is with great humility that I write these words of thank you for your support, this project would have never been completed otherwise. I would like to honor my mom and dad with this doctorate who, as educators themselves, raised me in a household framed with the importance of human service, respect for others, and lifelong learning.

It is hard to describe my thankfulness for Dr. Jia “Grace” Liang, my advisor, mentor, cheerleader, and appropriate critic. She was hard on me when she needed to be and taught me very well to respect the responsibility of this endeavor. Without her guidance and meaningful insights, the depths of this project would not have surfaced. I will forever be grateful. A sincere appreciation also goes to Dr. David C. Thompson as his wisdom and years of experience delivered upon me a lasting impression of the duty, responsibility, and influence of quality work. Thank you to my committee members Dr. Donna Augustine-Shaw, Dr. Richard Doll, and Dr. Royce Collins who were excellent mentors throughout the experience.

Finally, to my friends and family members and the many offerings of support, I say thank you. The countless hours of reflection and conversation. The willingness to listen to things that made little sense, yet the respect you have shown for my journey speaks volumes.

Dedication

To my children Cole, Addy and Ty Krug. Believe in your personal journey and surround yourself in truth. Thank you for believing in me.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Public education is a foundational component of democracy in the United States which is designed to meet the needs of the public as influenced by the public. It is a shared civic goal to ensure that all students are provided with a free and appropriate public education (Ravitch, 2014). Local boards of education are charged with a variety of functions which include establishing a vision for the school district, setting goals, establishing policies, hiring and evaluating the superintendent of schools, holding the superintendent accountable for accomplishing district goals, and helping build support for public education (Kansas Association of School Boards [KASB], 2014). School district governance is not easy, and “in fact, it’s often controversial, confusing, and confounding, as school board members attempt to represent the community in a quest for high student achievement that will prepare our nation’s children in the 21st century” (Plough, 2014, p. 50). Still, elected school boards are part of the core responsibility of a free nation, and boards are under pressure to navigate the directional path necessary to maintain achievement for all students.

As a primary duty generally codified in statute in virtually every state, school boards operate to advocate for students and their academic achievement in part by attending to wise use of tax dollars. “The Kansas Constitution makes education a state responsibility while at the same time providing for the operation of public schools by local school boards elected by citizens of the school district” (KASB, 2014, p. 6). According to Anderson (1992), “many new school board members assume their responsibilities with only limited training or understanding of the complexity of the organization” (p. 15), and board members throughout the nation and in Kansas are left to use whatever skills they possess, including their leadership preferences, to direct how they make decisions in an effort to manage their individual interpretations across varying degrees

of demands. Such work is challenging in that “effective school boards [need to] establish vision, focus on student achievement, provide oversight, work at the policy level, operate as a team, avoid micromanagement, build community support and align resources to goals” (Hopkins, O’Neil, & Williams, 2007, p. 686).

According to Herman and Renz (2004), organizations have many constituencies and stakeholders, and each is likely to evaluate the organization’s effectiveness of the criteria that are perhaps uniquely important to them. They underscored that “organizational effectiveness is not a single reality, but a more complicated matter of differing interests and expectations” (Herman & Renz, 2004, p. 695). School boards are such organizations; they are legal bodies having multiple members with individual styles and preferences and yet rely on key relationships with superintendents to accomplish their work. As such, the complex and delicate realities yield certain truths, including how school boards need to maintain their own responsibility for assessment and improvement, as there is no better outside means to assess how effective boards are at maintaining their duties. As Blomberg, Harmon, and Waldhoff (2004) indicated, “evaluation responsibility falls directly on the board itself and if a board is to improve, it must do so on its own” (p. 25). In effect, then, school boards are made up of unique and individualized personalities “engaged in complex social and organizational networks, representing complex skill sets and complex interests” (Blomberg et al., 2004, p. 26).

These complex responsibilities and relationships make school districts extraordinarily reliant on leadership styles and preferences among those assigned to the educational governance of the district. Therefore, one could argue that it is important to examine such dynamics in relation to district leadership if we are to consider maintaining a stable leadership for a healthy educational system.

Rationale for the Study

School boards, as lay constituent bodies, are uniquely challenged to make knowledgeable and effective decisions based on the information they have been provided. Of great importance to the dynamic of local school districts is that these challenges are coupled with additional unique constraints and interdependencies associated with the highly local political scene in which school boards must operate. Such challenges include the allocation of resources, administrative recruitment and maintenance in addition to limits on discretionary power as a result of federal intervention (French, Peevely, & Stanley, 2008; Shannon, 1994), along with additional layers of state-specific limitations on their authority. Troester (1963) stated that “The wishes and aspirations of the patrons and youth are voiced through board members [...] who make decisions relative to the local taxpayers’ money and are responsible to their neighbors for their action” (p. 1). According to Rice et al. (2000), board members “need to develop sufficient understanding, knowledge, and beliefs in order to create the conditions within the system which will ensure that the professional educators can grow in their educational expertise and generate productive change” (p. 58).

This line of analysis suggests the critical importance of aligning these complex leadership responsibilities for enhanced outcomes. It may be asserted that the stability of the district simultaneously depends on leadership styles and preferences of both boards and formal appointed administrative leaders. Yet, combining the values, attitudes, beliefs, and lived experiences of seven board members and one superintendent is complex and has the potential to present a variety of challenges. The instability of a school district has numerous consequences and ripple effects such as a decrease in school district morale, a decrease in academic achievement, and a financial burden on the district to recruit and hire a suitable replacement

(Alsbury, 2008; Banicki & Pacha, 2011; Diem, Frankenberg, & Cleary, 2015; Grissom & Andersen, 2012; Grissom & Mitani, 2016). Moreover, superintendent turnover is often associated with conflicts in working with school board members where tension results from differing opinions surrounding how to best govern the organization (Banicki & Pacha, 2011; Diem et al., 2015; Feuerstein, 2013; Grissom & Andersen, 2012). Stability in the superintendency is known to have a positive impact on student achievement (Waters & Marzano, 2006); yet, the school board maintains the authority for the hiring and firing of the position. As such, the opportunities for tension is evident as the organization seeks to balance district needs with community desires. While there exists a body of research exploring board-superintendent relationships, no formal studies have been conducted in Kansas specifically focusing on assessing the effect of board-superintendent alignment as a measure of board-superintendent relationship on leadership stability.

Research Purpose and Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine pillar preferences from the perspectives of superintendents and school board presidents in the state of Kansas and the effect of the (mis)alignment of the two groups on the superintendency stability measured by superintendent tenure. Additionally, the current study provided a snapshot of the landscape of leadership preferences of board presidents and superintendents in Kansas at the time when the study was conducted in 2019.

The primary research questions addressed in this present study were:

1. What are the perceptions of co-governance leadership pillar preferences as identified by the district superintendent?

2. What are the perceptions of co-governance leadership pillar preferences as identified by the board president?
3. To what extent does alignment of such pillar preferences impact the tenure of the district superintendent?
4. What are the relationships between school district enrollment and the perceptual alignment of such pillar preferences?

Operational Definitions

School boards: The governing unit of a public school district. There are indications that as the body of universalistic policy has grown the traditional rule-making function of the board of education has gradually evolved to a rule-application and rule-adjudication function, in which boards mediate the terms for applying general policy to local circumstances (James, 1967).

School board members: Individual members making up a public school board. Decision-making authority is vested in the board of education, not in individual members (KASB, 2014).

Superintendency stability: For the purpose of the current study, the superintendency stability is defined and measured by superintendent tenure. Given the national average for superintendent tenure is five to seven years (Ulrich, 2017), for this study, when one's tenure is equal or above five years, it is considered stable.

Pillars of alignment for effective board-superintendent relationships: Constructed by the researcher of this study from a thorough review of the extant literature on superintendent turnover, board effectiveness, superintendent effectiveness, and board-superintendent relations, the pillars of alignment speaks to the key aspects of congruence, as hypothesized by the researcher, that the school board as a whole and the district superintendent should have to

support a healthy board-superintendent relation and subsequently a stable superintendency. The resulting five pillars from the data analysis were: a) Valuing student achievement and quality instruction; b) Centering on collegiality and collaboration; c) Aligning themselves through philosophy, mission and vision and set goals to monitor ongoing progress and congruence, d) Valuing the importance of two-way communication, and e) Procedural.

Theoretical Framework

The relationship between the school board and the district superintendent sets the stage for how the remainder of the organization operates. Under positive conditions, the system is in equilibrium enjoying a shared balance of power while understanding the needs of the district and the desires of the community (Waters & Marzano, 2006). Effective governance teams recognize and deliver upon the intention to improve through the collective efforts of system-at-large. Whereas, negative relationships within and between the governance team can position the community, district, and students at a disadvantage as efforts to improve the district are distracted by the noise of the operation (Goodman, Fulbright, & Zimmerman, 1997). Therefore, the leadership preferences within the organization represented the focus of this study and positioned the researcher to examine the reported (mis)alignment as it related to district stability.

The success of the superintendent is predicated on a productive relationship with the board of education which stems from the understanding of leadership preferences unique to each individual, yet shared as a governance team (Banicki & Pacha, 2011; Land, 2002; Wheatley, 2006). First, factors which influence the orchestration of a balanced governance structure can vary, yet include such items as student achievement, parental pressures, fiscal responsibility, and an overall awareness of community desires (Banicki & Pacha, 2011; Diem et al., 2015; Hess &

Meeks, 2010; Land, 2002). Second, power structures contribute to the complexity insomuch as there is no universal model associated with effective results (Brunner, 1998; Mountford, 2004). Third, the degree to which accountability is a shared responsibility of the board-superintendent relationship also varies and represents another hurdle of effective governance (Ford & Ihrke, 2017a). Finally, the awareness of role differentiation between the board and superintendent positions the district to make educated decisions on matters of importance (Cole & Holland, 2017). Therefore, the governance team, reflected as individual members challenged to operate as a collective unit, has an impact on the leadership preferences considered of value to the organization.

In sum, the notion of pillars of alignment for effective leadership was constructed by the researcher of the current study by synthesizing the relevant literature. It was also the underlying theoretical framework upon which the effect of the board-superintendent alignment (on pillars, that is, leadership preference) on superintendent tenure was investigated, using the survey design and subsequent statistical analyses selected.

Methodology

This study utilized a tailored design survey approach (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2014). Tailored design was formulated as an extension of social exchange theory which seeks to explain why individuals are motivated to engage in certain social behaviors and not others (Dillman et al., 2014). Tailored design emphasizes questionnaires that focus on interesting questions which respondents will perceive as easy along with perceiving how participation in the study will be useful to other similarly situated persons. For this study the language, sequence, and topics of the questions were constructed according to the parameters of social exchange theory.

The targeted population for the study were Kansas superintendents and board presidents for the year 2019–2020. Factor analysis was used to assess the validity of the questionnaire constructed on the conceptualization of the pillars of leadership alignment. Descriptive statistics were obtained on survey items related to leadership preference, demographics, and superintendency tenure. Logistic regression was used to measure the effect of the alignment of effective co-governance pillar preferences on superintendent tenure. Finally, correlational analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between district size and pillar preferences.

Limitations and Possibilities of the Study

The current study has a number of limitations. First, the length of tenure of a superintendent in his or her current district is a proxy of superintendency stability, for a variety of reasons other than a troubling board-superintendent relationship resulted from misalignment in leadership preferences or focuses could lead to a brief tenure. Admittedly, tenure is a measure of longevity, not necessarily effectiveness. Nevertheless, stability in the superintendency is key to providing time for an initiative to result in increased student achievement (Ulrich, 2017; Waters & Marzano, 2006). Second, this study only included Kansas school districts on record for the 2019–2020 school year. As such, readers are cautioned to make interpretations of the study results beyond its immediate geographic locale and time. The third limitation relates to the nature of a perceptual survey, that is, it measures “perceptions only” which means that it is subjected to potential issues like “the reliability of the data; representativeness; interpreting the complexity of findings; different types of biases” (Herbert, 2013, p. 2). The reliability of the data relies on the assumption that each individual has answered honestly to the best of his/her ability. Representativeness refers to limitation that the results of the survey are limited to those who completed the instrument. Also, the degree to which participants maintained bias

surrounding prompts within the questionnaire could have the potential to complicate the interpretation of the data.

In terms of the possibilities of the current study, the foremost, the findings help shed further light on the conceptualizing of board-superintendent relationship and co-governance and its effect on superintendency. Whether through a quantitative or qualitative approach, future developments surrounding effective methods of orchestrating aligned leadership preferences could be considered. Similarly, the current study could be tested across other states, thereby, further testing the validity and reliability of the survey instrument as well as the replicability of the research findings in different contexts. Identifying the means of measuring the ability for boards of education and district superintendents to balance the duties and expectations of their respective roles is yet another area for future research.

Significance of the Study

Previous scholars have acknowledged the correlation between stability in the superintendency and academic achievement (Lorentzen, 2014) in addition to factors which influence superintendent turnover (Grissom & Andersen, 2012; Grissom & Mitani, 2016). Yet, no previous study has been conducted to frame leadership preferences alignment in key governance areas with school district stability. Within this framework, the current study identified pillars of effective co-governance most likely to predict the stability of the school district, as measured by superintendent tenure. The stability of the superintendency can be increased through board-superintendent training efforts, with a clear understanding that ongoing turnover at the “superintendent level will reduce the focus on implementing improvements and monitoring progress” (Williams & Tabernik, 2011, p. 30). The findings of the study can be beneficial to school boards for capacity building programming who “may utilize the information

to evaluate the importance of leadership [and boardsmanship] skill development and management techniques, allowing for a balance in the[ir] development” (Willey, 2011, p. 19) necessary to meet the needs of the school district and their respective constituents in a healthy, stable manner.

Chapter Summary

If superintendent tenure is a key indicator of district stability, then a better understanding of the leadership preference alignment between the superintendent and the board in relation to superintendent tenure is worthy of pursuing. Considering that the two collectively are charged with managing complex situations, dilemmas, and change in a manner consistent with a public perspective that has become intensely and politically focused on the best interest of all students, doing shared governance effectively and providing stable leadership at the top requires a more targeted approach to perform key functions and produce coherence and synergy. The current study was an effort to address that.

In the next chapter, Chapter Two, the relevant literature that informed the current study is discussed. Chapter Three addresses the methodology of the study.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

Introduction

The duties and responsibilities of a district superintendent exist as a necessary component for an educational organization to orchestrate a variety of systems aligned with community expectation and district need. Through their work with boards of education, superintendents must navigate internal and external pressures toward an end of stakeholder acceptance and buy-in. However, the complexity surrounding the numerous moving parts and systems of accountability within an educational organization shows no sign of decline. Add to this equation the varying perspectives held by stakeholders and the interconnectedness between such a matrix quickly complicates efforts toward improvement. At the heart of public school systems is the partnership between the school board and their respective superintendent. The board, after all, is responsible for the hiring and firing of the superintendent and the outcomes associated with leadership turnover (Alsbury, 2008; Banicki & Pacha, 2011; Diem et al., 2015; Grissom & Andersen, 2012; Grissom & Mitani, 2016).

The degree to which members of Kansas school boards and district superintendents align themselves across leadership preferences is of interest because questions remain unanswered at all levels of school governance. Within any organizational governance structure there are myriad operations which challenge the cohesiveness of its constituents. Are school boards able to maintain alignment toward a degree of sustainable stability in light of these challenges? Sell (2005) questioned “could more effective methods of school governance exist in today’s world of big business, federal regulations, and increased school accountability?” (p. 72). Charged with responsibility to govern educational programs at the local level, superintendents and school boards must also manage the appropriation of power. Particularly when the board and

superintendent work together they are more able to support and carry out collaborative decision making by balancing the respective powers they maintain (Mountford, 2004).

The shared sense of school governance is akin to a good dance partner. Knowing when to lead, when to follow, and when partners are dancing to the wrong song is necessary to identify and manage power effectiveness between superintendents and school board members. The literature notes that the success of a superintendent's authority has much to do with a good working relationship between the school board and superintendent is essential for effective governance (Banicki & Pacha, 2011; Land, 2002; Wheatley, 2006). Maintaining trust within this shared responsibility and a healthy working relationship resulted from effective communication leads to an appropriate balance of power. As Banicki and Pacha (2011) underscored, "if power is the capacity generated by our relationships, then we need to be attending to the quality of those relationships" (p. 3; see also Wheatley, 2006).

As an outcome associated with the increased responsibilities of a superintendent, new demands, obligations, and expectations of the position have changed over time. This chapter provides a review of literature associated with superintendent turnover, the history of school boards and their development and relative complexities, and how relative leadership preferences have been seen to impact working relationships between boards and superintendents. To start, the researcher will discuss the arrangements which associate with superintendent and/or school board stability and the degree to which stability has been understood and managed.

Stability vs. Turnover

Merriam-Webster defines stability as "the quality, state, or degree of being stable: such as the property of a body that causes it when disturbed from a condition of equilibrium or steady motion to develop forces or moments that restore the original condition" (Stability, n.d.). This is

fitting as the internal and external demands placed upon an educational governance system suggest the arrangement of such a structure requires intention to maintain equilibrium. Stability in the position of the superintendent leads to a reduction in economic and personnel issues and an increase in academic achievement (Boyland, 2013; Trevino, Braley, Brown, & Slate, 2008; Waters & Marzano, 2006).

Turnover in school board members can lead to a foothold for special interest groups; moreover, superintendent turnover can jeopardize academic achievement (Waters & Marzano, 2006). The stability of the organization is codified in the balance of working relationships between the board and the superintendent, as Waters and Marzano (2006) stressed:

Superintendents should note the importance of remaining in a district long enough to see the positive impact of their leadership on student learning and achievement. Of equal significance is the implication of this finding for school boards as they frequently determine the length of superintendent tenure in their districts. (p. 20)

Nationally, the average tenure for a superintendent is five to seven years (AASA, n.d.; Ulrich, 2017). According to the Council of the Great City Schools [CGCS] (2014), while the decade before 2010 had witnessed a steady increase on superintendent tenure in its urban schools, as of 2014, the number dropped to an average of 3.18 years from 3.64 years in 2010 (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 reports the average CGCS tenure from 1999 through 2014.

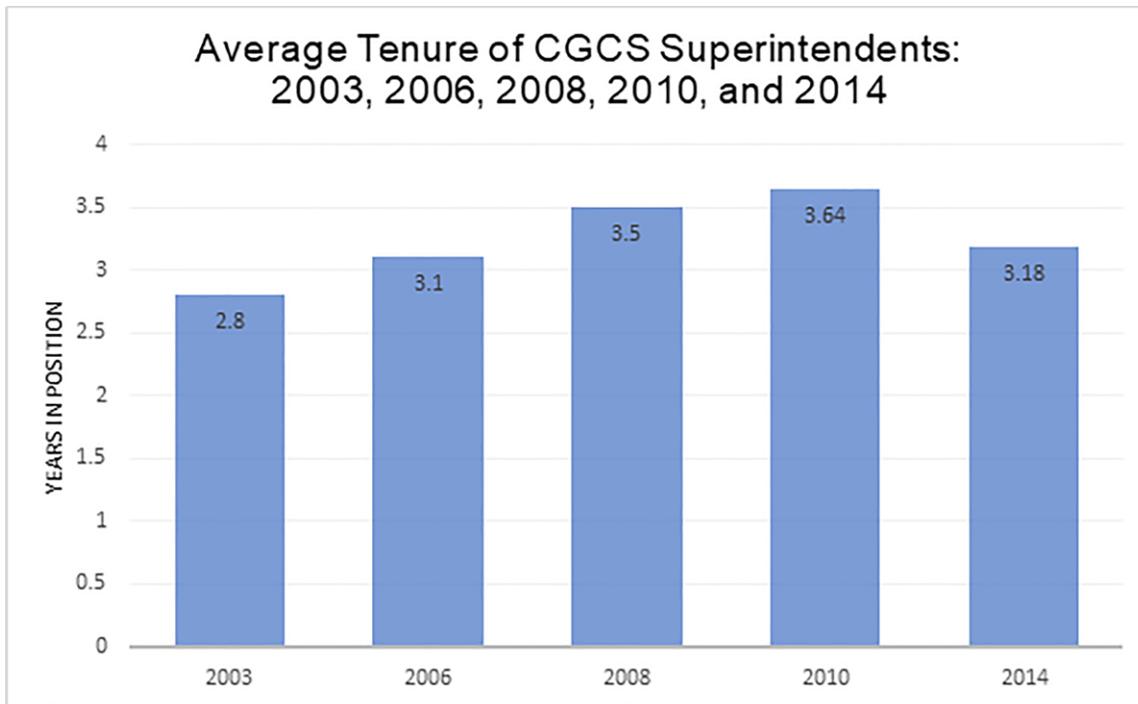


Figure 2.1. Graph of the Average Tenure of CGCS Superintendents: 2003, 2006, 2008, 2010, and 2014. Reprinted from *Urban Indicator*, by Council of the Great City Schools, Fall 2014, retrieved from <https://www.cgcs.org/> Copyright 2014 by Council of the Great City Schools. Reprinted with permission. Approved by: Tonya Harris, Director of Communications, Council of the Great City Schools.

In their surveying and interviewing superintendents in Ohio, Williams and Tabernik (2011) noted several major findings related to stability (see Table 2.1). Evidence from Table 2.1 suggests that the stability of a district best prepares itself to fend off what Mountford (2004) identified as historical and new sources of tension and controversy associated with “role confusion” between boards and superintendents (p. 705). According to Alsbury (2008), the historical sources of tension and controversy include

- (a) confusion over roles and responsibilities, (b) power struggles, (c) questionable motives for board services, and (d) equality of representation, and the new sources included (a) changes in philosophical orientation among new generations of board members, (b) disparate beliefs and attitudes, (c) increasing state and federal

accountability, (d) increasing resistance for service, and (e) public apathy toward education (p. 85).

It is important to note that new sources of tension and controversy do not supplant their historical counterparts, rather, they serve a supplementary role (Alsbury, 2008; Mountford, 2004). As such, one could say that the opportunity for conflict has doubled, for both historical and new sources of conflict become vulnerable areas for the school district governance structure.

Table 2.1.

