

SUPERINTENDENT EVALUATION AND OTHER INFLUENCES ON THE
SCHOOL BOARD AND SUPERINTENDENT RELATIONSHIP:
MEASURING STRENGTH OF RELATIONSHIP

by

Sara A. Duvall

Dissertation

Submitted to the Department of Leadership and Counseling
Eastern Michigan University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Dissertation Committee:

Dr. Ronald Williamson, Chair, EdD

Dr. Jaclynn Tracy, PhD

Dr. William Price, EdD

Dr. Patrick Melia, PhD

Dr. C. Robert Maxfield, EdD

January 10, 2005

Ypsilanti, Michigan

Dedication

To the faculty of the
Department of Educational Leadership
Eastern Michigan University.

In these times of change and opportunity,
reach to the future.

Memoria in Aeterna

Brett Milley
1962-2003

2002 Doctoral Cohort
Department of Leadership & Counseling
Eastern Michigan University

Friend to us all, humble, wry, and brilliant.
You are missed.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to the superintendents and school board presidents of the State of Michigan, whose concern for these issues of educational leadership and dedication to the education and welfare of our children is evident in their impressive response to this survey.

Thanks to my consistent pathfinder, Jackie Tracy. Thanks to Bill Price for perceptive advice throughout. Thanks to Bob Maxfield, who sets the standard for leadership. Thanks to Patrick Melia for demystifying the process. Thanks to Ron Williamson for maintaining the momentum.

Thanks to Mike Flannagan at MASA and Carl Hartman at MASB, exemplary educational professionals.

Thanks to Stewart Gordon for the verbs. Thanks to Elven Duvall for the reality checks. Thanks to Jane Duvall, an inspiration for excellence. Thanks to Majors Socco & Lourdes Duvall, United States Air Force, for the continuing dialog on organizational leadership and change.

Thanks to Scott Crawford, Internet survey guru extraordinaire, and his friends at Markettools, Marc Thornton and Laura Penderson.

Thanks to Brady West and the University of Michigan Center for Statistical Consultation and Research for wallowing in the numbers crunch with me and enjoying it. Thanks to Scott Swan at CSCAR for clarifying GIS.

Thanks to my siblings, Linda Duvall, Jane Bennett, Elven Duvall, and Mary Duvall, who are each talented leaders and educators; they are my touchstones. Thanks to Sarah Ginsberg for insight into wrestling with the demons along the way.

Thanks to Arthur Williams and the faculty and administration of Huron High School and to George Fornero and the central administration and school board of Ann Arbor Public Schools for the opportunity to surround my study with the reality of practice.

To you all for an invigorating exchange and for keeping the rubber on the road as I made an unanticipated but exhilarating left turn into a new career.

Abstract

As schools in the United States resegregate and federal antipoverty programs lapse, the achievement gap widens once again. What can educational leaders *do* on their own to reverse this trend in the face of increased state and federal mandates, decreasing school funding, and community resistance to change? The purpose of this study was to determine the relative effects of factors (evaluation, conflict, political climate, superintendent influence, teaching & learning style, board training, and overall Strength of Relationship) that influence the board and superintendent relationship and to use these data to suggest strategies to support substantive change.

A unique survey questionnaire was developed, tested, and deployed online statewide to all superintendents and board presidents in public school districts in the State of Michigan. Total population was $N = 526$ school districts, $N = 1052$ potential respondents. A self-selected sample ($n = 1047$, 99.5%) responded to the survey. Complete data provided an evenly distributed and representative self-selected sample of the entire state by region and district size from which the

researcher could generalize with confidence. A Strength of Relationship (SOR) Scale was developed by rating responses to questions in each factor, which were statistically tested against district level indicators (Size of District, socioeconomic status, per pupil expenditure, student achievement, political type, evaluation type). Conflict, disagreement, and student achievement were also statistically tested against district-level indicators.

The significant findings of the study were (a) When pluralistic political type board interaction paired with data-driven superintendent evaluation type (as opposed to global or judgment), Strength of Relationship increased approximately two-fold in most cases, levels of conflict were lower and, more important, levels of student achievement were higher; (b) boards that work in a pluralistic manner are 87–93% less likely to report conflict than were other political types (dominated, factional, inert). Conflict centered first on role definition and fulfillment, and second on financial issues; (c) the lower the levels of disagreement between the board and the superintendent were, the higher the student achievement was. This remained the case regardless of district size, per-pupil expenditure, or socioeconomic status; (d) student achievement was shown to be as

much as 3-4 times higher in the Pluralistic and Data-driven combination of political type and evaluation method.