School District Leadership Stability

<u>Stability Theme</u>	<u>Summarized Response</u>
Stable in regards to organizational health	All stakeholders know, understand, and support the district’s mission and vision and their place within it. A clear communication structure is in place (p. 24).
Stable in terms of longevity of superintendent	81% of superintendents indicated 5 years as a minimum to effect change and promote stability. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Year 1 - take time to evaluate the district, existing programs, processes, and power bases. • Year 2 - changes can begin to be put into place to move the district forward to support targeted initiatives. • Year 3 - step back and evaluate what has been put into place...this is the year for push-back, heel digging, wait it out mentality (p. 26).
Superintendent and paired board stability	If the superintendent and board are all on the same page, stability is inevitable, and a strong relationship between the two can promote and support a positive culture in the district (p. 27).
Superintendent stability and the number and/or type of staff conflicts	Longevity of the superintendent may help a district move forward by capitalizing on the strength of the relationships built with staff groups and lead to quicker, less chaotic resolution of conflicts (p. 28).
Board training (with the superintendent) reduces turnover	Training can help set the stage for consensus building around a mission and vision, help with team building, and solidify an understanding of the different responsibilities and roles that board members and superintendents must play (p. 29).
“Dissatisfaction Theory” and politically motivated board and	Repeated turnover at the superintendent level will reduce the focus on implementing improvements and monitoring progress (p. 30).

Note. Retrieved from Williams & Tabernik (2011)

In another longitudinal study conducted by Grissom and Mitani (2016) in the state of Missouri across 525 school districts spanning 15 years, it was evident that the *push and pull forces at work* were associated with the dynamics of the superintendent performance, acceptance, and tenure within their school district respectively. Under the dissatisfaction theory (Lutz & Iannaccone, 1986), the push effect occurs when community dissatisfaction leads to board turnover and eventual superintendent turnover (Alsbury, 2008). In contrast, the pull effect means that superintendents are being sought by other school districts due to his or her high performances (Alsbury, 2008). For their dissatisfaction theory, Lutz and Iannaccone (1986) used an in-depth “medical analogy of the death of a superintendent” to describe the symptoms and stages of dissatisfaction and encouraged proper treatment at the earliest stage possible (p. 13).

In applying the dissatisfaction theory, Alsbury (2008) and Petersen and Fusarelli (2005) similarly noted that when the community reaches a breaking point of frustration, such energy results in action steps from the community to ensure current board members are unseated so that new leadership (board members and superintendent) can begin operating under a new set of expectations from the community. While this can be a positive situation in some school districts, such change disrupts prior understanding, trust, and stability of pre-existing board/superintendent relations “often created by socialization” (Lutz & Iannaccone, 1986, p. 15). In sum, the internal and external constraints which initially present as minor issues can quickly become a major situation when the interconnectedness between the wishes of the community and the intentions of the district procedures are positioned in conflict.

Research has shown that superintendent turnover can be due to various reasons, including but not limited to retirement, reassignment, prestige, district size, academic performance, salary, school poverty, and fractious school boards (Grissom & Mitani, 2016). Regardless of the types of turnover, replacing a superintendent “creates disruption in district management and can negatively affect staff morale, funding for district operations, and community support, potentially hurting student achievement” (Grissom & Mitani, 2016, p. 352). As such, for rural schools particularly, school boards “may need to take additional steps to increase the attractiveness of superintendent positions ... in order to stem leadership instability” (Grissom & Mitani, 2016, p. 384).

This is not to deny that the board has the potential to press for a superintendent replacement due to misalignment resulting from election results whether politically or apolitically motivated. As superintendents work to carry out the expectations of the board (new or old), a dual effort is necessary for stability to be fostered or maintained. Frequent turnover of boards can be linked to the “loss of superintendent and principal morale, security, and continuity” and can place the superintendent in a challenging arena (Alsbury, 2008, p. 248). Therefore, “superintendents would be wise to continue to monitor community change variables, including changes in their community’s economic status, socioeconomic ratios, assessed valuation, student enrollment, and in- and out migration” as part of building, maintaining, and promoting their relationship with community stakeholders (Petersen & Fusarelli, 2005, p. 153).

As Boyland (2013) argued, the stability in superintendency “is desirable as lasting school transformation can only be brought about with time and constancy” (p. 92). According to Waters and Marzano (2006), positive impacts of superintendency stability on school

performance can “manifest themselves as early as two years into a superintendent’s tenure” (p. 14). Likewise, Ulrich (2017) concluded that when district leadership is effective, the stability is key to systemic improvement, for “it takes five years from the time an initiative is introduced to the time positive student achievement is seen” (p. 32). All these make it not surprising that Williams and Tabernik (2011) asserted, “When you have hard things to do, stability in the district makes it easier to get these things done” (p. 31).

It is not uncommon that some districts may experience controversy at alarming rates, others on occasion or in rarity. Regardless of frequency is the need for the governance team to operate with consistent cohesion resulting from sharing past experiences in order for new or modified board policy to reflect the desires of the organization and community. The success of this effort begins with the relationship between the superintendent and the board president (Alsbury, 2008; Boyland, 2013). Waters and Marzano (2006) stated that “School board members need to support district goals for achievement and instruction. They need to support district- and school-level leadership in ways that enhance, rather than diminish, stability” (p. 21). To better understand present-day demands requires a visit into the history surrounding the formation of school boards and superintendents. In the following sections, the researcher will first discuss briefly historical accounts of educational governance, followed by roles of superintendents, boards of education, and members. Also discussed are an examination of who makes up boards of education and superintendents, summary of leadership behaviors, board of education and superintendent paired effectiveness, and conflicts within the school district governance system. The researcher will conclude this chapter by framing pillars of co-governance leadership which contribute toward or diminish the presence of effective district governance based on the literature reviewed.

Brief Review of the History of Educational Governance in the United States

Boards and superintendents collectively manage the operations of school districts through their partnership aimed at improving organizational function. Some aspects of this relationship have changed over time while other aspects have remained the same. Beginning almost 200 years ago, as the population grew in tandem with governance responsibilities, local school districts funded by local taxes were formed and given financial and administrative authority (Hopkins et al., 2007; Land, 2002). This newfound authority provided local school districts with liberty to make decisions according to their individualized, specific needs. Also, embedded within that authority was the responsibility to manage local school districts in accordance to some semblance of normalcy or sequence throughout the nation. The opportunity to develop and run one's own school was a consequence of European immigration and the resulting omission of school management from the U.S. Constitution, which left states to decide how education was to be designed and constructed at the local level (Sell, 2005).

Formation of the nation in the 1700s left unanswered questions about education policy and school governance. Such questions perennially have been on the minds of many of the greatest thinkers and leaders such as Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin (Sell, 2005; Wagoner, 1976). These and other individuals stressed the importance of locally operated public schools. In 1837 Massachusetts became the first state to form a state board of education while states thereafter more or less followed the model set by Massachusetts during this time period (Land, 2002; Sell, 2005). Hopkins et al. (2007) noted,

The role of school boards early in their existence was strictly one of management, i.e. oversight and control. In the late nineteenth century school board members were elected

by municipal wards, tied to local politics, and attended to the day-to-day operations of their school districts. (p. 685)

As this management style of school board authority developed, the need for reform surfaced as day-to-day operations came to be understood as best handled by district administrators. A better model was therefore necessary to provide school districts and their local boards of education the opportunity to better serve their constituents. Major reforms of school boards took place in the 1920s, when centralized city school boards were developed and modeled after corporate executive boards where the focus of the work of the district was in conjunction with the needs of the entire community and served to move school boards closer to a broader leadership role (Diem et al., 2015; Hopkins et al., 2007; Land, 2002; Sell, 2005). As part of this transition, and as school districts grew in size and scale, “daily managerial tasks were taken out of the job description, and school boards were expected to focus instead on policy-making” (Sell, 2005, pp. 72-73). It was during this era in the 1920’s that “the superintendent became a professional manager, akin to the chief executive officer in a corporation” where such professional staff could manage administrative tasks (Sell, 2005, p. 73; see also James, 1967; Land, 2002). As such, the professional role of superintendency began in the early ages of American schooling and still exists today.

While reform efforts were mostly successful, “the general public was wary of giving up power over schools to the states, so most of the responsibilities of school governance remained with the local boards” (Sell, 2005, p. 72; see also Land, 2002). Currently, the increase in active roles played by state and federal governments in educational policy have once more regressed school boards toward attending to managerial tasks. Sell (2005) noted that “The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (United States, 1965) and the development of categorical programs...

[such as Title I, Title III, Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), etc.] ... have taken power away from school boards” (p. 73). As Sell (2005) also indicated, states have become increasingly involved in the establishment of curriculum, paired with the rise in charter schools, vouchers, homeschool and private school enrollments, so that “one might even argue that the age of the elected school board has passed” (p. 73).

Perennial questions therefore have plagued the nation, expressed as “What level of government should be delegated the task of running schools? Which leadership style results in the greatest achievement gains? Should American citizens have a direct vote in school governance” (Sell, 2005, p. 71). These have all been key questions faced by locally elected school boards which have long been composed of lay individuals and vested with authority by their respective states. As repeatedly reinforced in the literature, board members have been expected to represent and be directly accountable to the citizens who elect them (Johnson, 1988; Land, 2002; Sell, 2005). According to Land (2002), local school boards in the United States have typically evinced the following characteristics:

local control in order to meet the specific needs and preferences of the resident population; separation of educational from general governance; large districts with small boards; lay oversight with concentration on policy-making and reliance on a professional superintendent for management, patterned after corporate boards of directors with a chief executive officer; and democratic representation of all citizens through at-large elections rather than subdistrict elections or appointments. (p. 231)

In sum, from their inception to present day, boards of education and superintendents have been required to manage and maintain such practices to navigate ongoing changes at the national, state, and local levels. The establishment of the role of the superintendent points to a

critical piece for this research. Assuming their role as executive officers of the school district, superintendents are necessary to establish and manage a transition between the board of education and the school district. Similar to that of boards of education, superintendents have an enormous degree of responsibility necessary to operate an organization effectively. The manner in which superintendents are accountable of such responsibility to their board of education and the school districts they lead results in how the governance structure of the organization is positioned. As such, it is necessary to discuss the expected roles for superintendents, boards of education, and its individual members as revealed by the literature, which the researcher will provide in the following section. Of key interest are how these roles overlap and how such overlap is managed professionally and productively.

Roles of Superintendents, Boards of Education, and Members

The boards of education typically are composed of elected individuals who are challenged to make decisions aimed at improving the academic performance of all students (Devarics & O'Brien, 2011; Grissom & Mitani, 2016; Hess & Meeks, 2010; Land, 2002; Lorentzen, 2014; Plough, 2014; Rice et al., 2000; Ulrich, 2017; Waters & Marzano, 2006; Williams & Tabernik, 2011). Some small school districts are willing to share superintendents with other school districts or hire their district leader on a part-time basis as a means of ensuring the wishes of the community are reflected in the efforts of the school community (KSDE, 2018). It is evident the value placed upon the shared partnership between the superintendent and the school district is too great to forgo.

Superintendents

A superintendent who is capable of managing the needs of the district, overseeing routine tasks, and having the foresight to manage sustainable change greatly enhances the district's

ability to make educational improvements aimed at improved academic achievement for students. Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, & Ellerson (2011) stated that “This pivotal position of school superintendent has evolved over more than 100 years, and contemporary practice is affected by a range of issues, which take on varying levels of importance from state-to-state and district-to-district” (p. 9). School districts should desire a superintendent with the capacity to acknowledge, understand, and attend to their respective needs. More, the effort of the superintendent to remain transparent and forthright with the school board and other constituents on topics pertinent to the welfare of the district assists in establishing trust (Banicki & Pacha, 2011). Effective superintendents are expected to exercise their institutional knowledge by way of informal authority to assist the development of the school district in shared partnership with the board (Banicki & Pacha, 2011; Heifetz, 1994). Specifically, the superintendent maintains the onus of ensuring the balance of such partnership is orchestrated in a fair and consistent manner while “accepting the notion that accountability begins and ends at the desk of the superintendent” (Harris, 2006, p. 3).

As such, the superintendent is positioned to manage their duty while navigating constraints, thereby presenting themselves as capable leaders. As situations and circumstances of accountability differ, so does the need for a superintendent to have varied approaches toward the utilization of power structures they employ. Mountford (2004) and Brunner (1998) examined the use of power in the role of superintendency and to what effect power structures assist district leaders in accomplishing goals or managing tasks. Three different types of leadership power held by superintendents are found in the literature as power over (dominance or authority), shared power (collaboration), or mixed (a combination of dominance and collaboration). In sum, arriving at a desired set of outcomes requires the superintendent be aware of community need,

the desires of the board of education to meet those needs, and the details of the district associated with such considerations. That means the superintendent must remain aware of local norms, often identified and understood through conversation and relationship building. In addition to the superintendent, the board of education maintains a pivotal role in district governance ensuring stakeholders have a voice. The next section will provide insight into the associated roles of the board of education and the means by which they contribute to the district governance structure.

Boards of Education

The ability of the local board to remain flexible in its governance structure is key to ensuring local needs are met. There are a number of accountability challenges school boards face as they navigate their duty of governance. Among them are student achievement, accommodating the wishes of parents, managing, operating, and prioritizing educational and financial systems in line with their local economic, political, social, and religious contexts (Banicki & Pacha, 2011; Diem et. al., 2015; Hess & Meeks, 2010; Land, 2002). A consistent, overarching goal of the school board is to provide improved access to a better education for all students. Within this organizational structure exists access to educational experts and/or specialists, as well as an established link between the community and the school district (Sell, 2005).

According to the National School Boards Association (NSBA, 2017b), elected or appointed school boards are the best option to represent the values and beliefs of the community. As the number of special interest groups seeking to control public education has increased, “it is imperative that school boards take positive steps to ensure that high-quality people will run for election” (Goodman et al., 1997, p. 36). High quality people represent those

who have a willingness to participate in policy-based decision making aimed at improving student achievement for all. As such, school board members, as key decision makers in this progression of democracy, oversee the hiring and supervision of superintendents, establish tax rates, and set goals for the district (Dunn, 1999; Harris, 2006, Sell, 2005), with understanding of the need for collaboration rather than dominance as they entertain methods to bring diversified perspectives for consideration.

Consequently, holding themselves accountable for their actions while simultaneously attending to the intended limits within their roles can prove challenging as the interpretation of duties can vary among board members. Sell (2005) outlined three outcomes associated with board members not correctly interpreting their roles:

- Rubber stamp - approving policy decisions and wishes of the superintendent without argument or evaluation.
- Firefighters - boards which rush from problem to problem, fixing schools for the moment, but failing to address the cause of the problem or find a long-term cure for it.
- Micromanagement - moving beyond the established duties of the board. (p. 74)

Of these, micromanagement may be the worst, as such interference can cause significant damage to the balance of trust, autonomy, and educational progress for a school district as well as the working relationship with the board and the superintendent (Banicki & Pacha, 2011; Dervarics & O'Brien, 2011; French et al., 2008; Goodman et al., 1997; Harris, 2006; Land, 2002; Moody, 2011; Sell, 2005; Ulrich, 2017).

As for the expectations for individual board members, each member is positioned to contribute uniquely, provided they understand and embrace their role within the board of education. Arriving at the appropriate governance structure designed to manage the expanded federal role since the *No Child Left Behind* (2002) legislation elicits the need for local board

members to visualize their duty through varying lenses. Goodman et al. (1997) provided an extensive job description for board members which makes the case for the magnitude of the role across the areas of beliefs, knowledge, and skills. Ford and Ihrke (2017a) explained how boards in different districts may successfully execute and view accountability differently, as some feel they are to be “accountable to parents and others to taxpayers” (p. 283). Therefore, to be accountable, boards of education must make a concerted effort to improve the understanding of their roles through thoughtful analysis, teamwork, personal reflection, and ongoing professional development. In sum, “board member agreement on accountability definitions is linked to increased organizational performance” (Ford & Ihrke, 2017a, p. 452).

Boards of education, alone, lack the district perspective understood by the superintendent; while the superintendent, alone, can lack a full understanding of community desires. Therefore, partnership with constituents is essential toward a collective effort of improvement and reduces the feeling of isolation for the board of education, its members, and the superintendent. To offset conditions surrounding superintendent isolation, collaboration amongst stakeholders can provide a great deal of benefits to facilitate leadership and mitigate risk by broadening perspectives and reducing isolation (Anderson, 2009; Feuerstein, 2013). The overlapping of district governance roles serves as a foundation upon which meaningful growth and change can occur as it can solicit the formation of an orchestrated feedback loop whereby stakeholders are provided an arena for engagement.

Overlap of Roles

Understanding the climate and culture of a district and its respective constituents assists district superintendents in their effort to formulate and carry out a vision in partnership with the local board of education. The development of the school district has much to do with the ability

for the superintendent and the school board to share aspects of power. To be most effective, the variety of needs associated with the roles of boards of education require individuals who are willing to accept and shoulder such responsibility in a manner consistent with the needs of their respective constituents. Superintendents assume their roles following a myriad of educational and/or life experiences. Paired with similar aspects within school boards, such diversity complicates our ability to easily formulate a governance structure void of constraint, tension, or conflict. No universal model is possible due to the varying degree of personalities, leadership preferences, and lived experiences of school superintendents and their respective boards of education. To be authentically accountable, district leaders aim to foster the development of trust at the individual, organizational, and societal levels through the alignment of “espoused and enacted values” (Feuerstein, 2013, p. 9).

Transparency and symbolic mediation. Arranging organizational practice under an umbrella of transparency makes it possible to engage the community through honest and meaningful decision making representative of the entire community (Diem et al., 2015; Ford & Ihrke, 2017a). Such challenges of balance are also present for the superintendent as Feuerstein (2013) codified “symbolic mediation” to describe how “school leaders are continuously mediating external and internal demands” to a variety of stakeholders within and surrounding the organization (p. 8). Consistent with other organizational structures, Feuerstein (2013) described, “the mediatory role played by superintendents also offers the possibility of resistance” (p. 8). As a natural and seemingly unavoidable byproduct, situations of resistance require mediation tactics which reflect the “values and abilities – such as honesty, integrity, and dependability – to challenge unjust or inequitable practices” central to the shared intention of the superintendent and school board (Feuerstein, 2013, p. 9; see also Anderson, 2009). In this way superintendents

cultivate and promote positive coherence within the organization through their efforts to solicit high quality performance.

The framework for high quality performance is team-oriented with clear and consistent expectations toward the success of all students involving the engagement of stakeholders in a transparent manner while reducing barriers and providing positive feedback with improvement as the goal (Banicki and Pacha, 2011). Boards of education, equipped with this framework for decision making, often still wrestle with power dynamics. Only when a superintendent is armed with necessary communication skills and trusted by the board may they find themselves able to diplomatically lead the board through difficult decision making (Banicki & Pacha, 2011). Dunn (1999) outlined the importance of the “opportunity for citizens to provide input, be heard, and expect that their voices will be considered in making important decisions about the education of tomorrow’s citizens and leaders” (p. 158).

Partnership as relationship building and shared decision-making. Effective governance requires board members and superintendents to act in a manner of partnership. Central to this argument are notions of teamwork, relationship building, respect, communication, diversified stakeholder input, and a focus on student achievement, where “a healthy school-community relationship is the responsibility of both the board and the superintendent” (Harris, 2006, p. 8). Healthy organizational practice recognizes, understands, and implements the tenets of striking a balance between the needs of the constituents and the ability of the governance team to meet those needs. Finally, the ability to collaborate as a comprehensive leadership structure, the superintendent and the school board need to work in concert. As previously discussed, collaborative decision making is a vital component of transparent, trust-building leadership practice to assimilate conditions aligned with accountable

practice. Superintendents who embrace such conditions tend to position their leadership structure of organizational governance in alignment with the constituents they serve by embracing role overlap.

To conclude, if one accepts that the public in general “engenders public support” for the role and duties of boards of education regardless of the criticism boards endure, then the need to better understand aspects of leadership preferences ensues (Land, 2002, p. 233), for it helps explain why or how boards of education have maintained intact their duties and professional responsibilities since their inception in the 1800s. Identifying who makes up boards of education helps make sense of aspects of leadership that such members are charged with when developing, modeling, and working to implement in their local districts, as Hess & Meeks (2010) argued, “To understand how well school boards are able to manage the demands placed upon them, and to understand whether they are equipped to manage these demands, it is imperative that we know more about the boards themselves” (p. 16). As such, a discussion of the demographics and general qualifications of board members is provided next.

Who Makes Up Boards of Education and Superintendents

According to a 2011 National School Board Association report, more than 90,000 school board members across the United States govern more than 13,600 local school districts (Dervarics & O’Brien, 2011). That means, the boards oversee services for over 50 million public school students and a budgetary pool of over \$650 billion in public education annually (Hess & Meeks, 2010; NSBA, 2017a). As such, there is an immense amount of responsibility associated with the role of the board of education. Local control provides each school district the opportunity to assemble a governance board and a significant majority (95% or greater) of board members are seated by election (Hess & Meeks, 2010; Land, 2002). The two most

comprehensive studies on school boards and their demographics were conducted by Land (2002) and Hess and Meeks (2010), where Land (2002) examined the composition of school boards using literature from 1986 through 2000 and Hess and Meeks (2010) surveyed 900 school board members from 418 school districts across the nation. In Table 2.2 below, the results from the two studies are compared, using major demographic indicators.

Table 2.2.

Who Makes up Boards of Education

Indicator	Land (2002)	Hess and Meeks (2010)
Gender	56% male 44% female	56% male 44% female
Race	87% White 5% Black 1% Hispanic	81% White 12% Black 3% Hispanic
Kids attending public school	57% yes	40% yes
Income	57% at or above \$60,000 23% above \$100,000	90% at or above \$50,000 48% above \$100,000
Employed	57% working	73% working
Education	29% 4-year degree	74% 4-year degree
Appointment	96% elected to position	95% elected to position

Note. Data for board of education membership from Land (2002) and Hess & Meeks (2010).

It is evident that the aspects of gender, race, and method of appointment to the board have remained consistent over time. However, there are also noticeable differences. First, the percentage of board members who have students attending public schooling decreased by 17%. Second, the percentage of those making more than \$100,000 a year more than doubled for board members. Third, there was an increase of 16% for board members who were employed. Finally, there was a large increase (nearly 50%) of school board members who held a 4-year degree. These differences seem to suggest a trend of higher educated, working

individuals who have financial security becoming more of the nowadays board members. For superintendents, this could mean that current boards of education are more likely to desire qualifying information in advance of policy formation or approval than simply taking the leader at their word. Such a trend could also mean, as the researcher argues, that the higher educated, employed, financially stable board members are positioned and more inclined to arrive at their own framework of the role as a board member, which has direct implications for board-superintendent relationships and work dynamics.

On the other hand, according to the School Superintendents Association (n.d.), “there is no set number of superintendents” within the United States. But demographically, the national average age for superintendents is 54-55 years old, six percent ethnic minorities, and 60 percent with a doctoral degree (AASA, n.d.). In their 2010 study, Kowalski, et al. (2011) found that 24.1 percent of superintendents were women (up from 13.2 percent in 2000), the mean tenure for a superintendent is five to six years, and the annual turnover rate for superintendents is between 14 and 16 percent. In another more recent study, Ulrich (2017) found the national average superintendent tenure to be five to seven years.

To conclude, boards of education continue to serve as an opportunity for stakeholders to become leaders in the governance of school districts. An overwhelming majority of board members are seated following local elections, indicating the community at-large continues to maintain the authority of approval. The increasing trend to elect board members who are higher educated, working individuals with financial security, points to the need for an examination of leadership behaviors of those within the governance team.

Summary of Leadership Behaviors

The varying nature of public school districts, that is, factors that can influence a community's ability to operate with cohesion or merely exist, also presents significant challenges in identifying what effective superintendent leadership looks like. The leadership style or styles utilized by an effective superintendent has largely to do with the situation at hand in which the leader navigates a number of complex contingencies (i.e. group dynamics, personnel, school board members) to arrive at a desirable outcome (Kowalski, 2013). Given leadership is understood as relational, contextual, and value-laden, Osborn, Hunt, and Jauch (2002) conceptualized the context of leadership into four categories: "stability, crisis, dynamic equilibrium, and the edge of chaos" (p. 797). Building upon Osborn et al.'s (2002) categories, Mackenzie and Barnes (2007) added content as an essential component in the examination of effective leadership practice. They stressed that a leader's "place" is not their geographical location, rather an incredibly complex philosophical dilemma which extends from the mindset of the leader to the interconnectedness of time (past, present, and future) and everything in between (Mackenzie & Barnes, 2007). As such, "one's ability to grasp one's place requires one to be an engaged agent within it. It is not enough to merely observe" (Mackenzie & Barnes, 2007, p. 94).

The *place* in which superintendents reside is uniquely complicated. Based on her dissertation study, Gracia (2006) found that the setting in which the leader operates can generate different personality manifestations perceived externally. Further, by combining the context and content (place) and reducing it down to a 'situation', personality characteristics can be paired with certain leadership preferences to yield a "true determinant of effective leadership" (Gracia, 2006, p. 27). The active roles a leader assumes involve interactions across different situations

with different people “conceiving a form of leadership style as a combination of task orientation and relationship orientation” (Gracia, 2006, p. 36). As effective superintendents interact with their constituents they instinctively balance the role of manager, instructional leader, and politician utilizing different lenses. In this way their individualized and unique assortment of leadership behaviors surface as leadership preferences best suited to engage in the present context *and* content of the circumstance, rather than blindly reacting in a tenuous manner.

Kowalski (2013) reported “the belief that contextual variability requires different leadership styles supplanted the belief that there is one best administrative style” (p. 197). Furthermore, superintendent leadership is not static, rather it requires an ongoing assessment of many moving parts held together by an overarching interpretation of options, methods, and action plans viewed through aforementioned lenses to align the wishes of the community with the needs of the school district. Osborn et al. (2002) profoundly noted “The world of the leader has fundamentally changed [...] because [...] the context of leadership has itself become more complex [...] as a result [...] leadership shifts as the context shifts” (pp. 798, 803). In sum, district leadership is fluid, ever-changing and encompasses varied approaches surrounding leadership behavior. Still, one major aspect, skill, or indicator of an effective superintendent is his or her ability to work effectively with the board of education. The next section will detail the effective alignment of the board of education and superintendent.

Board of Education and Superintendent: Alignment for Effectiveness

An obvious, yet arduous task in organizational structure is knowing and acknowledging the associated limits or duties within different roles. School board members, when acting as a whole-group and obtaining a majority vote, they are able to exercise their respective power structures for decision making. As discussed earlier in this chapter, such power can be beneficial

or detrimental to an organization. In situations where the board of education and the superintendent operate as a cohesive unit the organization benefits from such effective governance. Herman and Renz (2004) noted that the “overall organizational effectiveness is whatever multiple constituents or stakeholders judge it to be” (p. 695). When the board and superintendent have a good working relationship, “there are processes for diffusing tensions” (Land, 2002, p. 252).

The existing literature reveals somewhat inconsistent findings on the board-superintendent relationships. In their study, Diem and her colleagues (2015) found 87% of the superintendent respondents surveyed, in contrast to 70% of board member respondents, described their relationship as being “mostly cooperative.” In another study of ten school districts in five states, Goodman and his colleagues (1997) found that in the districts with high-quality governance, superintendents and boards tended to engage in purposeful interactions through positive interpersonal relationships, as “they have learned to trust, respect, and depend on one another” and “they know how to communicate, to give-and-take, and to celebrate together” (p. 13). In particular, these so called high-quality governance teams effectively utilized constructive feedback loops that focused on roles and goals, where members knew well their roles and responsibilities, supported their superintendent, and “the superintendents, in turn, coach[ed] and support[ed] their boards through struggle and triumph” (Goodman et al., 1997, p. 13). In the remainder of this section the researcher will discuss in more details about the indicators, causes, and outcomes of alignment between superintendents and boards of education for effectiveness as revealed in the literature.

Indicators (Positive)

It has been noted that organizational governance requires *reciprocity* within its constituents to be effective. Shields (2010) described this reciprocity as “dialogic relationships -- getting to know others whose lived realities differ from one’s own and developing strong, personal relationships with them” (p. 140). She further explained that “relationships characterized by meaningful and purposeful interaction among individuals and groups who hold different values, dissimilar beliefs and understanding, and who are willing to respectfully engage and learn from each other” is essential in ensuring all interests are considered (Shields, 2010, p. 140). Similarly, the Center for Public Education (2011) reported that the key characteristics of an aware and understanding board and superintendent relationship include elements of trust, collaboration, communication, evaluation, and general structure aimed at improving organizational function. Goodman et al. (1997) stated that “Strong leaders keep their board informed on current issues” while also providing “a great deal of guidance to their respective school boards” regarding tasks which include “hiring, evaluation, development, and dismissal as needed” (p. 16). In another study commissioned by the Iowa Association of School Boards, the findings revealed that, while there were no conclusive board actions leading to increased student achievement, school board actions were critical in the establishment of a “culture of improvement” in the way in which they “work[ed] through others by creating conditions that promote learning” (Washington State School Directors Association, 2011, p. 2).

One useful way of distinguishing well-functional from mal- or dysfunctional districts came from Rice et al. (2000) where they classified districts into the categories of “moving” and “stuck” based on nine dimensions of governance behaviors. With demographic characteristics being controlled, “moving” districts are those whose schools have generated unusually high

achievement over years and “stuck” districts are those with unusually low achievement over the same time period (Rice et al., 2000). The characteristics by dimensions of moving and stuck districts are shown in Table 2.3 below.

Table 2.3.

Moving and Stuck Districts

Dimension of Governance Behavior:	Moving Districts	Stuck Districts
Focus on students:	Preparation for changing world. Response to state initiatives and pressure.	Very general. A response to state initiatives and pressure.
Promotion of shared vision:	An ongoing search for better education.	A maintenance orientation. Satisfaction with status quo.
Development of high expectations:	Affirmative view. Belief that all students need greater challenge.	Very modest expectations. SES and parenting cited as reasons why student achievement wasn't expected to change.
Shared decision making:	Involvement structures operating. Search for how to provide support under site-based philosophy.	Laissez faire. Unsure who had been involved or how. Focus on specifics rather than policy.
Promotion of new ideas, initiatives, and assessment of effects:	Thoughtful search. Support for initiatives by personnel.	Rare. External conditions paramount.
Provision of resources for innovation:	Innovation encouraged. Some support structures developed.	Discipline and management was emphasized rather than student learning.
Flexible use of resources:	Flexibility offered to schools. Some quandary about support.	Low priority. Agenda specific.
Enlist community support:	Generally open stance. Search for structures.	Modest efforts.
Interagency cooperation:	Modest efforts.	Modest efforts.

Note. Data for moving and stuck school districts from Rice et al. (2000). Reprinted with permission. Approved by: Harry Heiligental, Associate Executive Director, Board Development, Iowa Association of School Boards.

What is clearly illustrated in the table is that stuck districts operate with a fixed mindset, rarely seeking methods towards improvement, and do little to involve stakeholders in their processes, whereas, moving districts maintain a growth mindset in their endeavors, seek solutions to problems, and position themselves to forge meaningful change. The need to establish *a trusting relationship* between the board of education and the superintendent is heavily supported in the literature and posits itself as a stand-alone strategy capable of reducing conflict and tension while simultaneously increasing partisanship and stability, if used appropriately and in accordance with a competent superintendent (Banicki & Pacha, 2011; Collett, 2014; Dervarics & O'Brien, 2011; Diem et al., 2015; Feuerstein, 2013; French et al., 2008; Goodman et al., 1997; Greenleaf, 2002; Harris, 2006; Land, 2002; Moody, 2011; Sell, 2005; The Center for Public Education, 2011).

Causes or Precedents

According to Cole and Holland (2017), managing this board-superintendent partnership takes “[exercising] business judgement about what issues go to the Board for decision and what information should be provided to the board for routine oversight” (p. 4). Likewise, Harris (2006) noted that the role of the board is to “carefully study recommendations which come through the superintendent via principals, designees, search committees, etc., to ask tough but appropriate questions, and vote to approve or reject the recommendations” (p. 3). Such role differentiation allows the board to remain privy to information and circumstances as they occur in order to “discharge its duty of care in making critical decisions” (Cole & Holland, 2017, p. 4). Quality boards of education are dynamic in nature as they orchestrate systems toward a fuller understanding of the topic or issue. More, the shared experiences of superintendents and board

members which surround role exploration help the governance structure remain flexible as it seeks to meet the needs of the district toward improving academic achievement for all students.

Dunn (1999) discussed the need to “seek opportunities to build coalitions” as a means of finding “common ground” when board members maintain passions for areas different from one another (p. 161). Learning how to speak individually yet collectively, board members are best equipped to arrive at opportunities for advancement in an accelerated fashion as they engage in committee work associated with public relations and public need (Dunn, 1999; Kinder, 1982; Sell, 2005). To maintain the managerial line of institutional governance, it is needed to educate, monitor, and conduct periodic self-evaluations of the board and director to “include questions that assess whether directors are inappropriately encroaching into management’s role” (Cole & Holland, 2017, p. 4).

Outcomes (Positive)

The dialogue, discussion and debate within the board of education, typically conducted at board meetings, are to provide participants the voice necessary for a transparent organization. They are mechanisms through which the community is made aware of the challenges, constraints, and interconnectedness surrounding educational decision-making. When the relationships and governance are healthy, the superintendent is best able to provide the school board grounded recommendations across a variety of needs through the arrangement and utilization of the organizational hierarchy. Reciprocally, the board of education is able to communicate the wishes of the community in an atmosphere of understanding and capacity building. In collaboration, both sides can reach consensus on goals, respective roles, and actions (Feuerstein, 2013). It is worth noting that superintendents who encourage the school board to make policy decisions and commit themselves to following the decisions are assisted by the very

governance structure they have worked to foster and develop. Board of education members who fully embrace their roles as partners and team players tend to maintain an appropriate distance from the active leaders of the district while trusting the efforts of the superintendent (Banicki & Pacha, 2011; Diem et al., 2015; Greenleaf, 2002; Harris, 2006).

Unique to each community are the desirable qualities and needs of their superintendent. To a great extent, it is the job of the school board to select a superintendent who will fit. Goodman et al. (1997) noted,

A mismatch can inhibit board-superintendent communication and the ability to focus on common goals and approaches. A good match will help ensure that over the ensuing five to ten or more years, the board will be able to concentrate on its leadership responsibilities--not on resolving board-superintendent conflict. (p. 45)

In the same time, the superintendent relies upon the board to communicate in accordance to the needs and/or wishes of the community. The importance of maintaining dialogue and open communication between board members and the superintendent is readily supported in the literature (Banicki & Pacha, 2011; Blomberg et al., 2004; Cole & Holland, 2017; Cristofaro, 2017; Dervarics & O'Brien, 2011; Ford & Ihrke, 2017a; Goodman et al., 1997; Harris, 2006; Herman & Renz, 2004; Land, 2002; Moody, 2011; Nicholson & Kiel, 2004; The Center for Public Education, 2011; Sell, 2005; Williams & Tabernik, 2011). The school board, therefore, relies on the superintendent to formulate and carry out such desires in a manner consistent with sound educational practices utilizing their institutional knowledge and system expertise. When these operational mechanisms work together, the governance structure of the organization is strengthened which leads to increased academic achievement of students (Waters & Marzano, 2006). Subsequently, the tenure of effective superintendents “provides stability and long-term

leadership for substantive and lasting educational improvements” as they “usually stay in these districts ten or more years” (Goodman et al., 1997, p. 16).

As outlined above, a healthy organization is best able to self-correct and mitigate instances of error when a trusting relationship is cultured, developed, and encouraged. Essential to each school district is the understanding of where the line of management or oversight is drawn as some districts may be planning directional changes or have experienced gaps in competency (Cole & Holland, 2017). Improvement in this area is an ongoing process, not an endpoint of sorts. Continuous revision and refinement to existing policies, procedures, and protocols is essential in maintaining a healthy educational governance structure. The result is an environment of improved academic achievement when leaders within the organization model appropriate and acceptable forms of policy debate and discussion aimed at helping students succeed.

Section Summary

Some scholars are critical of traditional local school boards because they feel that many members are often caught-up in micromanaging the daily operations of the school district, instead of focusing solely on macromanagement (French et al., 2008). However, the literature reviewed within this section points to many characteristics which reveal strong indicators of alignment for effectiveness between the superintendent and the board of education. This helps situate leadership preferences in relation to the superintendency stability as an effort to further our understanding of alignment within district governance. A better understanding on alignment can assist school leaders, school boards, and community members in identifying dis/parity in priority setting, leadership styles, and mechanisms for initial assessment and subsequent adjustment for fitness and co-independence.

While the literature on the effective school districts is telling, lessons can also be learned from those stuck districts – the how’s and why’s of the problems experienced by the boards and the superintendents in their respective capacities. The next section looks into the literature related to the conflicts within the governance system.

Conflicts within the School District Governance System

As board members represent a diversified background of experiences, perspectives, cultural and political awareness, and educational knowledge their ability to arrive upon agreeable terms can be challenging. Including the superintendent into this matrix makes for yet another layer of complexity when the wishes of the district are meshed with those of the local community and the parameters of responsibility and limitations are blurred. Unfortunately, organizational systems can experience situations which compromise their institutional health. It is under these circumstances where conflict amongst individual board members and/or with the superintendent leads to a degradation of educational value and increased academic volatility. Finally, as internal and external demands are placed upon the organization the resulting conflict can precipitate an arrangement of foolish or reckless behavior where the trust, climate, and culture of the school district are compromised.

In the previous sections the researcher has reviewed the history of the school board in which the accounts clearly reveal that the changes in defined roles can lead to conflict between school board members and district superintendents. In what follows, the researcher will discuss (negative) indicators, causes, and outcomes of conflicts within the school district governance system.

Indicators (Negative)

Conflict between the school board and the superintendent has long been noted as a major obstacle of school governance (McCurdy, 1992; Mountford, 2004). The variety of organizational challenges can be staggering in an effort to manage internal and external demands. Moody (2011) suggested that the complexity of the relationship is compounded by political and social influence which propagates a historically “disjointed and unstable” relationship where the problems between school board members and superintendents have much to do with “some board members attempting to assume a more active role in the operational aspects of schooling than the superintendent is willing to accept” (p. 80).

Power dynamics can lead to additional areas of conflict between the superintendent and the school board. Sell (2005) noted a long-standing question within school organizations: “Who actually has the authority to run schools? The school board can always fire the superintendent, but as far as the daily management of the schools are concerned, who has the real power?” (p. 79). The literature reviewed above on well-functional board-and-superintendent pairs seems to suggest the absence of trust exacerbates power struggles and volatility. Given boards are comprised of lay members who serve part-time and tend not to be professional educators (Moody, 2011), they are more likely than not to represent the diverse behaviors as members of society. That also means different predispositions or bias would present themselves in leadership engagement.

According to Dervarics and O’Brien (2011), there are indicators for the lack of semblance of structure and role acknowledgement in school boards which they called “A Dozen Danger Signs.” They are, namely, lack of awareness, poor communication, negative comments toward staff, attendance to external pressure(s), micro-management, and “little professional

development together as a Board” (Dervarics & O’Brien, 2011, p. 7). When these patterns persist without being addressed, they inhibit the overall growth of the board and position the governing body which includes the superintendent as well as the organization, that is, the district as a whole, to tensions and chaos, struggling for direction and cohesiveness.

Causes or Precedents

Superintendent turnover is most often correlated to conflicts in working with school board members as the superintendent is employed by the board of education and can face challenging dynamics accordingly (Banicki & Pacha, 2011; Diem et al., 2015; Grissom & Andersen, 2012). Hill (2003) appropriately clarified this dynamic as he noted: “There are no practical limits on school board powers. They own the district, hire the superintendent and all staff, decide how money will be spent, and in some cases even set schedules and buy textbooks” (p. 11; see also Moody, 2011). Under such conditions, working to arrive at a unified school board on a myriad of topics such as capital projects, salary schedules, and policy adoption is an arduous task for even a skilled superintendent.

Central to the constraints of district governance, the diversified perspectives maintained by individual board members can intensify member polarity as topics brought to the board of education unveil misunderstanding or counterproductive disagreement. Lacking necessary background knowledge within a community is but one example of instances in which the superintendent “can lead to troublesome circumstances when the trusting relationship deteriorates” (Banicki & Pacha, 2011, p. 3). This tension is often predicated on differing opinions between those leading and those being led and “can become pronounced, making superintendents more vulnerable to external demands. If these demands cannot be met, the superintendent will likely be dismissed” (Feuerstein, 2013, p. 3).

Research suggests that “current board members are more self-centered than board members of the past, want quick fixes, and are very demanding of the superintendent’s time” (Mountford, 2004, p. 705; see also McCurdy, 1992). This is an example of the change that has taken place over the course of time in regards to how board members and superintendents organize interpersonal conflicts associated with school issues. Moreover, according to Moody (2011) “the information base from which school board members must operate is often provided by one or two major sources,” that is typically the superintendent or administrative staff, or those who are upset, angry, or otherwise frustrated (p. 80). As such, troubled school boards can revert to power struggles which result in a cycle of confusion over roles and responsibilities (Alsbury, 2008).

Goodman et al. (1997) found the most common frustration cited by both board members and superintendents regarding conflict within school governance structures dealt with micro-management by the school board. Additional characteristics of troubled school boards and frustrated superintendents included disregarding board agendas, playing to the news, role confusion, nit-picking, not committed to improvement, personal interest, and interpersonal conflict (Goodman et al., 1997). These circumstances are not unique to school boards for superintendents too experience frustration along similar characteristics which include micro-management and varied communication expectations, in addition to trust and respect (Goodman et al., 1997).

Outcomes (Negative)

The ability for an organization to operate under democratic conditions requires an understanding that power structures cannot be one-sided, dominating, or oppressive (Mountford, 2004). Feltman (2002) noted that coercive behaviors or power of individual board members are

counterproductive for schools for the organization as a whole is subject to disruption and partisan influence which compromise the efforts they set out to protect in the first place. Under these circumstances, “the decision-making process and relationships between board members, board colleagues, and superintendents are difficult at best” (Mountford, 2004, p. 704). As such, disagreements are inevitable. As Harris (2006) stated, “seven personalities with seven separate world views, board members are bound to have disagreements” (p. 5). Initially, such “disagreements [can] indicate independence and diversity of thought, which accounts for the synergy and creative tension that lead to problem-solving” (p. 5).

Monitoring disagreement is the shared responsibility of the board members and superintendent to preclude “a serious rift” from becoming “an unbridgeable gulf” (Vara-Orta, 2017, p. 8). It is for this reason the superintendent shoulders the responsibility to provide necessary information associated with the query in a consistent, intentional manner, aimed at meeting the informational needs of each individual board member. Additionally, the superintendent needs to have a recommendation in situations where the board appears withdrawn or ill-equipped to make necessary decisions or in the case of what Harris (2006) calls “*emotionally charged issues* [which] can result in debilitating tension, hurt feelings, and failure to solve problems” (p. 5, emphasis added). Otherwise, the needs of the district may go unattended or ignored for reasons the community has no clear answer.

The strength in which diverse thinking offers a school district is crippled when such diversity results in conflict which compromises the trust that stakeholders have in the local educational governance structure. Sell (2005) noted three things helpful in the transfer of power between these the school board and the superintendent, under the assumption the board has done

its job in securing a “superintendent who skillfully fulfills key leadership responsibilities”

(Waters & Marzano, 2006, p. 21), that is:

- Intentionally relinquish their power to the superintendent and serve mainly as evaluators of the superintendent's progress,
- Unintentionally lose their power and become "rubber stamps"; or ideally,
- Carefully share their power and vision with the superintendent and work as a team to form and implement policies (Sell, 2005, p. 79).

The board’s failure to hire the right superintendent candidate can lead to a variety of additional struggles which increase the challenges associated with school board and superintendent relations and inhibit the advancement of student achievement. Beyond the cost of firing a superintendent under contract are the tertiary costs associated with community dissension. School board members often find themselves on opposing sides of a termination decision. These situations are often amplified in media outlets and result in what Sell (2005) called a “shift of a boards focus to a superintendent crisis...[which] means school boards are no longer fully concentrating on education and the quality of schools” (p. 81; see also Land, 2002).

Section Summary

In order for boards of education to work well with their respective superintendent, the roles and responsibilities must be understood, trusted, accepted and boards must be willing to relinquish some of their governing power. When school boards are subjected to idealism, ideology, personal agendas, and partisan politics, to name a few, damage is bestowed on the students, staff, and community because such behavior inhibits a positive working relationship between the school board and the superintendent (Goodman et al., 1997).

As situations of turmoil mount so does the vulnerability of district leadership. Arriving at solutions designed to mitigate internal struggles, the board of education and the superintendent

wrestle with such conflict through a variety of capacities. It is in this way each participant draws upon their natural tendencies to navigate unknown areas. Such tendencies can be ascribed to individualized leadership preferences where participants resort to what feels most natural in their management of struggle and their resulting presumption of how effective governance is manifested. The next section will unveil relevant literature which surrounds the core constructs of the current study, identified as pillars of co-governance leadership.

Pillars Co-Governance Leadership

Along the leadership continuum, no single style or preference is better than another; however, in terms of educational governance, key aspects of performance shared between the superintendent and school board point to effective outcomes. Within school districts, boards of education are often challenged with the need to improve academic achievement, in addition to fostering an environment of trust and sharing responsibility while remaining cognizant of the general welfare of the district. According to the National School Boards Association [NSBA] (2017b), “one out of every six Americans will spend their day in a public school” (p. 1). Considering the sheer number of employees associated with public education, the responsibility to oversee and manage “this massive investment of human and financial resources” calls for an effective governance structure aimed at positively developing students to secure our nation’s future (NSBA, 2017b, p.1).