Table of Contents

Dedication.....	ii
Memoria in Aeterna.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Abstract.....	vi
List of Tables.....	xiv
List of Figures.....	xvi
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Context.....	2
Purpose of the Study.....	4
Shifting Priorities.....	5
Board and Superintendent Relationship.....	11
Concomitant Questions and Conceptual Model.....	12
Research Questions.....	20
Research Methodology.....	21
Delimitations and Limitations.....	22

Relevance of the Study.....	23
Summary of Chapter 1.....	26
Chapter 2: Review of Relevant Literature.....	27
Introduction.....	27
Contextual Literature.....	30
Literature in Support of Variables.....	43
Relevance and Meaning.....	68
Summary of Chapter 2.....	71
Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology.....	73
Introduction.....	73
Research Hypotheses and Questions.....	74
Research Design.....	76
Survey Instrumentation & Validity Tests.....	81
Variables in the Study.....	85
Procedures.....	91
Variable Constructions.....	95
Summary of Constructed Variables.....	105
Data Analysis.....	105
Summary of Chapter 3.....	109
Chapter 4: Presentation of Data Analysis.....	111

Introduction.....	111
Hypotheses, Analysis Objectives, and Results.....	112
Variables.....	116
Sample Descriptive Statistics.....	119
Relation of Predictor Variables with Strength of	
Relationship (SOR) Variables.....	129
The Nature of Conflict and Levels of Agreement.....	157
The Nature of Overall Strength of Relationship	
(OverSOR) and District Level Variables and	
Disagreement.....	166
The Nature of Student Achievement (MEAP) and	
Overall Strength of Relationship (OverSOR).....	168
Hypotheses Results Summarized.....	172
Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusions.....	181
Introduction.....	181
Overview of Significant Findings.....	181
Findings and Existing Research.....	187
Implications of the Study for Further Research.....	194
Implications of the study for Professional Practice....	197
Conclusion.....	202

References.....	204
Appendixes.....	215
Appendix A: Superintendent and School Board Strength of Relationship Survey and Scale for K-12 Public Schools in the United States.....	216
Appendix B: Human Subjects Approval Letter.....	231
Appendix C: Informed Consent.....	232
Appendix D.1-12: Printed Materials.....	233
D.1 E-Invitation.....	233
D.2 Reminder.....	234
D.3 Reminder Two.....	235
D.4 Reminder Three.....	236
D.5 Reminder Four.....	237
D.6 Non-access.....	238
D.7 Partial.....	239
D.8 Graphic License Agreement.....	240

D.9 Brochure (inside).....	241
D.10 Brochure (outside).....	242
D.11 Postcard.....	243
D.12 Secretaries Card.....	244
Appendix E.1-10: Recode Syntax for Constructed	
Variables, SPSS 11.0.....	245
E.1 Evalid.....	245
E.2 Variable 15.....	248
E.3 Evalid_m.....	252
E.4 Evalid_p.....	253
E.5 Polid.....	254
E.6 Role of Board.....	256
E.7 Role of Superintendent.....	265
E.8 District Size.....	277
E.9 Conflict.....	278
E.10 Agreement.....	301
Appendix F: Evalid and Polid Frequencies.....	305
Appendix G: Strength of Relationship (SOR) Value	
Assignments.....	306
Appendix H: Variables Considered in Scoring	

Agreement/Disagreement Between Board	
President and Superintendent.....	308
Appendix I: Counties in the MASA Regions.....	309
Appendix J: Glossary of Statistical Terms.....	310
Appendix K: Computer Programs and Software.....	315

List of Tables

<u>Table</u>	<u>Page</u>
1. McCarty and Ramsey Political Climate Model	
Summary.....	52
2. Superintendents' Preferences for Performance	
Evaluation.....	66
3. Analyses Variables and the Associated Objectives.....	118
4. Bivariate Correlation Analysis Results.....	128
5. Significant Effects on Evaluation Strength of	
Relationship (Evalsor).....	132
6. Significant Effects on Conflict Strength of	
Relationship (Confсор).....	138
7. Significant Effects on Political Strength of	
Relationship (Polsor).....	142
8. Significant Effects on General Strength of	
Relationship (Gensor).....	146
9. Significant Effects on Teaching and Learning	
Strength of Relationship (TLsor).....	149
10. Significant Effects on Training Strength of	
Relationship (Trainsor).....	152

List of Tables (continued)

<u>Table</u>	<u>Page</u>
11. Significant Effects on Overall Strength of Relationship (Oversor).....	155
12. Frequency of Conflict Type by Number of Citations..	159
13. <i>Conflict Types Grouped into Four Categories of Conflict</i>	160
14. Wald Chi-Square Statistics from the Estimated Logistic Regression Models for the Four Categories of Conflict.....	164
15. Odds Ratios from the Estimated Logistic Regression Models for the Four Categories Models of Conflict	165
16. Results of Regression Analysis of MEAP (Student Achievement) with OverSOR (Overall Strength of Relationship) and Other District Level Variables.....	171
17. Data-driven Hierarchy of Evaluation Types and Political Types.....	184

List of Figures

<u>Figure</u>		<u>Page</u>
1.	The association of evaluation method to the relationship between the board and superintendent: Filters and influences.....	14
2.	Michigan Association of School Administrators regional designations.....	120
3.	Chi-Square test of the sample versus the population	124
4.	Bar graph of the sample relative to the population by MASA region, depicting an evenly distributed and representative sample of school districts.....	125
5.	Estimated marginal means of transformed evaluation Strength of Relationship (t_Evalsor).....	136
6.	General and specific tasks in evaluating superintendent performance.....	189
7.	Model of a continuing cycle of goal setting, communication, data gathering, and assessment: Data-driven superintendent evaluation combined with pluralistic board interaction.....	190