As discussed above, the existing literature on board-superintendent relationship and governance effectiveness is rich and yet at times with contradictory or competitive views. As such, a delineation of commonality becomes instrumental. After a thorough review of the relevant literature, the researcher has classified what he calls the pillars of co-governance effectiveness, one that became the theoretical foundation for the current study. Tables 2.4 and

2.5 below outline respectively the literature which heavily supports four effective and ineffective pillars of effectiveness between school board members and district superintendents.

Table 2.4.

Effective Pillars of Connectivity Between School Board Members and Superintendents

Authors/Dates	Effective Pillar
Banicki & Pacha, 2011; Dervarics & O'Brien, 2011; Diem et. al., 2015; Goodman et al., 1997; Harris, 2006; Hess & Meeks, 2010; Hopkins et. al., 2007; Land, 2002; NSBA, 2017b; Plough, 2014; Rice, et al., 2000; Waters & Marzano, 2006; WSSDA, 2011	Valuing student achievement and quality instruction
Alsbury, 2008; Anderson, 2009; Banicki & Pacha, 2011; Cole & Holland, 2017; Dervarics & O'Brien, 2011; Dunn 1999; Feuerstein, 2013; Gill et al., 2005; Grissom & Andersen, 2012; Grissom & Mitani, 2016; Kinder 1982; Moody, 2011; NSBA, 2017b; Ravitch, 2014; Shields, 2010; Usdan, 2010; Wheatley, 2006	Centering on collegiality and collaboration
Alsbury, 2008; Blomberg et al., 2004; Dervarics & O'Brien, 2011; Dunn, 1999; Goodman et al., 1997; Kinder 1982; Kowalski, 2013; Melton, 2017; NSBA, 2017b; Petersen & Fusarelli, 2005; Shields, 2010; Ulrich, 2017; Vara-Orta, 2017	Aligning themselves through philosophy, mission and vision and set goals to monitor ongoing progress and congruence
Banicki & Pacha, 2011; Blomberg et al., 2004; Cole & Holland, 2017; Cristofaro, 2017; Dervarics & O'Brien, 2011; Diem et. al., 2015; Ford & Ihrke, 2017a; Goodman et al., 1997; Harris, 2006; Herman and Renz, 2004; Hess & Meeks, 2010; Hopkins et. al., 2007; Land, 2002; Moody, 2011; Nicholson and Kiel, 2004; NSBA, 2017b; Sell, 2005; Williams & Tabernik, 2011	Valuing the importance of two-way communication

Table 2.5.

Ineffective Pillars of Connectivity Between School Board Members and Superintendents

Authors/Dates	Ineffective Pillar
Andersen, 2012; Banicki & Pacha, 2011; Clark & Estes, 2008; Dervarics & O'Brien, 2011; Diem et al., 2015; Feltman, 2002; Goodman et al., 1997; Grissom & Hill, 2003; Grissom & Mitani, 2016; Harris, 2006; Moody, 2011; Mountford, 2004; Sell, 2005	Maintaining views centered on control, power, and authority
Banicki & Pacha, 2011; Clark & Estes, 2008; Goodman et al., 1997; Grissom & Andersen, 2012; McCurdy, 1992; Moody, 2011; Mountford, 2004; Rice et al., 2000; Sell, 2005	Centralizing the decision-making process

Banicki & Pacha, 2011; Clark & Estes, 2008; Dervarics & O'Brien, 2011; Goodman et al., 1997; Johnson, 2007; McCurdy, 1992; Moody, 2011; Mountford, 2004; Rice et al., 2000; Ulrich, 2017

Utilizing exclusive planning vs. inclusive planning as they work to establish goals

Banicki & Pacha, 2011; Clark & Estes, 2008; Dervarics & O'Brien, 2011; Goodman et al., 1997; Moody, 2011; Rice et al., 2000; Ulrich, 2017

Avoiding transparency

It is evident that effective board of education members contribute to the betterment of school districts and the skill sets and individual characteristics they maintain allow for greater transparency and civil responsibility. However, boards of education do not universally maintain the knowledge and educational awareness necessary for an effective school district. Still needed is the role of the superintendent which is designed to balance the educational needs of the district with the educational desires of the community. Even more important is that when these two entities have mutual understanding and align well in key governance areas, the district as a whole benefits in terms of leadership, stability and growth. Equipped with the knowledge and awareness of the importance of alignment, superintendents and school board members are best positioned to engage in meaningful discussion on a deeper, more personal level aimed at improving district stability.

Chapter Summary

The struggles that local boards of education and their respective superintendents navigate are real and ever changing. Since their inception in Massachusetts, school boards have been asked to adapt at an alarming rate to expanding needs within individual communities. The complexities surrounding such diversity present additional challenges as no two boards of education are alike. To this end, such diversity across and within boards of education results in some districts experiencing leadership alignment, and others not. In the meantime, a superintendent also navigates board-superintendent relationship and other roles of contextual

constraints through the use of individual leadership preferences in an effort to foster alignment. Unique to each school district are the individuals that comprise the governance team and the relationships they maintain with other community stakeholders. Nonetheless, some areas are more critical as key areas for alignment, if the district as an organization needs to be successful.

The literature reviewed in this chapter points to the need for a greater understanding of the interconnectedness between school board and superintendent effectiveness. Specifically, as no relevant research exists within the state of Kansas, this topic presents an opportunity to explore methods in which superintendent tenure and/or district stability may be improved through a holistic understanding of individual and group dynamics, expressed through leadership styles which lead to increased district stability. In the next chapter, Chapter Three, the methodology utilized for the current study is discussed.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

Introduction

The methodology utilized in this research is described in this chapter. The purpose of this study was to examine the superintendent stability, defined as the length of tenure, in Kansas school districts through a selective analysis of school board leadership preferences.

Additionally, the current study examined leadership preferences as related to the size of the school district. The current study targeted all 286 individual school districts in the state of Kansas where the enrollment sizes vary from less than 100 to over 50,000 students (ksde.org). Such disparity of district size represented a myriad of differences in how educational governance structures are elected and their respective involvement or awareness of detail. This substantial size difference necessitates a need for orchestration of the school board and superintendents to meet the needs of their respective communities. The manner in which a district balances the institutional need with that of societal approval falls within the details of how board members and their superintendents operate (Banicki & Pacha, 2011; Feuerstein, 2013; Harris, 2006; Heifetz, 1994; Ulrich, 2017; Waters & Marzano, 2006).

Research Questions

To reiterate, the primary questions addressed in the present study in the context of Kansas were:

- Research Question 1 (RQ1): What are the perceptions of co-governance leadership pillar preferences as identified by the district superintendent?
- Research Question 2 (RQ2): What are the perceptions of co-governance leadership pillar preferences as identified by the board president?

- Research Question 3 (RQ3): To what extent does alignment of such pillar preferences impact the tenure of the district superintendent?
- Research Question 4 (RQ4): What are the relationships between school district enrollment and the perceptual alignment of such pillar preferences?

Hypotheses to Research Questions

Answers to RQ1 and RQ2 relied on descriptive statistics and, therefore, no hypotheses were pre-established. Demographic items within RQ1 and RQ2 provided a group profile of the participants. The remaining two research questions relied on inferential statistics for measuring relationships among constructs, as such, the hypotheses are stated below. And alternative hypotheses were informed by the literature review concerning the directions of these relationships (Waters & Marzano, 2006; Williams & Tabernik, 2011).

The literature has revealed stability of the superintendency contributes to a reduction in economic and personnel issues and an increase in academic achievement (Boyland, 2013; Goodman et al., 1997; Trevino et al., 2008; Waters & Marzano, 2006). Given this study's focus was on the tenure of the superintendent and the alignment of pillar preferences between the superintendent and the board (as evaluated by the board president), the alternative hypothesis for RQ3 is: the alignment of pillar preferences across key effective pillars between the board (as evaluated by the board president) and the superintendent has a positive effect on the resulting tenure of the superintendent.

Supportive and aligned governance teams promotes and supports strong relationships, positive culture, and enhanced stability (Goodman et al., 1997; Waters & Marzano, 2006; Williams & Tabernik, 2011). While the extant literature has examined the relationships between the district demographics and the characteristics of the superintendent or of the school board

respectively (Alsbury, 2008; Boyland, 2013; Grissom & Mitani, 2016; Williams & Tabernik, 2011), the current study was the first attempt to explore the notion of leadership preference alignment in relation to the superintendency stability. As such, for RQ4, the alternative hypothesis is stated as nondirectional: the alignment of pillar preferences has a relationship with district size.

Research Design

Quantitative Methods

The current study was designed quantitatively to examine superintendent and board president perceptions of pillar preferences. Furthermore, this survey study examined the alignment of the aforementioned preferences with the resulting tenure of the superintendent. A questionnaire was used to collect data from the population for exploratory correlational research. Additionally, materials from Kansas Association of School Boards (KASB) were used in the development of the survey instrument.

It was important to be able to measure the perceptions of pillar preferences of superintendents and board presidents as locally elected educational governance systems experience challenges when faced with assessing their effectiveness. The current study used an online survey to examine the relationship between pillar preferences and the resulting superintendent tenure. The perceptual survey provided insight into perceptions and opinions. Board members, while maintaining their individual pillar preferences, engage in a complex arrangement of social and governance situations which require “self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management” (Hopkins et al., 2007, p. 696; see also Blomberg et al., 2004). As such, the board president and superintendents, were asked perceptual questions within the survey instrument.

Willey (2011) pointed out advantages to survey research, noting: “Questionnaires are often used in education to collect data that is not easily observable. They allow for data to be collected efficiently, since data can be collected over a large geographic area in a relatively short amount of time” (p. 63). Additionally, “surveys enable scholars to explore social psychological phenomena that accurately represent the population about whom generalizations are to be made” (Visser, Krosnick, & Lavrakas, 2000, p. 247). Finally, the advantages of using an electronic survey for the current study include no financial obligation, no travel requirements, quick response, and quick data compilation (Jones, Baxter, & Khanduja, 2013).

Following the tailored design (Dillman et al., 2014) approach to the survey, the language, sequence, and topics of the questions were constructed and then executed according to the parameters of social exchange theory (Dillman et al., 2014). For instance, an effort was made to ensure the instrument had appropriate flow to benefit participant engagement. Ultimately, the survey served as an invitation to participate in that the study was of value and of use for similarly situated persons.

Study Population

According to Dillman et al. (2014), a census “entails selecting everyone in the target population” (p. 56). The current study was a census survey, and the target population was the superintendents and school board presidents of all public schools in the State of Kansas for the 2019-2020 school year. The total number of superintendents and their names and contact information was obtained through the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) using the Kansas superintendent and board president directory located on the KSDE website (ksde.org). Eight Kansas school districts share a superintendent, accounting for four fewer superintendents than there are Kansas school districts; thus, the population for this study was 282

superintendents and 286 school board presidents, resulting in a target population of 568 individuals.

Surveying the board presidents rather than all the board members was based on several considerations. First, due to his/her leadership role within the governance structure, the board president tends to be the individual most connected to the superintendent and board at-large and as such in a best position to speak to the overall leadership of the board as a whole. Secondly, with a board typically consisting of seven members, surveying board presidents makes the participant size logistically manageable for the researcher. Finally, due to the considerable variation in the school district size and a potentially low survey return rate, a census approach of surveying all public school superintendents and their respective board of education presidents allowed a better chance to minimize such potential obstacles and provide a perceptual landscape of Kansas boards and superintendents on these matters under study. As survey methodologists suggested, a census approach provides access to otherwise underrepresented groups (Check & Schutt, 2012; Lavrakas, 2008).

Survey Design

Ponto (2015) noted that efforts to design a valid and reliable survey for the target population can include using a “font size appropriate for the respondents, ordering items logically without creating unintended response bias, and arranging items clearly on each page [to] increase the response rate” (p. 170). In the current study, the face validity of the questionnaire designed was established by consulting with a current superintendent and a board member as they provided feedback on the survey regarding item appropriateness, clarity, order, and relevancy (Dillman, et al., 2014). Then, the survey was revised based on such feedback

before its full launch to the target population. The construct validity was measured by exploratory factor analysis.

In what follows, the sources that informed the survey item construction will be introduced first, followed by a more detailed discussion on the instrument validation process, that is, the analyses conducted for measuring validity and reliability.

Survey Item Construction

Kansas Association of School Boards (KASB) conducts school board trainings among many other services for Kansas School districts. By permission, survey questions used for their training efforts were incorporated into the survey instrument. Two resources from the National School Board Association (NSBA), *Becoming a Better Board Member: A Guide to Effective School Board Service* (NSBA, 2006) and *The Key Work of School Boards: Guidebook* (NSBA, 2015) served as the resources used by KASB in the development of their instrument. The language of the KASB questions used in this study were kept to be as close to their original format as possible; however, a minor amount of editing was done for flow. Secondly, additional questions were constructed by the researcher to ask of respondents along the core constructs of the study.

Altogether, these questions were remapped along the four pillars initially conceptualized by the researcher (see Tables 2.4 and 2.5 in Chapter 2 for more details). To reiterate, the initial pillars of effective school governance were: (a) valuing student achievement and quality instruction, (b) centering on collegiality and collaboration, (c) aligning themselves through philosophy, mission, and vision and set goals to monitor ongoing progress and congruence, and (d) valuing the importance of two-way communication. Table 3.1 provides a crosswalk of the

research questions and their respective constructs, variables, survey items, and method of analysis.

Table 3.1.

Crosswalk of Research Questions

RQ	Constructs	Variables	Survey Items	Analysis
1	Demographics	Age, gender, years in current superintendent role, total years as a superintendent, length of contract, district size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age • Gender • Size of school district • Number of different superintendents in the past 5 years • Length of superintendent contract • Number of years in current superintendent role • This is my first year as superintendent; Are you intending to stay for 5 years? • Total years as superintendent • Number of districts as superintendent 	Descriptive statistics
2	Demographics	Age, gender, years in current board chair role, total years as a board member, district size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age • Gender • Years of experience on BOE • Size of school district • Number of different board presidents in past 5 years • Number of consecutive years on BOE • Number of years as board president 	Descriptive statistics
3	Alignment & Tenure	Effective Pillars, years as superintendent	<p>Tenure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of different superintendents in the past 5 years • Number of years in current superintendent role. • This is my first year as superintendent, I am new to this role; Are you intending to stay for 5 years? <p>Effective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student achievement is a common topic of board meeting discussion. • District efforts to improve student achievement are consistently supported by the BOE. • The board is made aware of instructional efforts to improve student achievement. • District efforts to improve quality instruction are consistently supported by the BOE. 	Logistic Regression

- The BOE is made aware of instructional challenges within the school district.
- The BOE is made aware of student achievement challenges within the school district.

2Effective:

- *Each BOE member acts in the best manner of the entire school district rather than on a segment or special interest group.*
- *The BOE assures that each policy is written as clearly as possible so that it can support the superintendent's interpretation.*
- *The BOE and superintendent trust and respect one another.*
- *During the decision making process, board members think independently, but once a decision is made, all board members respect the decision; the board speaks with one voice.*
- *The board president and superintendent jointly develop an agenda that reflects the needs of the BOE and supt.*
- *In advance of each meeting, the board receives a packet of materials including...*
- *The meeting time, length, place and facilities accommodate the board, staff and public to the fullest extent possible.*

3Effective:

- *The BOE recognizes that most board decisions are policy decisions. Written policies are essential to effective governance and implementing the district vision.*
- *The BOE has agreed upon a clear vision for the district.*
- *The board president and superintendent have a plan (goals) for moving the district toward the agreed upon vision.*
- *The district's programs, services, and staff development are aligned with the BOE vision, goals and priorities.*
- *The board regularly reviews and evaluates the district's progress towards its goals.*
- *The board regularly monitors district policy for effective implementation and compliance.*

4Effective:

- *Board members attempt to assure that community values and educational aspirations are adequately reflected at the board table.*

- *The board considers its most important job to be setting a clear direction for the district on behalf of the community.*
- *The school board engages the community in securing support for the vision and goals of the district as well as the resources necessary to achieve them.*
- *Board members work to strengthen public confidence in the board and district.*
- *The board is engaged in two-way conversation with the community, enabling it to speak on behalf of the community and provide educational leadership for the community.*
- *Prior to adopting policy, the board requires input from affected parties - the superintendent, staff, and community - through appropriate and varied methods.*

4	Alignment & District Size	Effective Pillars, school district size	District Size: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enrollment of school district Effective Pillars: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • see RQ 3 for detail of questions 	Correlation
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Note. Italics denotes questions from KASB training resources.

Basically, the survey instrument contained two parts: demographic questions and questions related to pillar preferences (see Appendix A). A question within the survey identified the responder as one of two possible participants: superintendent or board president. Response to this question initiated skip-logic within the digital survey instrument to ensure only pertinent questions were asked of the respondent.

The tenure of the superintendent was constructed as a binary dependent variable (stable or unstable). Demographic data, including district size, gender, age, number of years serving as a superintendent/board member, and number of years serving as a superintendent/board member in the current district, and turnover of superintendents in district were considered as variables. Given the national average of superintendent tenure is reported at five to seven years (Ulrich, 2017), for the purpose of this study, the cutoff for determining whether or not a district has superintendent stability was set as five years.

Validity and Factor Analysis

Validity is “the extent to which a question or scale measures the concept, attribute, or property that it says it is. Validity can be optimized by careful pre-testing of alternative questions designed to measure the same concept” (Fowler, 2013, p. 57). As noted above, the survey itself was constructed by incorporating and modifying items drawn from those in a questionnaire used by KASB, together with some self-designed items. The KASB instrument was reviewed by an expert panel of board of education trainers outside of the state of Kansas. As aforementioned, face validity, defined as the degree to which an assessment or test subjectively appears to measure the variable or construct that it is supposed to measure was measured using an expert panel. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was used to assess the construct validity of the survey.

EFA was conducted using the SPSS® Statistics software version 26 to identify any latent variable factors indexed to pillar preferences. Factor score correlations were used to measure the validity of the study’s five effective pillars within the survey instrument. EFA identifies interdependencies between variables to measure the validity by identifying the fewest number of factors that account for the largest amount of covariation within the observed data. In this study, each of the survey items associated with each of the five pillars was considered as a variable, and the five pillars were tested as the factors (also known as constructs).

The EFA process consisted of three distinct steps: 1) Extraction, 2) Rotation and, 3) Interpretation. The extraction process was used to determine the number of factors to retain and interpret using eigenvalues for each factor and a scree plot for the overall analysis. Factor loading was used in accordance with the eigenvalues to determine the magnitude of the item-factor relationship in addition to how much item variance was accounted for by each factor (Kim & Choi, 2018). Rotation was conducted by oblique and orthogonal means for the data to be

examined from a different angle consistent with the theoretical construct to identify the best result. The flexibility of interpreting the results of the EFA allowed the researcher to make decisions on what made the most sense from a theoretical and perceptual perspective.

Reliability Measure

There was no report suggesting that KASB had conducted a reliability analysis on their instrument. For this study, as a measure of internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha was used to estimate and determine the reliability of five pillars of effective leadership by ensuring all subcategories consistently measured the same thing (Brauckmann & Pashiardis, 2011; Ford & Ihrke, 2017b; Fowler, 2013; Willey, 2011). A Cronbach's alpha value at or above 0.7 indicates an acceptable level of internal consistency (Fowler, 2013).

Data Collection Procedure

IRB and Informed Consent Process

The current study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Kansas State University. As noted above, the contact information of all the superintendents and school board presidents in the state of Kansas was obtained through the KSDE using the Kansas superintendent and board president directory located on its website. Individual contact was made with superintendents and board presidents in advance by email with a form letter (Appendix B), containing information regarding the IRB, the study, participant rights, and request to participate in the study. This served as a professional courtesy which explained to the superintendent the confidentiality of the responses, approximated timing of future reminders, and definition of purpose. It was noted in the invitation to participate and the introductory message of the online survey that by responding to the survey, the participants were indicating their informed consent to participate in the study (Appendix C).

Survey Distribution

Based on the listed contact information of the superintendents and board presidents obtained from the KSDE, the researcher generated a group email, using his official Kansas State University email account. The first invitation-to-study email contained a brief summary of the study and the benefit to participate (Appendix B). Six additional reminder emails were sent at approximately one-week intervals to the targeted participants and the total time for the data collection was eight weeks.

The privacy of the respondents was protected by making the results to the questionnaire confidential. Direct personal identifiers such as name and location were not collected. Indirect personal identifiers were collected which included the use of the district number which served as the participants “username”, tenure of duty for the board chair and superintendent, district enrollment, age, gender, etc. Yet, the indirect personal identifiers were necessary to the survey data to fully analyze the responses associated with their respective school districts (Peterson, 2014). The use of the district number as the “username” was necessary to pair the results in order to conduct the resulting data analysis. No individual IP addresses were recorded and only aggregated data were used for analysis and reporting purposes.

Given the current survey design, it was therefore possible for the researcher to distinguish the participants who had responded from those who had not. As such, the follow-up emails were sent to only those who had yet to participate. Care was taken to indicate such context in these follow-up emails, explaining the necessity of multiple indiscriminating emails and appreciating the participants’ considerations.

Data Analysis

Previous studies have analyzed superintendent turnover as it relates to salary, performance, school board function, and assessment scores (Grissom & Andersen, 2012; Grissom & Mitani, 2016). For the current study, survey data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics to look for patterns associated with board president and superintendent alignment. To answer Research Question 1 and 2, descriptive statistics were generated to describe the targeted population, that is, the school board presidents and superintendents in Kansas, their leadership views, including district size, gender, age, number of years serving as a superintendent/board member, and number of years serving as a superintendent/board member in the current district, and turnover of superintendents in district.

The measurement of the dependent variable was constructed to operationalize the definition of stability which, for the purpose of this study, was defined as superintendent tenure. Assessed at a five-years mark, tenure was classified as a dichotomous (also known as binary) variable (TRUE at five or more years, FALSE at four or less years). Utilizing SPSS® software, the dependent variable, tenure, was analyzed across the pillars of effective leadership preferences predictors for statistically significant correlations between such alignment and tenure of the superintendent, using logistic regression (Brauckmann & Pashiardis, 2011; Grissom & Mitani, 2016; Ford & Ihrke, 2017a; Ford & Ihrke, 2017b). To answer Research Question 4, correlation analyses were conducted to measure the relationship between the district size, defined as the enrollment, and the leadership preference as reported by the board presidents and superintendents.

Limitations

The study has several limitations. First, stability was defined as having a superintendent remain in the position for five or more years; this definition of stability was arbitrary. Ulrich (2017) indicated the average tenure to be five to seven years. As such, the current study could have elected to use six or seven years as the dependent variable which could produce different results. Second, the tenure of the superintendent represents a point-in-time and does not take into consideration the trends of the previous superintendencies. Stated differently, instances of a recent superintendent turnover may not reflect the historical stability of a particular school district. Third, the tenure of the board president could affect his or her ability to respond to the survey questions to reflect the board's leadership preference as intended by the researcher. Nonetheless, a question in the survey on board president tenure provided some control over this unintended response error. Finally, this study involved human subjects participating in a perceptual survey which, according to Herbert (2013), is subjected to potential biases because of eventual self-selection to participate voluntarily. Nonetheless, an examination on the demographics of the respondents in relation to those of the targeted population helped to check if and to what extent such biases were present.

Chapter Summary

This chapter focuses on the methodology utilized by the current study. Overall, this was a census survey. The survey item construction relied on modifying an existing instrument and self-constructing additional items specifically for the purpose of the current study. The use of an expert panel served as the face validity measure while exploratory factor analysis was used to assess the construct validity of the survey instrument. Cronbach's alpha was used to estimate and determine the reliability of five pillars of effective leadership. Contact information of the all

superintendents and board presidents was obtained through the Kansas State Department of Education. The school district number served as the “username” in order to pair the results of the superintendent with the board president. Survey data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics and the resulting data was reported in aggregate form. In the chapters that follow, Chapter Four will detail the results of the study and Chapter Five will provide discussions and conclusions, including implications for practice, policy making, and future research.

Chapter 4 - Results

Introduction

As noted in the previous chapters, the purposes of the present study were to examine the leadership style preferences of the board and the superintendent in relation to the stability of the school district in Kansas, and to capture a snapshot of the landscape of pillar preferences of the board and superintendents in Kansas for the current year. A self-designed perceptual survey was administered to the superintendents and board presidents of all Kansas school districts. This chapter presents the results from this study and is arranged in three sections. The first section discusses the descriptive statistics from the survey sample in relation to the targeted population, that is, all the superintendents and board presidents in the state of Kansas for the current year. The second section addresses the validity and reliability of the survey instrument as measured by the exploratory factor analysis and Cronbach's alpha results. In doing so, the underlying constructs proposed by the researcher were examined and discussed in detail. The last section focuses on the statistical results concerning the research questions sought for the current study.

Before re-introducing the research questions and associated hypotheses, it is necessary to reiterate that the present study solicited demographic and perceptual feedback from Kansas superintendents and their respective board presidents regarding pillar preferences associated with district governance. Moreover, the results of the study are displayed as responses associated with their respective subgroups in addition to responses of superintendent-board pairs.

Research Questions

The purpose research questions that were examined in the present study follow:

1. What are the perceptions of co-governance leadership pillar preferences as identified by the district superintendent?

2. What are the perceptions of co-governance leadership pillar preferences as identified by the board president?
3. To what extent does alignment of such pillar preferences impact the tenure of the district superintendent?
4. What are the relationships between school district enrollment and the perceptual alignment of such pillar preferences?

Hypotheses

Two hypotheses were tested quantitatively in this study. RQ1 and RQ2 dealt with descriptive statistics and were, therefore, without hypotheses. The null hypotheses and alternate hypotheses for RQ3 and RQ4 are as follows:

H₀₃. The alignment of pillar preferences across key effective pillars between the board (as evaluated by the board president) and the superintendent has no effect on the resulting tenure of the superintendent.

H_{a3}. The alignment of pillar preferences across key effective pillars between the board (as evaluated by the board president) and the superintendent has a positive effect on the resulting tenure of the superintendent.

H₀₄. The alignment of pillar preferences has no relationship with district size.

H_{a4}. The alignment of pillar preferences has a relationship with district size.

Descriptive Statistics

Demographics of the Respondents

The targeted population for this study consisted of 282 superintendents and 286 board of education presidents in Kansas per the 2020 record. A total of 364 surveys was received, leading to a return rate of 64.08 percent. Among the questionnaires received, 360 were usable and thus

included for data analysis. Table 4.1 shows the breakdown of the survey results by their role within the school district in addition to the representative percentage across the state.

Table 4.1.

Participant Composition

Role	Sample (%)	Population	Sample/Population Ratio in %
Board President	158 (43.9)	286	55.24
Superintendent	202 (56.1)	282	71.63
Total	360 (100)	568	63.38

Note. Population = total number of board presidents or superintendents in Kansas in 2019.

District size represented an important part of the current study as RQ4 looked to identify the relationship between the alignment of pillar preferences and the size of the district.

Displayed in Figure 4.1 is the comparison of the total number of Kansas school districts in each size category to the results of the survey responses. Applegate’s (2017) classification of school size was used. There are significant size differences in school districts across the state of Kansas, as evident in the results. Of the 202 reporting districts, the mean (of enrollment) was 1,659.73 and the median was 600. Yet, the standard deviation for district size for the current study was 4,528.25, indicating a considerable variation in the sample (range = less than 100 students ~ over 20,000).

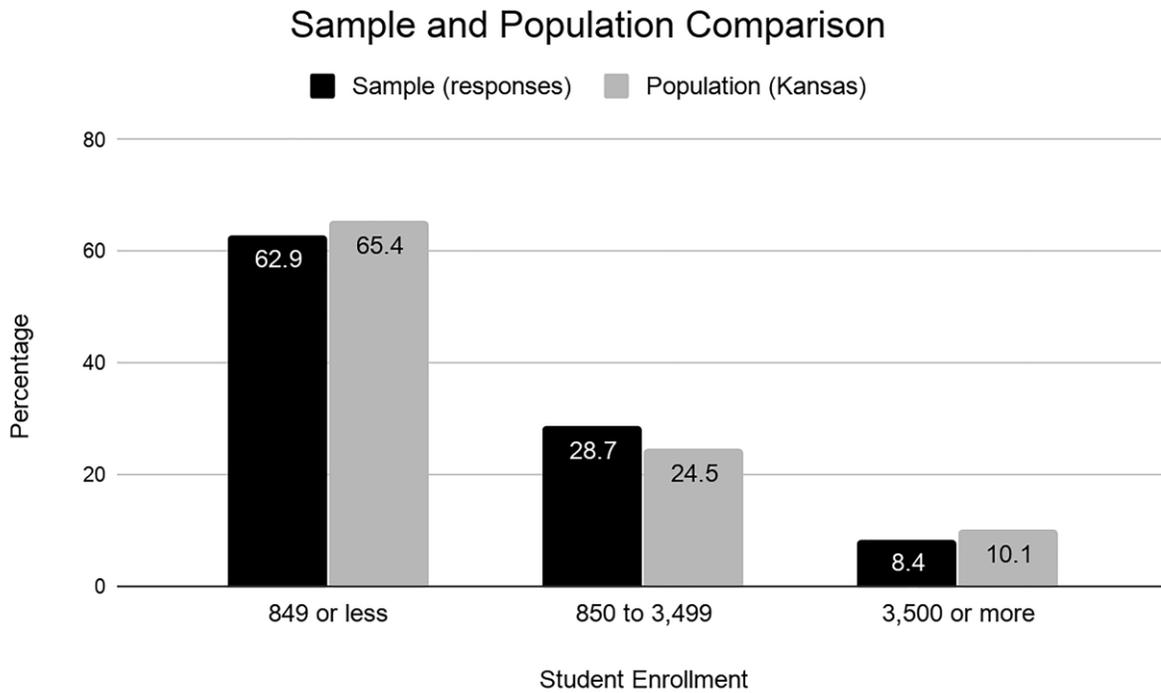


Figure 4.1. Comparison of Kansas School Districts and Survey Population Responses by Percentage.

After addressing the general demographics of the respondents who participated in the study, in the following two sections, the specifics of each subgroup (i.e., superintendents and board presidents) surveyed are discussed. Noted, out of the myriad of potential demographic questions that could have been included in the survey, the researcher made very intentional choices to only examine those concerning superintendency stability in reference to tenure trends and turnover as revealed in the literature speaking to both groups regarding school district governance.

Superintendents

As of the 2019–2020 academic year, there are 282 superintendents in Kansas, of which, 202 responded (a response rate of 71.63 percent). For the current study, the threshold of five years was used to define stability in regard to superintendent tenure and served as the

overarching timeframe reference throughout the study (Ulrich, 2017). Table 4.2 shows the breakdown by gender for the superintendents in the current study. The results reveal that while the majority of the superintendents in Kansas were males, proportionally, there were more females in the study sample.

Table 4.2.

Superintendent Gender

	Sample (%)	Population	Sample/Population Ratio in %
Male	165 (81.7)	239	69
Female	35 (17.3)	43	81.4
Prefer not to answer	2 (1.0)	n/a	
Total	202 (100)	282	71.6

Note. Population = total number of superintendents in Kansas in 2019.

In addition to superintendent age and the length of the superintendent contract, four questions in the present study were constructed to identify stability (see Table 4.3). The average number of years in the current district reported by the respondents as well as the number of different superintendents a district has had revealed in the results suggests that school districts in Kansas are more likely than not to witness one superintendency change every five years, echoing the national average of five to seven years (Ulrich, 2017). The results on the age of superintendents are consistent with the findings of Boyland (2013), where half of the participants of the current study are between the ages of 51–60. With regard to superintendent contracts, 71.3 percent of superintendents indicated they had a two-year contract, with three-year contracts making up 18.3%, and one-year contracts 8.9%. A majority (58.4%) of superintendent participants had only been a superintendent in their current district, while 28.2% and 8.4% had been with two and three districts respectively. Additionally, 19 school districts reported having had three new superintendents over the past five years, and three school districts reported having

had four new superintendents in the same time frame. The results of all six superintendent-specific demographic questions asked in the survey are shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3.

Superintendent Descriptive Statistics

Measurement	<i>M</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age	52.37	53.00	7.77
Length of contract	2.13	2.00	.604
Years in current district	5.04	4.00	4.23
Total years as superintendent	7.92	5.50	6.13
Number of districts as superintendent	1.61	1.00	.897
Number of different superintendents in past 5 years	1.28	1.00	.088

Note. *M* = mean, *Mdn* = median, *SD* = standard deviation

With regards to district size and the responses for superintendent turnover over the past five years (see Table 4.4), the results indicate that the largest school districts had the least turnover of superintendents, as compared to the small and medium sized districts.

Table 4.4.

Number of Different Superintendents Over the Past Five Years

District Size Category	Number of Different Superintendents in Past Five Years				
	0	1	2	3	4
849 students or less	43 (33.9%)	22 (17.3%)	43 (33.9%)	17 (13.4%)	1 (0.8%)
850 to 3,499 students	17 (29.3%)	12 (20.7%)	24 (41.4%)	3 (5.2%)	2 (3.4%)
3,500 or more students	8 (47.1%)	1 (5.9%)	7 (41.2%)	1 (5.9%)	0 (0.0%)
Total	68 (33.8%)	35 (17.4%)	74 (36.8%)	21 (10.4%)	3 (1.5%)

Note. n=201. (%) = the percentage of the sample in the corresponding district size category (Applegate, 2017).

Furthermore, superintendents new to their position in the current school year (2019–2020) were asked a question about their intentions to remain in their current position for five years, that is, the study’s designated threshold for stability. There were 32 first-year Kansas superintendents in the sample, and nearly 69% of this subgroup responded as so (see Table 4.5).

Table 4.5.

New Superintendents Intention to Stay for Five Years in Current Position

Selection	Frequency (%)
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True	22 (68.75)
Neither True nor False	4 (12.5)
False	5 (15.63)
Prefer not to answer	1 (3.13)
Total	32 (100)

School Board Presidents

As of the 2019–2020 academic year, there are 286 board presidents in Kansas, of which, 158 responded (a response rate of 55.24 percent). Table 4.6 shows the breakdown by gender for the board presidents in the current study. The database from which the board president contact information was collected made no reference to gender (ksde.org). Yet, a 2018 survey conducted by the National School Boards Association of 1,387 school board members indicated that 46% were female (NSBA, 2018). Results indicated that proportionally, there were more male board presidents in the sample.

Table 4.6.

Gender Distribution of the Board President Respondents

	Male	Female	Total
Counts (%)	105 (66.46)	53 (33.54)	158 (100)

Likewise, there were questions included in the survey to get a sense of the stability of the board president and general board members (see Table 4.7). Results indicated that the median age, 50, of a board president was slightly less than the median age, 53, of the superintendent. According to the National Association of School Boards (NSBA), the median age for board members in 2018 was 59 (NSBA, 2018). With regards to years of experience and consecutive years in the district, the two numbers (9.96 years and 9.54 years respectively) were nearly double that of what the average tenure of superintendents (5.04 years). Almost all the superintendents indicated that the board president was elected by board members, rather than via a rotation of

members; and the average number of board presidents over a five-year period was 2.88. The average number of years as board president was 4.35.

Table 4.7.

Board President Descriptive Statistics

Measurement	<i>M</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age	50.88	50.00	8.74
Years of board experience	9.96	9.00	5.86
Number of board presidents in past 5 years	2.88	3.00	1.41
Consecutive years on board	9.54	9.00	5.62
Years as board president	4.35	3.00	3.27

Note. *M* = mean, *Mdn* = median, *SD* = standard deviation

Furthermore, a question in the survey specifically asked about the time frame in which the responding board president was in their role with the current superintendent in position. The results (see Table 4.8) revealed that 89.1 percent of board presidents had worked for four or less years with the current superintendent. In other words, only 10.9 percent of school board presidents had worked with their current superintendent for five or more years. This suggests that neither position has an average tenure long enough to sustain a partnership beyond five years; at least that was the case for the current sample.

Table 4.8.

Number of Years as Board President with Current Superintendent in Position

Years	Frequency (%)	Value
1	51 (32.69)	
2	50 (32.05)	
3	21 (13.46)	
4	17 (10.89)	
5	4 (2.56)	
6	13 (8.33)	
Total	156 (100)	
<i>M</i>		2.44
<i>Mdn</i>		2.00
<i>SD</i>		1.512

Note. *M* = mean, *Mdn* = median, *SD* = standard deviation

To sum up, in this section, the results from the demographic items in the survey are discussed in detail to help the reader to have a grasp of who actually participated in the current study and to what extent, this sample is representative of the population targeted. Next, the validity and reliability of the questionnaire are addressed in the next two sections, before the results to address the research questions are introduced.

Validity

The purpose of this section is to outline the process utilized to validate the instrument used in the current study. A series of distinct steps was conducted, including extraction, question removal, and rotation. To accomplish these steps several measures were used to make analytical decisions, and those measures were: eigenvalues, total variance, scree plotting, factor loading, and communalities. Such an instrument validation process also served the purpose of testing the proposed underlying structure constructed by the researcher. In this section, the results of exploratory factor analysis (EFA) for instrument validity is discussed.

Factor analysis reduces a relatively large number of variables to groups of related variables, namely latent factors from which additional criteria are run to ensure the output is what the researcher is seeking (Mertler & Vannatta, 2005; Rodriguez, 2018; Yoxsimer, 2015). Parsimony is a key principle with factor analysis (Mertler & Vannatta, 2005). Typically, an eigenvalue is provided for each factor, and according to the Kaiser rule, those with an eigenvalue greater than one should be retained as they indicate a strong factor (Mertler & Vannatta, 2005; Yoxsimer, 2015). Given the survey was constructed with the proposed underlying four tenets of pillar preferences in mind, the factor analysis for instrument validity check also functioned as a check on the proposed tenets (that is, latent factors). The survey returned 360 valid responses which exceeded the recommended sample size of 300 or greater (Mertler & Vannatta, 2005).

Extraction

Following the validity analysis of the survey items, factor extraction was conducted to determine what, if any, underlying structure existed for measures on the 25 variables. Prior to the factor analysis, evaluation of linearity and normality was conducted and all variables within the correlation matrix had at least one correlation with another variable greater than $r = .3$. Principal components analysis (PCA), one of the most commonly used extraction methods, was used: it analyzes each observed variable for “all sources of variability—unique, shared, and error variability” and serves to extract the maximum variance from a data set to arrive at fewer factors (Mertler & Vannatta, 2005, p. 250; Rodriguez, 2018).

PCA was conducted on the 25 survey items that measured the proposed tenets suggested by the literature as contributing toward board-superintendent shared governance. The threshold for suppression was set at .4 and two survey items did not return a value greater than or equal to .4 on any factor. In addition, another two survey items cross loaded on multiple latent factors without necessarily showing a distinguishable high loading on any factor (Rodriguez, 2018). As such, four items were omitted, and the remaining 21 items were retained and further examined. The specifics about item removal are to be discussed in the next paragraph. Overall, three measures were used to determine the appropriate number of factors to retain: (a) eigenvalue, (b) variance, and (c) scree plot. All the results pointed to a five-factor solution as appropriate. Thus, the researcher ran a PCA again on the remaining 21 survey items with the number of latent factors set at five.

The analysis of reliability (to be discussed in detail in the next section) confirmed that it was appropriate to remove these four aforementioned questions from the data analysis. The four omitted items were: Q117 – “District efforts to improve student achievement are consistently

supported by the school board.”; Q119 – “District efforts to improve quality instruction are consistently supported by the school board.”; Q124 – “The board recognizes that most board decisions are policy decisions. The board’s written policies are essential to effective governance and implementing the district’s vision.”; and finally, Q132 – “The board considers its most important job to be setting a clear direction for the district on behalf of the community.” The pattern matrix results revealed that Q119 and Q124 had values less than .4., Q117 cross loaded similarly on two factors, Factor 3 and Factor 4, and Q132 had similar loadings on Factor 1 and Factor 3. According to Costello and Osborne (2005), “the researcher has to consider if [removing items] compromises the integrity of the data” (p. 3) and if the remaining items all have “adequate to strong loaders (.50 or better) on each factor” (p. 4). As such, the four noted survey items were removed from data analyses. As a result, the original 25-item survey instrument was reduced to 21 items for final PCA, where there were at least three items measuring each factor.

Eigenvalues and Total Variance. The final PCA revealed the presence of five factors with eigenvalues exceeding one (see Table 4.9), explaining 36.6%, 7.8%, 6.2%, 5.9%, and 5.3% of the total variance, respectively, and 61.9% accumulatively (see Table 4.10). This satisfied the explanatory power needed for social sciences (İlhan & Kılıç, 2019).

Table 4.9.

Factor	Eigenvalue
1	7.693
2	1.639
3	1.306
4	1.230
5	1.122
6	.891
7	.832

Table 4.10.

Factor	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	7.693	36.631	36.631
2	1.639	7.805	44.436
3	1.306	6.218	50.654
4	1.230	5.858	56.512
5	1.122	5.344	61.856
6	.891	4.243	66.099
7	.832	3.963	70.062

Scree Plot. According to Mertler and Vannatta (2005), the researcher should “retain all factors within the sharp descent, before eigenvalues level off” (p. 260) in the scree plot. As shown in Figure 4.2, the most drastic descent is at three, and eigenvalues begin to really level off at eight. Considering the theoretical interpretability and model complexity (Costello & Osborn, 2005), together with the eigenvalues and the scree plot, an extraction of five factors made better sense.

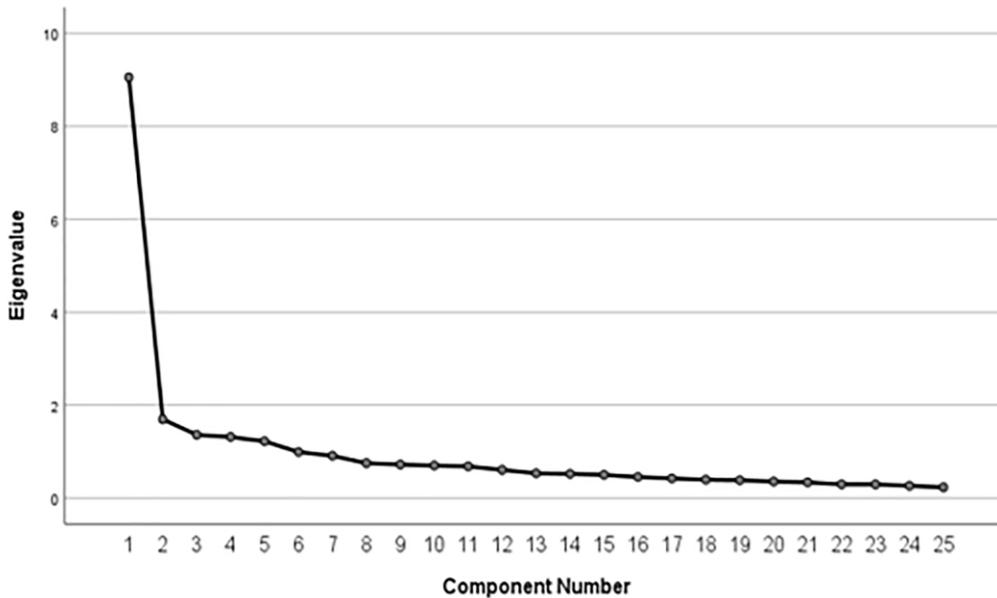


Figure 4.2. Catell's Scree Plot

Communalities. Communalities indicate how much of the variance is explained in each item explained by all factors (Mertler & Vannatta, 2005). That is, the extent to which an item correlates with all other items. The highest communality recorded was .753; Q134 - *The board and superintendent have a plan (goals) for moving the district toward the agreed upon vision*. This indicates that there is a large degree of correlation between Q134 and the remaining 20 survey items. As such, the notion that the board and superintendent have a plan to move the district toward an agreeable vision was found to be most correlated to the other items in the questionnaire. Communality values in social sciences are likely to be between .4 and .7; those with values less than .4 are candidates for removal as they may not belong in the factor (Costello & Osborne, 2005). As shown in Table 4.11, all communities but one had values above .4. Nonetheless, considering that this item has a factor loading greater than the threshold of .4 and a minimum of three-item requirement for reliability purposes for each construct (i.e., factor), it was retained for the current study.

Table 4.11.

Communalities		
	Initial	Extraction
Factor 1		
The board is engaged in two-way conversation with the community, enabling it to speak on behalf of the community and provide educational leadership for the community.	1.000	.630
The school board engages the community in securing support for the vision and goals of the district as well as the resources necessary to achieve them.	1.000	.629
Board members work to strengthen public confidence in the board and district leadership.	1.000	.611
The school board regularly monitors district policy for effective implementation and compliance.	1.000	.551
The board assures that each policy is written as clearly as possible so that it can support the superintendent in his/her reasonable interpretation.	1.000	.528
Board members attempt to assure that community values and educational aspirations are adequately reflected at the board table.	1.000	.526
Prior to adopting policy, the board requires input from affected parties - the superintendent, staff, and community - through appropriate and varied methods.	1.000	.478
Factor 2		
The board and superintendent have a plan (goals) for moving the district toward the agreed upon vision.	1.000	.753
The board has agreed upon a clear vision (direction) for the district.	1.000	.752
The district's programs, services and staff development are aligned with the board's vision, goals and priorities.	1.000	.673
The board regularly reviews and evaluates the district's progress towards its goals.	1.000	.661
Student achievement is a common topic of board meeting discussion.	1.000	.468
Factor 3		
Each board member acts in the best manner of the entire school district rather than on a segment of the district or a special interest group.	1.000	.747
During the decision making process, board members think independently, but once a decision is made, all board members respect the decision; the board speaks with one voice.	1.000	.689
The board and superintendent trust and respect one another.	1.000	.641
Factor 4		
The school board is made aware of student achievement challenges within the school district.	1.000	.752
The school board is made aware of instructional challenges within the	1.000	.746

school district.

The board is made aware of instructional efforts to improve student achievement. 1.000 .585

Factor 5

In advance of each meeting, the board receives a packet of materials including: a) an agenda and b) as appropriate, analysis and recommendations on the agenda items. 1.000 .635

The meeting time, length, place and facilities accommodate the board, staff and public to the fullest extent possible. 1.000 .604

The board president and superintendent jointly develop an agenda that reflects the needs of both the board and superintendent. 1.000 .332

Rotation

To further assess that the assumption of linearity between variables is met, and to determine the appropriateness of performing a Principal Component Analysis (PCA), the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was performed (Kaiser, 1974; Rodriguez, 2018). The KMO for the 21 remaining items yielded a measure of .920 (see Table 4.12), indicating a satisfaction of sampling adequacy (Kaiser, 1974). Also, correlations between variables, a necessary condition to perform a PCA, were assessed using Bartlett's test of sphericity. Bartlett's test of sphericity was statistically significant (see Table 4.12), supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix (Pallant, 2013), and thus indicating that the data fit to the factor analysis.

Table 4.12.

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.920
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity Approx. Chi-Square	3536.04
	df 253
	Sig. .000

In factor analysis, once certain numbers of factors are extracted, they are rotated to simplify and clarify the interpretation of the factor structure (Mertler & Vannatta, 2005).

Promax rotation is an alternative non-orthogonal (oblique) rotation method that is used when

factors are correlated and in the presence of large datasets. Additionally, “in the social sciences we generally expect some correlation among factors, since behavior is rarely partitioned into neatly packaged units that function independently of one another” (Costello & Osborne, 2005, p. 3). As such, the promax rotation method was used.

The factor loadings matrix resulted from the promax rotation is presented in Table 4.13. As noted above, the threshold for suppression was set at .4. Factor 1 was named, *Valuing the importance of two-way communication*; Factor 2 was named, *Aligning themselves through philosophy, mission and vision and set goals to monitor ongoing progress and congruence*; Factor 3 was named, *Centering on collegiality and collaboration*; Factor 4 was named, *Student achievement and quality instruction*; Factor 5 was named, *Procedural*.

Table 4.13.

Factor Loadings	
	Loading
Factor 1: Two-way Communication	
The board is engaged in two-way conversation with the community, enabling it to speak on behalf of the community and provide educational leadership for the community.	.855
Prior to adopting policy, the board requires input from affected parties - the superintendent, staff, and community - through appropriate and varied methods.	.790
Board members work to strengthen public confidence in the board and district leadership.	.728
The school board engages the community in securing support for the vision and goals of the district as well as the resources necessary to achieve them.	.692
The board assures that each policy is written as clearly as possible so that it can support the superintendent in his/her reasonable interpretation.	.640
The school board regularly monitors district policy for effective implementation and compliance.	.537
Board members attempt to assure that community values and educational aspirations are adequately reflected at the board table.	.500
Factor 2: Alignment through mission and vision	
The board has agreed upon a clear vision (direction) for the district.	.912
The board and superintendent have a plan (goals) for moving the district toward the agreed upon vision.	.895
The board regularly reviews and evaluates the district's progress towards its goals.	.749

The district's programs, services and staff development are aligned with the board's vision, goals and priorities.	.722
Student achievement is a common topic of board meeting discussion.	.507
Factor 3: Collegiality and Collaboration	
Each board member acts in the best manner of the entire school district rather than on a segment of the district or a special interest group.	.878
During the decision making process, board members think independently, but once a decision is made, all board members respect the decision; the board speaks with one voice.	.788
The board and superintendent trust and respect one another.	.758
Factor 4: Student achievement and quality instruction	
The school board is made aware of instructional challenges within the school district.	.897
The school board is made aware of student achievement challenges within the school district.	.878
The board is made aware of instructional efforts to improve student achievement.	.726
Factor 5: Procedural	
In advance of each meeting, the board receives a packet of materials including: a) an agenda and b) as appropriate, analysis and recommendations on the agenda items.	.798
The meeting time, length, place and facilities accommodate the board, staff and public to the fullest extent possible.	.742
The board president and superintendent jointly develop an agenda that reflects the needs of the both the board and superintendent.	.409

To conclude, the factor analysis results indicate the instrument used in the study was valid and revealed a five-factor structure for the superintendent-and-board alignment conception. In the next section, the discussion of the reliability results is provided.

Reliability

Also known as internal consistency, reliability was measured, using Cronbach's alpha. Reliability indicates the extent to which the items on a scale are measuring the same underlying dimension (Yoxsimer, 2015). The reliability analysis was performed on the overall scale of the superintendent-board alignment, using all 21 items, and on each of the five resulting factors independently (see Table 4.14). The overall internal consistency was .909. All factors except

factor 5 had a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient above .7, indicating adequate reliability (Pallant, 2013).

Table 4.14.

Reliability Results

	<i>Cronbach’s alpha</i>	<i>No. of Items</i>
21-Item Scale	.909	21
F1 – Two-way alignment	.854	7
F2 – Alignment through mission and vision	.848	5
F3 – Collegiality and collaboration	.776	3
F4 – Student achievement and quality instruction	.781	3
F5 - Procedural	.488	3

Note. F1 = Factor 1, F2 = Factor 2, F3 = Factor 3, F4 = Factor 4, and F5 = Factor 5

The three items which make up Factor 5, “Procedural,” include: Q141 - In advance of each meeting, the board receives a packet of materials including: a) an agenda and b) as appropriate, analysis and recommendations on the agenda items.; Q142 - The meeting time, length, place and facilities accommodate the board, staff and public to the fullest extent possible.; Q140 - The board president and superintendent jointly develop an agenda that reflects the needs of both the board and superintendent. Both Q141 and Q142 had strong factor loadings at .798 and .742 respectively. However, Q140 had the lowest factor loading across all of the items (see Table 4.13). The descriptive statistics for Q140 revealed an average value of 1.65, yet had the largest standard deviation of all the survey items ($SD = .757$). Additionally, Q140 had the lowest recorded community value = .332 (refer to earlier discussion on page 78 and Table 4.11). This indicates it was the most unexplained variable by any other variable. This calls for further examination, which will be addressed later when the discussion on implications for future research is provided. Nonetheless, in sum, the overall scale and its subscales had adequate consistency in measuring the intended constructs. In the next section, the results addressing each of the four research questions will be reported.

Results for Research Questions

Research Question One: The Perception of Co-Governance Leadership Pillar

Preferences as Identified by the District Superintendent

As noted in the Methodology chapter (Chapter 3), the leadership preference section consisted of 21 Likert-scale questions with 1 being “strongly agree” and 4 being “strongly disagree” (see Appendix D for all the survey items). The researcher examined the results across all five factors for patterns. The highest mean factor score existed with Factor 1, “Two-way communication,” while the lowest mean factor score was associated with Factor 5, “Procedural.” Additionally, the greatest range (.56) came from Factor 5, “Procedural”. Yet, the smallest range (.11) came from Factor 4, “Student achievement and quality instruction.” Refer to Table 4.15.

Table 4.15.

Superintendent Factor Score Examination

	<i>M</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Range</i>
Factor 1	1.88	1.61	2.05	.44
Factor 2	1.78	1.61	2.00	.39
Factor 3	1.68	1.44	1.96	.52
Factor 4	1.60	1.53	1.64	.11
Factor 5	1.43	1.21	1.77	.56

Note. M = Mean, Min = Minimum value, Max = Maximum value

The results from all 202 superintendents showed that three survey items had a mean greater than 2, meaning superintendents tended to mark “disagree” on those items. And, these three items all measured Factor 1, “Two-way communication,” based on the tested underlying factor structure. Two of the three items with the smallest means (that is, rating more positively) measured Factor 5, “Procedural,” and the final item measured Factor 3, “Collegiality and Collaboration.” Comparing to the average standard deviation of .24 across all items, these six items in Table 4.16 all had much larger standard deviations, suggesting more variations among superintendent respondents’ rankings.

Table 4.16.

Selected response values from Kansas superintendents

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Q138 - The school board regularly monitors district policy...	2.05	.63
Q144 - Prior to adopting policy, the board requires input...	2.05	.66
Q136 - The school board engages the community in securing support...	2.03	.61
Q126 - The board and superintendent trust and respect...	1.44	.61
Q142 - The meeting time, length, place and facilities accommodate...	1.30	.49
Q141 - In advance of each meeting, the board receives a packet...	1.21	.42

Note. *M* = Mean, *SD* = Standard Deviation

Research Question Two: The Perception of Co-Governance Leadership Pillar

Preferences as Identified by the Board President

The researcher examined the results across all five factors for patterns. The highest mean factor score existed with Factor 1, “Two-way communication,” while the lowest mean factor score was associated with Factor 5, “Procedural.” Additionally, the greatest range (.35) came from Factor 1, “Two-way communication” and Factor 3, “Collegiality and Collaboration.” And, the smallest range (.20) came from Factor 2, “Alignment through mission and vision.” Refer to Table 4.17.

Table 4.17.

Board President Factor Score Examination

	<i>M</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Range</i>
Factor 1	1.69	1.46	1.81	.35
Factor 2	1.53	1.47	1.67	.20
Factor 3	1.58	1.40	1.75	.35
Factor 4	1.53	1.39	1.61	.22
Factor 5	1.30	1.18	1.51	.33

Note. *M* = Mean, *Min* = Minimum value, *Max* = Maximum value

The results from all 158 board presidents showed that all items had a mean less than or equal to 1.81, meaning that board presidents tended to mark “agree” on all items. Similar to the superintendent results, each of the three highest mean items measured Factor 1, “Two-way communication,” based on the underlying factor structure. Two of the three items with the

smallest means (that is, rating more positively) measured Factor 5, “Procedural,” and the final item measured Factor 4, “Student achievement and quality instruction.” Comparing to the average standard deviation of .18 across all items, these six items in Table 4.18 all had much larger standard deviations, suggesting more variations among board president respondents’ rankings.

Table 4.18.

Selected response values from Kansas board presidents

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Q144 - Prior to adopting policy, the board requires input...	1.81	.65
Q138 - The school board regularly monitors district policy...	1.80	.61
Q143 - The board is engaged in two-way conversation...	1.80	.62
Q118 - The board is made aware of instructional efforts...	1.39	.50
Q142 - The meeting time, length, place and facilities accommodate...	1.22	.43
Q141 - In advance of each meeting, the board receives a packet...	1.18	.38

Note. *M* = Mean, *SD* = Standard Deviation

Comparison of the Perceptions of Such Pillar Preferences Between the Superintendent and Board President

In comparing the results obtained from all responses of superintendents and board presidents, the researcher observed several worth noting patterns. First, responses with the smallest mean value (that is, rating more positively) came from Factor 3, “Collegiality and Collaboration”; Factor 4, “Student achievement and quality instruction”; and Factor 5, “Procedural”. Second, the responses with the largest mean values (that is, most negative) were all associated with Factor 1, “Two-way communication.” Third, items from Factor 5, “Procedural,” Q141 – *In advance of each meeting, the board receives a packet of materials including: a) an agenda and b) as appropriate, analysis and recommendations on the agenda items*; and Q142 – *The meeting time, length, place and facilities accommodate the board, staff and public to the fullest extent possible* were both represented as part of the superintendent and

board presidents most positively ranked responses (see Tables 4.17 & 4.18). Finally, Q138 – *The school board regularly monitors district policy for effective implementation and compliance;* and Q144 – *Prior to adopting policy, the board requires input from affected parties – the superintendent, staff, and community – through appropriate and varied methods* were both part of the most negatively ranked items (see Tables 4.17 and 4.18). In sum, while the trends across the variables were very similar, all responses from the board presidents returned more positive rankings (except for Q120 – *The school board is made aware of instructional challenges within the school district.*, where the mean value of the superintendent and the board president was the same).

To further examine the comparison and contrast between the responses of superintendents and board presidents, an analysis was conducted across the items with the smallest (.05 or smaller) and largest (.25 or greater) differences (see Table 4.19). The negative values displayed in Table 4.19 indicates that superintendents were less likely to mark “strongly agree” as compared to their paired board president. In other words, the greater the difference, the greater the perceptual difference between the superintendent and the board president. For the four items with the greatest difference, Q116 and Q137 belonged to Factor 2, “Alignment through mission and vision”; one was associated with Factor 1, “Two-way communication”; and the last one was associated with Factor 5, “Procedural”. In regards to the items with the closest alignment, two were associated with Factor 3, “Collegiality and collaboration”; one was associated with Factor 4, “Student achievement and quality instruction”; and the final one was associated with Factor 5, “Procedural” (see Table 4.19). For interpretive purposes concerning Table 4.19 and Table 4.20, the board president values served as the base for the measurement, hence the negative values in the displayed results.

Table 4.19.

Comparison of Superintendent and Board President Mean Values of Pillar Preferences

	Board President <i>M</i>	Superintendent <i>M</i>	Difference in <i>M</i>
Q116 - Student achievement is a common...	1.49	2.00	-.52
Q136 - The school board engages the community...	1.73	2.03	-.30
Q140 - The board president and superintendent jointly develop...	1.51	1.77	-.27
Q137 - The board regularly reviews...	1.67	1.94	-.27
Q121 – The school board is made aware...	1.60	1.64	-.04
Q126 – The board and superintendent trust...	1.40	1.44	-.04
Q141 - In advance of each meeting...	1.18	1.21	-.04
Q131 - During the decision making process...	1.60	1.64	-.03

Note. Calculations rounded to the nearest hundredth.

Research Question Three: Alignment of Pillar Preferences to Superintendent

Tenure

The process to address RQ3 involved three distinct steps. First, once the underlying factor structure was validated, only the data collected across the remaining 21 items were used to generate leadership preference factor scores for each participant. To accomplish this, an average of all responses across each of the respective factors was conducted to arrive at a value for each factor for the superintendent and board president responses.

Secondly, for comparative purposes between all respondents and those of superintendent-board pairs, the average factor scores and their respective differences were reported (see Table 4.20). The results revealed that Factor 5, “Procedural,” showed an increase in misalignment from the overall results of the sample population ($n = 360$) as compared to the superintendent-board pair results ($n = 133$). Otherwise, all other factors indicated improved alignment from the sample population to the paired population.

Factor 4, “Student achievement and quality instruction” had the least difference, thereby indicating the greatest alignment between the superintendent-board pairs (see Table 4.20). Factor 3, “Collegiality and Collaboration” saw the greatest reduction (nearly half) in difference between the results for all superintendents and board presidents, relative to those of the superintendent-board pairs. This discrepancy in a way supports that the researcher’s decision to separate the paired data from the overall data collected was necessary. Factor 1, “Two-way communication” and Factor 2, “Alignment through mission and vision” both returned a value difference of .17 for the superintendent-board pairs (see Table 4.20). Finally, Factor 5, “Procedural” showed less alignment for superintendent-board pairs than for all survey respondents.

Table 4.20.

Averages factor scores

	<i>All superintendents and board presidents (n=360)</i>					<i>Superintendent-board president pairs (n=133)</i>				
	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5
Board President	1.69	1.53	1.58	1.53	1.31	1.70	1.55	1.58	1.55	1.30
Superintendent	1.88	1.77	1.68	1.60	1.43	1.87	1.72	1.66	1.59	1.43
Difference	-.19	-.24	-.15	-.07	-.12	-.17	-.17	-.08	-.04	-.13

Note. F1 = Factor 1, F2 = Factor 2, F3 = Factor 3, F4 = Factor 4, and F5 = Factor 5

Thirdly, logistic regression analysis was conducted, using the data from the 133 matched pairs of superintendent-board president responses only. In the survey, three item variables measured superintendent stability (tenure of 5 or more years = stable, tenure of less than 5 years = unstable), and they were: Q80 - *How many different superintendents has your district had over the past five (5) years?* – variable “turnover”; Q83 - *Including this school year, how many years have you served as the superintendent in your current school district?* – variable “existing tenure”; Q161 - *New superintendents - Are you intending to stay in your current role for five (5) years?* – variable “intentions”. In order to proceed with logistic regression, responses to these

three item variables were converted to binary values; 1 = stable for those who met or exceeded the five-year definition and 0 = unstable otherwise.

The separate binary variable analyses, using the variables “turnover”, “existing tenure”, and “intentions” as independent variables respectively and the five factors as the dependent variables, were conducted. The statistical models are listed below:

Model 1

$$\ln[Y_1/(1-Y_1)] = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + b_4X_4 + b_5X_5, \text{ where}$$

Y_1 = the probability of having superintendent stability measured as “turnover.”

X_1 = factor 1; X_2 = factor 2; X_3 = factor 3; X_4 = factor 4; and X_5 = factor 5

Model 2

$$\ln[Y_2/(1-Y_2)] = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + b_4X_4 + b_5X_5, \text{ where}$$

Y_2 = the probability of having superintendent stability measured as “existing tenure.”

X_1 = factor 1; X_2 = factor 2; X_3 = factor 3; X_4 = factor 4; and X_5 = factor 5

Model 3

$$\ln[Y_3/(1-Y_3)] = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + b_4X_4 + b_5X_5, \text{ where}$$

Y_3 = the probability of having superintendent stability measured as “intentions.”

X_1 = factor 1; X_2 = factor 2; X_3 = factor 3; X_4 = factor 4; and X_5 = factor 5

The responses of the variable “turnover” were reclassified, using the 5-year threshold. Eighty-eight school districts (66.7%) indicated they had had the same superintendent for five or more years, and as such were classified as “stable” and marked with a value = 1. Forty-four school districts (33.3%) indicated they had had more than one superintendent over the past five years, and as such were classified as “unstable” and marked with a value = 0.

The responses of the variable “existing tenure” were also reclassified at the 5-year threshold. Fifty-four superintendents (40.6%) indicated they had been the superintendent in the current district for five or more years, and as such were classified as “stable” and marked with a value = 1. Seventy-nine superintendents (59.4%) indicated they had not been the superintendent in the current district for five or more years, and as such were classified as “unstable” and marked with a value = 0.

The responses for the variable “intentions” underwent the same reclassification at the 5-year threshold. Fifteen new superintendents (75%) indicated they planned to remain in their current district for five or more years, and as such were classified as “stable” and marked with a value = 1. Five superintendents (25%) indicated they did not plan to remain in their current district for five or more years, and as such were classified as “unstable” and marked with a value = 0.

The Hosmer-Lemeshow test measures the goodness-of-fit for logistic regression, that is, how well the data fits the model (Abu-Bader, 2016; Archer & Lemeshow, 2006). “A non-significant chi-square value is thus desired where $p > .05$ ” (Abu-Bader, 2016, p. 131). None of the p -values were significant, indicating all three models had good predictability power for superintendent stability measured in the survey (see Table 4.21).

Table 4.21.

Superintendent Stability

Question	Overall Predicted Percentage	Hosmer and Lemeshow Test		
		Chi-square	df	Sig.
80	67.4	4.947	8	.763
83	64.7	5.927	8	.655
161	86.1	7.806	8	.453

For Model 1, where Q80 – “turnover” was the independent variable, only factor 2 “Alignment through mission and vision” was found to be statistically significant (see Table

4.22). For interpretive purposes, it is necessary to note that the researcher constructed the survey scale to indicate “strongly agree” as value = 1 and “strongly disagree” as value = 4. As such, Factor 2 had a beta value of -.274 indicating that for every one unit of increased alignment, there would be .274 units of increased stability. The Odds-Ratio of .76 suggested for every unit of increase on the alignment scale leads to $100*(.76-1) = 24\%$ decrease in the odds of turnover.

Table 4.22.

Q80: How many different superintendents has your district had over the past five (5) years?

Supt. and board president difference	B	Wald	df	Sig.	Odds-Ratio	95% C.I. for Odds-Ratio	
						Lower	Upper
Factor 1	-.002	.001	1	.977	.998	.872	1.142
Factor 2	-.274	7.241	1	.007	.760	.623	.928
Factor 3	-.039	.084	1	.773	.962	.740	1.251
Factor 4	.108	.793	1	.373	1.114	.879	1.412
Factor 5	-.039	.065	1	.799	.962	.715	1.294
Constant	1.021	19.589	1	.000	2.775		

For Model 2, where Q83 – “existing tenure” was the independent variable, only factor 2 “Alignment through mission and vision” was found to be statistically significant (see Table 4.23). Factor 2 had a beta value of .230 indicating that for every one unit of increased alignment, there would be .230 units of decreased odds of having a superintendent leave the district before the five-year mark. The Odds-Ratio of 1.259 suggested for every unit of increase on the alignment scale leads to $100*(1.259-1) = 25.9\%$ increase in the odds of existing tenure.

Table 4.23.

Q83: Including this school year, how many years have you served as the superintendent in your current school district?

Supt. and board president difference	B	Wald	df	Sig.	Odds-Ratio	95% C.I. for Odds-Ratio	
						Lower	Upper
Factor 1	.055	.720	1	.396	1.057	.930	1.200
Factor 2	.230	5.942	1	.015	1.259	1.046	1.515

Factor 3	.017	.018	1	.894	1.017	.793	1.305
Factor 4	-.121	1.074	1	.300	.886	.705	1.114
Factor 5	.044	.092	1	.762	1.045	.785	1.392
Constant	-.687	10.295	1	.001	.503		

For Model 3, where Q161 – “intentions” was the independent variable, no factors were found to be statistically significant (see Table 4.24).

Table 4.24.

Q161: New superintendents - Are you intending to stay in your current role for five (5) years?

Supt. and board president difference	95% C.I. for Odds-Ratio						
	B	Wald	df	Sig.	Odds-Ratio	Lower	Upper
Factor 1	-.042	.104	1	.747	.959	.744	1.237
Factor 2	-.259	1.857	1	.173	.772	.532	1.120
Factor 3	-.251	1.188	1	.276	.778	.495	1.222
Factor 4	.188	.670	1	.413	1.207	.769	1.894
Factor 5	-.035	.017	1	.896	.965	.571	1.632
Constant	2.075	23.780	1	.000	7.964		

To summarize, the null hypothesis for RQ3 was rejected, though partially. Only factor 2, alignment through mission and vision, was found to be statistically significantly related to two of the three tenure measures, that is, turnover and existing tenure.

Research Question Four: Alignment of Pillar Preferences to District Size

To address RQ4, only the data collected across the 21 items, sub-categorized by factor, were used. First, the correlation was conducted using the data collected from all the respondents, using the overall alignment factor score (i.e., overall score difference) as one variable and the enrollment as the other. Secondly, the same correlational analysis was conducted on the data associated with the 133 matched pairs of superintendent-board president responses only (see Table 4.25). The researcher ran two versions of the same bivariate correlational analysis. First, the enrollment number reported on the survey was examined against the factor difference.

Second, districts were broken down into Applegate’s (2017) size categories 1) 849 or less, 2) 850 to 3,499, and 3) 3,500 or greater and examined against the factor difference. Results of the analysis did not reveal any statistically significant findings for either correlation.

Table 4.25.

Correlations of district size and pillar preferences of superintendent and board president pairs

	<i>Pearson’s Correlation</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Enrollment number	-.001	.993	.538	1.60
Categorical size	-.036	.683	.538	1.60

Note. Enrollment number = number of students, Categorical size = the sample in the corresponding category (Applegate, 2017), *Sig* = Significance, *M* = Mean, *SD* = Standard Deviation

The researcher also conducted bivariate correlation analyses on each of the five factors independently in relation to the enrollment size of the school district (see Table 4.26). Factor 3, “Collegiality and Collaboration” was the only factor found to be significant. According to Abu-Bader (2016), the correlation between two variables “is considered strong if the coefficient of determination is greater than or equal to .64, moderate if it is greater than .25 and less than .64, and weak if it is less than or equal to .25” (p. 5). As such, while the alignment on Factor 3 is statistically significantly correlated to district size, given its coefficient value of .176, such a relation is weak. Nonetheless, the null hypothesis predicting that there is no statistically significant difference in the alignment of pillar preferences by the size of the school district was rejected.

Table 4.26.

Correlations of district size and pillar preferences of superintendents and board presidents by factor

	<i>Pearson’s Correlation</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Factor 1	.037	.671
Factor 2	-.059	.501
Factor 3	.176*	.043
Factor 4	-.032	.716
Factor 5	-.168	.053

Note. *. Correlation is significant at the .05 level.

Summary

This chapter described the results of survey data collection from a sample of 202 superintendents and 158 board presidents in Kansas. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was used to test the validity of the self-made survey instrument. EFA results revealed five factors with an eigenvalue greater than one, accounting for 61.9% of the variance. The reliability of the instrument was measured using Cronbach's alpha which returned an overall internal consistency value of .909.

The focus of this study surrounded four research questions. Outside of the demographic questions (RQ1 and RQ2), questions surrounded the tenure of the superintendent and the alignment of pillar preferences between the superintendent and the board of education (as evaluated by the board president), detailed as RQ3; as well as the effect that district size had on leadership preference (mis)alignment, detailed as RQ4. Different statistical measures were used in this study, namely descriptive statistics, logistic regression, and correlational analysis.

Descriptive statistics were used to answer RQ1 and RQ2 which described the demographics of research participants and detailed the landscape of their responses according to the governance role of the respondent. For RQ3, the relationship between pillar preferences of the superintendent-board president pairs were analyzed using logistic regression. It was determined that Factor 2 (Alignment through mission and vision) was statistically significant at predicting the stability of a school district (as indicated by superintendent tenure). Therefore, the null hypothesis predicting that there is no statistically significant difference between leadership preference alignment and the resulting tenure of the superintendent was rejected.

To answer RQ4, a bivariate correlation was analyzed to determine the effect of district size on pillar preferences of superintendent-board president pairs. It was determined that Factor 3 (Collegiality and collaboration) had a weak but statistically significant relationship to pillar preferences of superintendent-board president pairings and the size of the district. Yet, the null hypothesis predicting that there is no statistically significant relationship with the alignment of pillar preferences and district size was also rejected.

Chapter 5 will further explain these findings from this study. It will also present the limitations, conclusions and recommendations for the future based on the research.

Chapter 5 - Summary and Conclusions

In this final chapter, a summary of the findings will be introduced first. Next, a discussion of the study's findings in relation to the extant literature will be provided. Also addressed are the implications for future research, practice and policy. The chapter concludes by summarizing the current study.

No previous study has been conducted which specifically measures leadership stability in relation to board-superintendent alignment "Despite the presumed importance of stability in school district leadership" (Grissom & Mitani, 2016, p. 381). Board-superintendent awareness surrounding the topics under investigation by the current study is essential to improving governance structure and district oversight. The current study began with an idea to identify, within all the varied capacities, expectations, and responsibilities of the board-superintendent educational governance team, the areas or dimensions of leadership as positively correlated with increasing superintendent tenure. In other words, the current study focused on critical aspects of executive leadership alignment as a way to better understand its relationship to district leadership stability. Before introducing the finding summaries, the research purpose of the study is reiterated here.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine pillar preferences from the perspectives of superintendents and school board presidents in the state of Kansas and the effect of the (mis)alignment of the two groups on the superintendency stability measured by superintendent tenure. Additionally, the current study provided a snapshot of the landscape of pillar preferences

of board presidents and superintendents in Kansas at the time when the study was conducted in 2019. Also examined were any impacts that district size has on pillar preferences.

Summary of Findings

Research Question One: The Perception of Co-Governance Leadership Pillar

Preferences as Identified by the District Superintendent

Superintendents from 202 Kansas school districts responded to a self-designed perceptual survey where the results identified a five-factor structure. In other words, the board-superintendent interactions or functions upon which leadership (mis)alignment appears can be categorized into five key pillars or dimensions, namely, “Two-way communication (Factor 1),” “Alignment through mission and vision (Factor 2),” “Collegiality and collaboration (Factor 3),” “Student achievement and quality instruction (Factor 4),” and “Procedural (Factor 5).” Superintendents tended to agree more frequently with the key pillars in reverse chronological order. That is, they were arranged as Factor 5, Factor 4, Factor 3, and so on. Factor 5, “Procedural” had a value closest to agree and Factor 1, and “Two-way communication” had a value closest to disagree.

Additionally, when the mean factor scores were examined, Factor 5, “Procedural” (range = .56) and Factor 3, “Collegiality and collaboration” (range = .52) had the two highest variations observed among the superintendent respondents, followed by Factor 1, “Two-way communication” (range = .44) and Factor 2, “Alignment through mission and vision” (range = .39). Finally, Factor 4, “Student achievement and quality instruction” had the least variation, with a range of .11.

Research Question Two: The Perception of Co-Governance Leadership Pillar Preferences as Identified by the Board President

Board presidents from 158 Kansas school districts participated in the same self-designed perceptual survey as the superintendents did where the results identified a five-factor structure. Similar to the superintendent subsample, the board presidents' results also ranked the importance of the five pillars (that is, the five factors identified) in order as following: first, Procedural; second, Student achievement and quality instruction; third, Collegiality and collaboration; fourth, Alignment through mission and vision; and last, Two-way communication.

The range of responses, that is, the difference between the maximum and minimum factor scores, across the five factors revealed two patterns of similarity. Factor 1, "Two-way communication" (range = .35), and Factor 3, "Collegiality and collaboration" (range = .35) represented the responses with the largest ranges, trailed by Factor 5, "Procedural" (range = .33). Factor 4, "Student achievement and quality instruction" (range = .22) and Factor 2, "Alignment through mission and vision" (range = .20) had much lower variations.

Research Question Three: Alignment of Pillar Preferences to Superintendent Tenure

A total sample of 360 responses was recorded from Kansas superintendents and board presidents for the current study. Of the 202 superintendents and 158 board presidents, 133 were noted as paired, meaning both the superintendent and the board president from the same school district responded. The mean factor scores revealed that for all factors but one, the paired responses showed an increased alignment between the superintendent and board president. That is, on four (out of five) pillars, superintendent-board pairs (n = 133) showed a better alignment as compared to the entire sample (n = 360). Factor 4, "Student achievement and quality

instruction” (.04) had the least disparity (that is, the mean factor score of the total sample to the mean factor score of the paired subsample) while Factor 1, “Two-way communication,” (.17) and Factor 2, “Alignment through mission and vision” (.17) had the greatest disparity. The disparities on Factor 3, “Collegiality and collaboration,” (.08) and Factor 5, “Procedural” (.13) were moderate.

The results of the logistic regression analyses on the paired board president-superintendent responses revealed that Factor 2, “Alignment through mission and vision,” was the only factor which statistically significantly predicted the turnover and the (current) tenure length, but not the intention of remaining on the current superintendency. Taking into consideration of all the results obtained to address research question one to three, it is safe to conclude that overall the superintendents and the board presidents surveyed had more agreement than disagreement in terms of leadership areas of importance. Furthermore, the fact that the paired subsample had a better level of alignment in its results has reaffirmed the study’s methodological decision of forgoing the absolute anonymity but instead requesting the identification of the district from the participants.

Research Question Four: Alignment of Pillar Preferences to District Size

For RQ4, only the paired subsample responses were used for analysis. The relationship between district size and leadership preference alignment was examined where district size was measured as (a) district enrollments or (b) enrollment categories (Applegate, 2017). When the overall alignment factor scores were used, no statistically significant relationship was found. When individual alignment factor scores were examined in relation to district size, only Factor 3, “Collegiality and collaboration” was found to be statistically significant ($r = .176, p = .043$).

What follows in the discussion is the relevant literature connection to the summarized findings.

Discussion

Research Question One: The Perception of Co-Governance Leadership Pillar

Preferences as Identified by the District Superintendent

Overall, the results indicated that Kansas superintendents in the current study recognize and echo the national awareness surrounding the importance of improving student success through quality instruction (Boyland, 2013; Lorentzen, 2014; Trevino et al., 2008; Waters & Marzano, 2006). Their having the least variation in responses on Factor 4, “Student achievement and quality instruction,” showed their focus on improving student achievement and quality instruction. Results on school board presidents (i.e., RQ2) were in agreement with those of the superintendents, suggesting that this is an area that hardly has any “grey area” for both parties. This is not surprising given that what schooling is for and particularly the recent history of educational reforms predicated on raising student achievement for all groups (Goodman et al., 1997; Hopkins et al., 2007; Plough, 2014; Waters & Marzano, 2006). The literature supports the tendency of the board of education to focus on and work with the superintendent on student achievement and quality instruction as both the board president and superintendent tend to agree on its importance (Banicki & Pacha, 2011; Diem et al., 2015; Hess & Meeks, 2010; Land, 2002).

On the other hand, a greater variation was observed on Factor 5, “procedural” (i.e. meeting time and location, preparation of board packet in advance, item analysis and recommendations). The literature review on existing studies on the board-superintendent relationships did not necessarily indicate that procedural items would be fully articulated. Accordingly, these items were given a new name, “procedural” from which to build an entry

point into the existing conversation and to establish a relevant literature connection. Yet, the presence of varying tendencies such as micromanagement vs. macromanagement was found in the literature (French et al., 2008). More, however, is the lived realization of the polarizing byproducts of micromanagement (Banicki & Pacha, 2011; Dervarics & O'Brien, 2011; French et al., 2008; Goodman et al., 1997; Harris, 2006; Land, 2002; Moody, 2011; Sell, 2005; Ulrich, 2017). And, the current study revealed the largest degree of ambiguity for Kansas superintendent's perception of board pillar preferences for this factor. It appears that the range of responses from superintendent's point to a consideration that procedures are highly important to some and not as important to others. Stated differently, some superintendents may not see board member micromanagement as a problem, while others consider it to have suffocating effects on the progress of the organization (Hopkins, et al., 2007). The researcher of the current study, therefore, is not overly surprised with the variation for Factor 5, "procedural" as such a controversial topic as micromanagement is reflected in the results. The variation of responses was somewhat in between for the remaining factors and each will be discussed next.

Factor 3, "collegiality and collaboration," exists in two different, yet similar capacities. The superintendent and board-president uniquely consider how to define and activate "collegiality and collaboration." And, the construction of leadership behaviors is recognized as requiring an ongoing awareness of the many moving parts associated with tasks and relationships, or content and context (Gracia, 2006; Osborn et al., 2002). How a person behaves, that is, their attitude, their ability and willingness to work with others, is a reflection of their professionalism in a work environment and can precipitate different outcomes. Yet, not everyone perceives professionalism with the same regard. The disconnect of collegiality and collaboration in an organization often illuminates a deeper need within the educational

governance framework. From the perspective of the superintendent, collegiality can be interpreted as the work to create a system or structure to influence group work with a beneficial outcome. In many cases the benefit of collegiality is as beneficial for the individuals as it is for the organization due to its shared purpose (Sell, 2005). Yet, from the perspective of a board, collegiality may take on an even broader role as they look to adopt policy from the considerations of stakeholders and then deal with the byproducts of the adopted policy from a collegial standpoint. As such, great resolve is necessary to identify situations of conflict and internal constraints if the desire is to improve the organization (Dunn, 1999; Harris, 2006; Sell, 2005). Collaboration, however similar to collegiality, provides another lens at pillar preferences. For a superintendent, collaboration may mean the orchestration of resources and people to accomplish an objective. For a school board, collaboration might involve resources and people external to the organization for the purpose of accomplishing the same objective, yet across a greater landscape. It is in this partnership that the board-superintendent relationship is provided the means for collective improvement for the sake of increasing student success and maximizing stability (Alsbury, 2008; Banicki & Pacha, 2011; Diem et al., 2015). However, researchers have noted that manipulative behaviors or intent exerted by people in leadership positions are caustic and result in the reduction of teamwork for the purpose of “dominance over” or “divide and conquer” schemes (Brunner, 1998; Mountford, 2004). Consequently, the variability of responses in the current study is expected given the variability of the internal nuances which help define collegiality and collaboration in a leadership sense.

As for the two remaining factors that were moderately aligned, Factor 1, “two-way communication,” and Factor 2, “alignment through mission and vision,” effective communication is what orients organizations to unite under the shared mission and vision,

navigate challenges and consider alternatives. When it comes to two-way communication, it often than not demands both parties to recognize the importance of listening *and* speaking in an effort to identify themes of consideration that align with the districts mission and vision. When done well, stability improvements are recognized and the organizations health also improves (Banicki & Pacha, 2011; Dunn, 1999; Harris, 2006; Williams & Tabernik, 2011). Yet, it is undeniable that, in reality, not all superintendents or board members want a diversified opinion as their leadership tactics leave little room for alternative considerations (Andersen, 2012; Banicki & Pacha, 2011; Clark & Estes, 2008; Dervarics & O'Brien, 2011; Diem et al., 2015; Feltman, 2002; Goodman et al., 1997; Grissom & Hill, 2003; Grissom & Mitani, 2016; Harris, 2006; Moody, 2011; Mountford, 2004; Sell, 2005). That is, until someone else has done it and they have witnessed the benefit. Dervarics and O'Brien (2011) noted that lack of awareness and poor communication are indicative of danger signs. Results from the current study indicate that superintendents recognize the importance of two-way communication and mission and vision work. Yet, these two factors only represent a portion of all that effective co-governance encompasses. Consequently, it is not the top priority of a superintendent to change the mission and vision of an organization, nor is it the top priority to engage in two-way conversation. In situations where the culture of an organization is undergoing changes, the emphasis on mission and vision as well as two-way communication would increase. Therefore, a degree of misalignment naturally exists within these factors as some districts are working to change culture and spend a great degree of time and energy on mission and vision, while other districts are focused more on a succession plan. The results of the current study are supported as Williams and Tabernik (2011) indicate that concerning organizational health "all stakeholders know, understand, and support the district's mission and vision and their place within it" (p. 24). The

degree to which it is emphasized varies dependent upon the intention of the organization to modify or stabilize mission and vision information.

Research Question Two: The Perception of Co-Governance Leadership Pillar Preferences as Identified by the Board President

The results revealed that the smallest variation of responses from board presidents dealt with Factor 2, “alignment through mission and vision.” This indicates that Kansas school boards, as assessed by their presidents, have maintained an obligation to the stakeholders who elected them even in the presence of complicating, “differing interests and expectations” (Herman & Renz, 2004, p. 695). According to Williams and Tabernik (2011), a healthy district enjoys stability when “stakeholders know, understand, and support the district’s mission and vision and their place within it” (p. 24). As such, it is possible to say that the school boards in Kansas at the time of the study generally recognized the importance of an aligned mission and vision.

Factor 4, “student achievement and quality instruction” had a similar (small) variation in responses as Factor 2. These two areas, according to Harris (2006), help stakeholders remain focused on programs, policies, and practices designed to improve “a healthy school-community relationship” (p. 8). As outlined in the discussion for RQ1, Kansas superintendents considered Factor 4 as paramount for boards of education. It comes as no surprise that Factor 4 had minimal variation as an overarching understanding for which education exists is for the promotion of learning and the betterment of student success. Researchers have argued that the success of students is predicated on team-oriented, stakeholder engaged, barrier reduced, and transparent leadership framework (Banicki & Pacha, 2011). The study’s results suggest that while school board members do not necessarily eat and breath the mechanics of “student achievement and

quality instruction,” they do value its importance and desire to keep a clear space for its discussion at the board table.

In contrast to Factor 2 and Factor 4 being the two with the least amount of variation in the responses, both Factor 1, “two-way communication,” and Factor 3, “collegiality and collaboration” had an identical, much larger variation in responses. What has been explained under the discussion of RQ1 for superintendents regarding Factor 1, “two-way communication,” can be the possible explanations for what was observed here for board presidents. The realities that call for the importance of speaking and listening continue to be differentiated across the landscape of Kansas, as evident in that board president responses had large a variation for Factor 1. Identifying, capturing, and utilizing ways to engage the community in providing feedback should remain a goal area for Kansas school districts as the core of governance work is the recognition and responsibility to represent the constituents for whom are represented by the board members(s) (Cole & Holland, 2017). Literature further explains the importance of purposeful engagement in interaction which is designed to promote positive interpersonal relationships (Goodman et al., 1997).

The discussion for Factor 3, “collegiality and collaboration” was also largely covered in the previous section as the discussion for RQ1 spoke also of RQ2. Additionally, however, are some other considerations from the perspective of a board member. First, is the awareness that, as elected officials, board members have an obligation to their constituents, and an responsibility to work with the superintendent in order to maintain a healthy and stable governance relationship (Willey, 2011). This duality, that is, working with a superintendent with a large degree of educational experience or expertise while also working with constituents with varying levels of educational awareness is complex. As such, the large degree of variation of responses from the

board presidents along this factor could be a manifestation of the struggle to balance both (Banicki & Pacha, 2011; Diem et al., 2015; Hess & Meeks, 2010; Land, 2002).

Factor 5, “procedural” represented the final factor of which board president responses variation was large. This variation was similar to that of RQ1 and, therefore, allows for a continuation of the same discussion for RQ2. For a variety of reasons, procedural events can evince polarizing outcomes. Yet, the literature indicates that a trusting relationship between the superintendent and the board of education can reduce conflict and tension and increase partisanship and stability (Banicki & Pacha, 2011; Collett, 2014; Dervarics & O’Brien, 2011; Diem et al., 2015; Feuerstein, 2013; French et al., 2008; Goodman et al., 1997; Greenleaf, 2002; Harris, 2006; Land, 2002; Moody, 2011; Sell, 2005; The Center for Public Education, 2011).

Research Question Three: Alignment of Pillar Preferences to Superintendent

Tenure

As discussed in details in Chapter 4, overall, better alignment was present across all five factors in the subsample of the board president-superintendent pairs relative to the results when the whole sample was used for analysis. Not only is this not surprising, but also makes better sense, considering how alignment was operationalized in this study. As such, the baseline for the following discussion is predicated on the results from the paired subsample.

Of the five factors in the current study, the board presidents and superintendents had the highest disparities on Factor 1, “two-way communication,” and Factor 2, “alignment through mission and vision.” Such results suggest that the board president and superintendent have similar, yet different looking glasses through which to communicate, particularly two-way communication. At the heart of the board member is the obligation to the community, yet for the superintendent it is the school district. However, a successful partnership that understands and

embraces a balance of power also identifies the need for ongoing and effective board-superintendent communication, hence the two-way (Banicki & Pacha, 2011; Harris, 2006; Waters & Marzano, 2006). These two complex ideologies converge at the board table and result in a large variation of responses.

In terms of Factor 2, “alignment through mission and vision,” such noticeable disparity between board presidents and superintendents could be a result of perceived relevancy the two parties held toward the mission and vision. For some districts, the mission and vision serves as the stabilizing component upon which organizational health is manifested and turnover is reduced (Williams & Tabernik, 2011). Yet, for others the current mission and vision is an expression or extension of the status quo, resulting in a sense of feeling “stuck” (Rice et al., 2000). These particular opposing perspectives unveil the importance of Factor 2, “alignment through mission and vision” which was the only factor found to be statistically significant for RQ3. As outlined in the discussion for RQ1, the emphasis placed on mission and vision is largely dependent upon the culture of the organization. Districts who are navigating culture changes will largely consider mission and vision elements to be important. Yet, other districts whose focus is on more of a succession plan may not place great emphasis on mission and vision elements as the role of the board-superintendent pair is to maintain, rather than modify. As such, the results from the present study reveal an explainable pattern as the paradox of responses indicates the conflict of consistency.

Furthermore, two of the three logistic regression models (Model 1 and Model 2) produced beta values close to or in excess of one quarter of one unit per one whole unit of alignment. Specifically, Model 1 “turnover” measured how many different superintendents the school districts had over the past five year while Model 2 “existing tenure” measured the tenure

of the superintendent in their current school district. This means that the more aligned the governance team is with regards to mission and vision, the greater the odds that the superintendent will remain in the district for five or more years.

Factor 4, “student achievement and quality instruction” had the least amount of disparity. Many complexities surround governing bodies in their efforts to improve quality instruction and student achievement, particularly as school board members attempt to reflect community desires in the process (Plough, 2014). Yet, undeniably, superintendents and board presidents alike were consistently in agreement on the importance of this factor as manifested in the least disparity. This result is largely explainable due to the recognition that school systems exist for the purpose of educating students and improving academic achievement (Waters & Marzano, 2006). Therefore, systems and events which surround the promotion of such ideals should consistently be considered important and are reflected as such in the current study. Lorentzen (2014) indicated that stability in the superintendency is known to have a positive impact on student achievement. Consequently, school board members need to support district goals aimed at improving student achievement and quality instruction in an effort to enhance stability (Waters & Marzano, 2006). Finally, balanced organizational structures establish a system of overall awareness where needs and desires for student success are provided the opportunity to improve. As such, the longevity of the superintendent increases the likelihood of these circumstances to unfold (Ulrich, 2017).

Factor 5, “procedural” had a moderate amount of disparity and was the only factor where the paired subsample showed greater misalignment than the whole sample. Such result could be related to the one somewhat weak item (refer to discussion noted in Chapter 4). It is also possible that, as Cole and Holland (2017) noted, such result was a manifestation of the

challenging task in understanding where the line of management and oversight is drawn. For instance, the matter of micromanagement often cited in the literature as the most common troubling relationship between the board and the superintendent aspect, while could be perceived to be so for some superintendents, might not necessarily be the case for others.

Factor 3, “collegiality and collaboration” also had a moderate amount of disparity in the results. Collaborative teams ensure that the needs of the school district are monitored and acted upon while the desires of the community are reflected in the work within the organization (Brunner, 1998; Mountford, 2004). Moreover, the goals of the district are reflected in a shared governance structure that embodies the work of collegiality and collaboration (Dunn, 1999; Harris, 2006; Sell, 2005). Central to this idea is the establishment and maintenance of collegiality and collaboration, where the recognition and usage of power structures is managed toward organizational benefit. Transparency lends itself to the establishment of trust which naturally propagates the development of collegiality and collaboration as organizations begin to work in partnership, as teams (Banicki & Pacha, 2011; Heifetz, 1994). Even when boards and superintendents desire to work together and trust each other; it is possible that the overlapping of roles may present itself as problematic as both parties navigate their unique comfort level of shared governance structures. Accordingly, the balance of roles and expectations, is subject to problems if the organization is unable to manage the struggle for the sake of maintaining a healthy working relationship (Banicki & Pacha, 2011; Dervarics & O’Brien, 2011; French et al., 2008; Goodman et al., 1997; Harris, 2006; Land, 2002; Moody, 2011; Sell, 2005; Ulrich, 2017).

Research Question Four: Alignment of Pillar Preferences to District Size

Factor 3, “collegiality and collaboration” was unveiled as the statistically significant predictor for stability across varying district sizes. As such, it is possible that superintendents in

the smallest and largest categories have two opposing things in common: *size*. The detailed role of a superintendent changes as the size of the district increases as a small district superintendent may be responsible for many managerial tasks, while a larger district superintendent may only be responsible for the oversight of these areas (James, 1967; Land, 2002; Sell, 2005). As such, the professional role of the superintendent looks different according to enrollment size. Yet, regardless of size is the desire to work together as a collective unit for the benefit of the organization. Under conditions that reflect a partnership toward district goals and objectives, astute governance teams understand and embody their respective role authorities (Devarics & O'Brien, 2011; Land, 2002; Moody, 2011; Sell, 2005). For small districts, it can be for the purpose of organizational benefit. That is, it is easy to sink a small ship, therefore, teams work together to maximize their skill sets to deliver upon the needs of the community. And, for larger districts, the sheer size of the organization positions itself to identify factors that influence productivity. That is, they too recognize that with all the moving parts, one must come together to accomplish meaningful and beneficial work as diversified perspectives mitigates instances of dominance behaviors (Brunner, 1998; Mountford, 2004).

Responses for RQ4 were classified into three size categories (a) large, (b) medium, and (c) small. The superintendents of medium sized districts (850 to 3,499 students) had the least stability of the categories. While there were more responses from participants in this category, the percentages of respondents closely mirrored the number of Kansas school districts of this respective enrollment range. Grissom and Mitani (2016) indicate that among other things, district size can precipitate superintendent turnover. Therefore, recognizing that an unstable superintendency has a negative impact on student achievement, trust building for the purpose of ongoing collaborative efforts leads to improved communication and understanding for the

organization (Goodman et al., 1997; Lorentzen, 2014; Waters & Marzano, 2006). The results of the present study established collegiality and collaboration as a means of balancing power dynamics in co-governance structure (Mountford, 2004). Central to RQ4 is the recognition of Factor 3 as a significant contributor to stability based on district size.

Implications for Future Research, Practice, and Policy

As noted in Chapter 2, no previous research has framed pillar preferences alignment in key governance areas as a focal point in examining school district stability. In addition to this immediate scholarly contribution, the findings of the current study shed light for future research. Also discussed in this section are the implications for practice and policy.

Implications for Future Research

No single study is capable of capturing all facets of a social structure, specifically those involving “complex skill sets and complex interests” (Blomberg et al., 2004, p. 26). This study’s implications for future research can be classified into three directions: those related to the proposed framework, those speaking to the methodological considerations, and those of theoretical considerations.

First, more studies are needed to further test and improve the validity and reliability of the survey instrument and ultimately the key tenets for leadership alignment framework proposed by the researcher in this study. The cross loading occurred on some initial survey needs to be further examined. The items designed to measure Factor 5 “Procedural” need to be improved, as indicated by its relatively low reliability. New items may need to be considered for inclusion to increase the instrument’s ability to capture the procedure related aspects of board-superintendent roles. would present itself. The overall low reliability on Factor 5, including one item with a

reliability score of .332 indicates that additional questions are needed to measure “Procedural” as it is defined in the present study.

Second, the findings from the current study could be further validated, involving different geographic locations. The national average of superintendent tenure (five years) used in the study could be a common benchmark of superintendency stability for such cross-state comparative studies. Similarly, future studies could consider isolating districts of a particular size category across multiple states to assess the correlation of different regions of the country.

Third, the exploratory factor analysis conducted for this study is based on quantitative response survey items. As such, superintendent and board president verbal/qualitative responses were not the focus of this study. Future studies that utilize qualitative research methodologies could reveal the meaning making the participants engaged when viewing and approaching leadership roles and style in relation to co-governance and priority setting to benefit the organization (Rodriguez, 2018). Qualitative case studies can be conducted in the districts where superintendency stability is present or absent, using the five key tenets as possible focal points for data collection and analysis to obtain in-depth and contextualized understanding of the (mis)alignment and its effects on leadership stability.

Implications for Practice

The findings from the present study provide insight into opportunities for improved practice for the purpose of increasing organizational stability. Ongoing board training and professional development “can help set the stage for consensus building around a mission and vision, help with team building, and solidify an understanding of differing responsibilities and roles” of the governance team (Williams & Tabernik, 2011, p. 29). Yet, the provision of board trainings or professional development for governance entities should occur in collective group

settings rather than as isolated subgroups. In this way the line of management, that is role recognition and awareness, can be examined at the co-governance level for the sake of transparency and thereby making attempts at improving the overall alignment. More, it is appropriate for co-governance teams to be reminded of the governance structure that clearly places the superintendent and the school board in differing, but supporting capacities. All should know their role and do well to manage it accordingly. More, as school districts onboard a new superintendent, so too should the board adopt a training schedule to provide ongoing opportunities for cohesiveness and relationship building for the purpose of being clear on roles and responsibilities (Brunner, 1998; Harris, 2006; Land, 2002; Mountford, 2004).

The identification of the significant pillars (i.e. key areas for alignment) can be instrumental for practitioners for facilitating conversations and developing interventions as they examine inter-relationships and roles in shared governance for effectiveness and improvements. For instance, the results of the current study could be cross-walked with the stability theme work of Williams & Tabernik (2011) to ascertain a focused plan of training and development. Superintendents could arrange for monthly trainings as part of their pre-established board meetings. Conducted synchronously or asynchronously, these training sessions would allow for the meaningful professional development around topics or constructs which influence the perpetuation of stable organizations. Board members could begin to appreciate the importance of ongoing, monthly training sessions for the purpose of maintaining alignment with mission and vision and attending to the importance of collegiality and collaboration. With the high disparity between superintendents and board presidents dealing with alignment through mission and vision it is anticipated some districts may use mission and vision to stabilize, while others see mission and vision as a distraction. Additionally, collegiality and collaboration shed light on the

complexities of working together across a governance team. This is particularly the case when one party is elected and the other is hired. Finally, co-governance structures working to carry out the desires of a community can experience role overlap as superintendents and board presidents may inadvertently compete for role identity.

State departmental licensure entities can benefit from their recognition of stability themes for the purpose of establishing protocols for licensure. The national average of superintendent tenure is reported as five years (Ulrich, 2017). Accordingly, efforts to elongate the necessary experience record toward the national average might assist in the establishment of committed individuals who are more vetted in administrative experience than simply role advancement efforts. Leadership preparation programs from higher education institutions can benefit from the recognition that relationship building between the board and the superintendent is a critical component to managing and navigating ongoing challenges and struggles as the work in partnership (Banicki & Pacha, 2011; Heifetz, 1994). Results from the present study indicated that “Alignment through mission and vision” and “Collegiality and collaboration” are the two statistically significant pillars of effectiveness in predicting a stable organization. Accordingly, leadership organizations and preparation programs could use the items associated with Factor 2 and Factor 3 for professional development with superintendents regarding effectively working with board members and other stakeholders.

Implications for Policy

Efforts at the policy level are essential to the development of organizations as policy has the reputation of driving or confining practice. Accordingly, when individuals are tasked with the responsibility to interpret varying degrees of demands, the foundational structure upon which to build improvement is necessary to “align resources to goals” (Hopkins et al., 2007, p. 686, see

also James, 1967). The intersection of aligned resources and goals also requires the considerations of purposeful practice concerning meaningful outcomes. In other words, policies need to align with needs.

The results from the current study present considerations surrounding potential improvements in the processes used to hire a superintendent. The traditional means of hiring a superintendent include some form of a formal interview following the receipt of a written application. It is recognized that the newly hired superintendent will be required to work with and amongst a varying state of personalities and lived experiences from board and staff members. Therefore, hiring agencies and leadership organizations might begin to place more emphasis on community engagement in areas outside of the applicant's job area insomuch as to reiterate to the profession that good leaders are also able to be followers. Accordingly, the candidate is able to model to the prospective employer that not only do they recognize the importance of a balanced power structure; they embrace and act upon it (Brunner, 1998; Mountford, 2004). As such, higher education programs should consider incorporating more basic psychology awareness, systemic analytics, and effective communication curricular as part programming.

Turnover in leadership roles is responsible for a decrease in student achievement, low staff morale, and budgetary struggles (Alsbury, 2008; Banicki & Pacha, 2011; Diem et al., 2015; Grissom & Andersen, 2012; Grissom & Mitani, 2016). Therefore, policy considerations for governmental agencies, professional organizations, and higher education institutions that support longevity and stability could allow for the restructuring of historical systems to make room for adaptive solutions and models to enhance organizational stability. Utilizing the statistically significant results of the current study that are correlated with district stability, policy makers for

these groups could entertain policy which draws attention to the importance of alignment through mission and vision as well as collegiality and collaboration in governance teams. This could exist by establishing expectations of co-governance leadership structures to embrace and deliver upon the needs of team dialogue, discussion, and decision making for the purpose of fostering stability.

Licensure entities experience ongoing external constraints as the need for alternative licensure options are presented. Kansas, for example, offers seven varying “routes to the classroom” (ksde.org). Yet, leadership licensure is often granted upon verification of years of experience and a passing score on a standardized assessment. The acknowledgement of years of experience is central to the argument of tenure or stability. In this vein, the establishment of policy which recognizes the national average of superintendent tenure (five years) positions licensure entities to ground their expectations in a research-based timeframe for the purpose of stability considerations (Ulrich, 2017). Working with higher education institutions, leadership organizations could partner with school districts for the purpose of mentorship of new or experienced superintendents. More, this mentorship agreement would ensure the licensure requirements are met, yet the partnership with the district would engage both in a feedback loop where ongoing considerations are examined for the purpose of increasing district stability.

Conclusion

It is evident that leadership stability remains a complex arrangement of personal and social structures interconnected within the framework of co-governance. As such, further attention by scholars and further research in the field is needed. According to Blomberg and his colleagues (2004), the uniqueness that each board beholds positions the organization to engage in the work of “complex social and organizational networks” (p. 26). The current study recognized

the role of leadership style preferences for the purpose of identifying preferences of leadership that contribute to improved organizational stability. To do so, themes of leadership style preferences were grouped into five distinct pillars which served as the foundation for the study.

This study determined that two of the pillars “alignment through mission and vision,” and “collegiality and collaboration” were correlated with district stability which was measured as superintendent tenure. The contributions, therefore, represent an opportunity to extend the conversation of leadership alignment, specifically co-governance teams toward a fuller understanding of pillar preferences, their benefit or demise, and the resulting considerations for school districts and other organizations with governance structures.

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Appendix A - Survey Instrument

Please indicate below the role you maintain within your local school district.

- a. Board president
- b. Superintendent

a. Board president

1. What is your age?
2. What is your gender?
3. Please select from the drop-down menu the **TOTAL** years of experience you have on **any** public school board.
4. Please select from the drop-down menu how many **CONSECUTIVE** years you have been on the school board.
5. Please select from the drop-down menu how many **CONSECUTIVE** years you have served as the **BOARD PRESIDENT**.
6. Please indicate how many years you have you been the board president while this superintendent is in position?
7. How many **DIFFERENT** school board presidents has your district had over the past five (5) years?
(Five years = 2015-2016 through the current year.)
8. How many **DIFFERENT** superintendents has your district had over the past five (5) years?
(Five years = 2015-2016 through the current year.)

b. Superintendent

1. What is your age?
2. What is your gender?
3. Please approximate the size of your school district using your September 20, 2019 headcount data.
4. The selection of the board president in our school district is...
 - a. voted on by the board of education
 - b. assigned using a rotation of members
 - c. other
5. How many **DIFFERENT** school board presidents has your district had over the past five (5) years?
6. What is the length of the superintendent's contract?
7. How many **DIFFERENT** superintendents has your district had over the past five (5) years?
8. This is my first year in this superintendency.
 - Are you intending to stay in your current role for five (5) years?
9. Including this school year, how many years have you served as the superintendent in your **CURRENT** school district?
10. Including this school year, how many **TOTAL** years have you served as the superintendent in **ANY** school district?
11. Including your current school district, what is the **TOTAL** number of **DISTRICTS** you have served as the superintendent?

Leadership Preference Survey Questions

Likert scale response options (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree)

1. Student achievement is a common topic of board meeting discussion.
2. District efforts to improve student achievement are consistently supported by the school board.
3. The board is made aware of instructional efforts to improve student achievement.
4. District efforts to improve quality instruction are consistently supported by the school board.
5. The school board is made aware of instructional challenges within the school district.
6. The school board is made aware of student achievement challenges within the school district.
7. Each board member acts in the best manner of the entire school district rather than on segment of the district or a special interest group.
8. The board assures that each policy is written as clearly as possible so that it can support the superintendent in his/her reasonable interpretation.
9. The board and superintendent trust and respect one another.
10. During the decision making process, board members think independently, but once a decision is made, all board members respect the decision; the board speaks with one voice.
11. The board president and superintendent jointly develop an agenda that reflects the needs of both the board and superintendent.
12. In advance of each meeting, the board receives a packet of materials including: a) an agenda and b) as appropriate, analysis and recommendations on the agenda items.
13. The meeting time, length, place and facilities accommodate the board, staff and public to the fullest extent possible.
14. The board recognizes that most board decisions are policy decisions. The boards written policies are essential to effective governance and implementing the districts vision.
15. The board has agreed upon a clear vision (direction) for the district.
16. The board and superintendent have a plan (goals) for moving the district toward the agreed upon vision.
17. The districts programs, services and staff development are aligned with the boards vision, goals and priorities.
18. The board regularly reviews and evaluates the district's progress towards its goals.
19. The school board regularly monitors district policy for effective implementation and compliance.
20. Board members attempt to assure that community values and educational aspirations are adequately reflected at the board table.
21. The board considers its most important job to be setting a clear direction for the district on behalf of the community.
22. The school board engages the community in securing support for the vision and goals of the district as well as the resources necessary to achieve them.
23. Board members work to strengthen public confidence in the board and district leadership.
24. The board is engaged in two-way conversation with the community, enabling it to speak on behalf of the community and provide educational leadership for the community.
25. Prior to adopting policy, the board requires input from affected parties - the superintendent, staff, and community - through appropriate and varied methods.

Appendix B - Letter of Invitation

Dear Colleague:

My name is Chad Krug. I am a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Leadership at Kansas State University looking for Kansas Superintendents and school board presidents who would consider participating in a potentially valuable study.

Charged with the responsibility to manage the myriad of functions within a school district, superintendents and boards of education develop and orchestrate board policy. This research study seeks to better understand aspects of leadership which superintendents and board presidents perceive to be important through the use of a survey instrument.

As a voluntary participant in this study, you will be asked to complete a brief survey regarding your view on leadership preferences of the school board. Your service to the profession should take no more than 15 minutes, yet stands to unveil meaningful perspectives from the field.

Every aspect of this research request can be done remotely and is mobile phone compatible. Your replies will be kept confidential. Only aggregated data will be used for analysis and research report; no personally identifiable information will be used for any dissemination purpose. **In a separate email, I will be sending more information to include a link to the survey.**

I welcome the opportunity to speak with you, and to answer any questions you may have. Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions. I appreciate your willingness to consider participating, and I thank you in advance for your help and your contribution to the field of educational leadership.

Sincerely,



Chad Krug

Doctoral Student

Email: ckrug@ksu.edu

(620) 952-2700

Educational Leadership
Kansas State University
Manhattan, KS 66506

Appendix C - Informed Consent

Project Title: A Study of the Board-Superintendent Leadership Preference Alignment and Superintendency Stability in Kansas

Approval Date of Project: 10-24-2019 **Expiration Date of Project:** 4-24-2020

Co-Principal Investigators: Dr. Jia Liang and Dr. David C. Thompson

Contact and phone for any problems/questions:

- Dr. Jia Liang, gliang15@ksu.edu, (785) 532-5535
- Dr. David C. Thompson, thompsond@ksu.edu, (785) 532-5535

Corresponding graduate student: Chad A. Krug, ckrug@ksu.edu, (620) 952-2700

IRB Chair:

- Rick Scheidt, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224.
- Cheryl Doerr, Associate Vice President for Research Compliance, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224.

Purpose of the Research: 1) Examine the leadership style preferences of the board and the superintendent in relation to the stability of the school district; 2) Capture a snapshot of the landscape of leadership preferences of the board and superintendents in Kansas for the current year.

Procedures or Methods to be Used: Online survey study of superintendents and board presidents of all Kansas school districts. No financial incentives will be afforded.

Length of Study: It is estimated that the length of the study will be 2-3 months.

Risks or Discomforts Anticipated: There are no known risks in participating in this voluntary research study.

Benefits Anticipated: Contribution to the field of educational leadership.

Extent of Confidentiality: All responses to survey items are maintained under KSU password protected software. Only aggregate data will be used for reporting purposes.

Terms of Participation: I understand this project is research, and that my participation is completely 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 to which I may otherwise be entitled.

I verify that my completion of this survey indicates that I have read and understand this consent form, and willingly agree to participate in this study under the terms described, and that my submission of this survey acknowledges receipt of this consent form.

Appendix D - Superintendent Responses

Perceptions of pillar preferences as identified by the district superintendent

Question (variable)	Mean	SD
Student achievement is a common topic of board meeting discussion.	2.00	.64
The board is made aware of instructional efforts to improve student achievement.	1.53	.52
The school board is made aware of instructional challenges within the school district.	1.61	.51
The school board is made aware of student achievement challenges within the school district.	1.64	.55
Each board member acts in the best manner of the entire school district rather than on a segment of the district or a special interest group.	1.96	.73
The board assures that each policy is written as clearly as possible so that it can support the superintendent in his/her reasonable interpretation.	1.72	.57
The board and superintendent trust and respect one another.	1.44	.61
During the decision making process, board members think independently, but once a decision is made, all board members respect the decision; the board speaks with one voice.	1.64	.71
The board president and superintendent jointly develop an agenda that reflects the needs of both the board and superintendent.	1.77	.82
In advance of each meeting, the board receives a packet of materials including: a) an agenda and b) as appropriate, analysis and recommendations on the agenda items.	1.21	.42
The meeting time, length, place and facilities accommodate the board, staff and public to the fullest extent possible.	1.30	.49
The board has agreed upon a clear vision (direction) for the district.	1.70	.60
The board and superintendent have a plan (goals) for moving the district toward the agreed upon vision.	1.61	.57
The district's programs, services and staff development are aligned with the board's vision, goals and priorities.	1.62	.59
The board regularly reviews and evaluates the district's progress towards its goals.	1.94	.63

The school board regularly monitors district policy for effective implementation and compliance.	2.05	.63
Board members attempt to assure that community values and educational aspirations are adequately reflected at the board table.	1.61	.54
The school board engages the community in securing support for the vision and goals of the district as well as the resources necessary to achieve them.	2.03	.61
Board members work to strengthen public confidence in the board and district leadership.	1.77	.59
The board is engaged in two-way conversation with the community, enabling it to speak on behalf of the community and provide educational leadership for the community.	1.92	.56
Prior to adopting policy, the board requires input from affected parties - the superintendent, staff, and community - through appropriate and varied methods.	2.05	.66

Note: Likert scale mean results where 1 is strongly agree and 4 is strongly disagree

Appendix E - Board President Responses

Perceptions of pillar preferences as identified by the board president

Question (variable)	Mean	SD
Student achievement is a common topic of board meeting discussion.	1.49	.55
The board is made aware of instructional efforts to improve student achievement.	1.39	.50
The school board is made aware of instructional challenges within the school district.	1.61	.59
The school board is made aware of student achievement challenges within the school district.	1.60	.60
Each board member acts in the best manner of the entire school district rather than on a segment of the district or a special interest group.	1.75	.68
The board assures that each policy is written as clearly as possible so that it can support the superintendent in his/her reasonable interpretation.	1.53	.55
The board and superintendent trust and respect one another.	1.40	.59
During the decision making process, board members think independently, but once a decision is made, all board members respect the decision; the board speaks with one voice.	1.60	.60
The board president and superintendent jointly develop an agenda that reflects the needs of both the board and superintendent.	1.51	.65
In advance of each meeting, the board receives a packet of materials including: a) an agenda and b) as appropriate, analysis and recommendations on the agenda items.	1.18	.38
The meeting time, length, place and facilities accommodate the board, staff and public to the fullest extent possible.	1.22	.43
The board has agreed upon a clear vision (direction) for the district.	1.47	.56
The board and superintendent have a plan (goals) for moving the district toward the agreed upon vision.	1.47	.55
The district's programs, services and staff development are aligned with the board's vision, goals and priorities.	1.54	.56
The board regularly reviews and evaluates the district's progress towards its	1.67	.63

goals.

The school board regularly monitors district policy for effective implementation and compliance.	1.80	.61
Board members attempt to assure that community values and educational aspirations are adequately reflected at the board table.	1.46	.54
.54The school board engages the community in securing support for the vision and goals of the district as well as the resources necessary to achieve them.	1.73	.63
Board members work to strengthen public confidence in the board and district leadership.	1.70	.62
The board is engaged in two-way conversation with the community, enabling it to speak on behalf of the community and provide educational leadership for the community.	1.80	.62
Prior to adopting policy, the board requires input from affected parties - the superintendent, staff, and community - through appropriate and varied methods.	1.81	.65

Note: Likert scale mean results where 1 is strongly agree and 4 is strongly disagree