

PERFORMANCE EVALUATION OF NEBRASKA K-12 PUBLIC SCHOOL
SUPERINTENDENTS

by

Bill Heimann

B.A.E., Wayne State College, 1994

M.S.E., Wayne State College, 1997

Ed.S., Wayne State College, 2004

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ABSTRACT

Bill Heimann, Ed.D., Educational Administration,
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Performance Evaluation of Nebraska K-12 Public
School Superintendents

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The relationship between the public school superintendent and board of education is critical to the successful operation of the public school district. This study examined the perceptions of Nebraska K-12 public school superintendents regarding the purposes, criteria, and practices of the formal evaluation process. Comparisons of the superintendents' perceptions were made based school district enrollment, years as a superintendent within the school district, and total years of experience as a superintendent.

A researcher-developed survey instrument was used to collect data from the 238 individual K-12 public school districts in Nebraska that are served by 229 superintendents. Five-point Likert-type scales were used to measure respondents' perceptions regarding the importance of the purposes for conducting the evaluation of the superintendent and the extent that the American Association of School Administrators' eight professional standards are utilized by the board of education as criteria to measure superintendent performance. Current evaluation practices were identified by superintendents along with the respondents' level of satisfaction with the formal evaluation.

Nearly all superintendents (95.3%) reported a formal evaluation conducted at least annually by the board of education. The board of education is the only stakeholder group that consistently has formal input into the formal performance evaluation of superintendents. Regardless of the school district enrollment or years of superintendent

experience, Nebraska superintendents believe the most important purposes of performance evaluation to be related to documenting accountability and communicating with their boards. The AASA professional standards related to communication and community relations are most often examined in the performance evaluation.

Performance evaluation practices conducted by boards of education are similar in Nebraska regardless of the district enrollment or years of superintendent experience. Although Nebraska superintendents are generally satisfied with the criteria and practices utilized in their most recent performance evaluation, there is no clear agreement regarding the purpose, criteria, and practices for the performance evaluation of Nebraska public school superintendents.

This abstract of approximately 350 words is approved as to form and content. I recommend its publication.

Signed _____
Dr. Mark Baron

DOCTORAL COMMITTEE

The members of the committee appointed to examine the dissertation of
Bill Heimann find it satisfactory and recommend that it be approved.

Dr. Mark Baron, Chair

Dr. Doreen Gosmire

Dr. Marcia Morrison

Dr. Kris Reed

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The public school superintendent plays a vital role in the education of children. The leader of the school district has the opportunity to accept the challenges of the present to shape the future (Sharp, Malone, & Walter, 2001). Stufflebeam (1995) wrote

Together with parents, teachers, and principals, school district superintendents play a critical role in the effective education of America's children and youth. In recent years, researchers and policy makers have supported what parents and teachers have known from experience – that the quality of leadership provided by educational administrators significantly influences the quality of schools. (p. 305)

The school superintendent must be well versed in finance; child development; pedagogy; local, state, and federal politics; human relations and negotiations; technology; building and grounds management as well as best practice in curriculum and instruction (Carter & Cunningham, 1997). Historian Raymond Callahan quoted the 1895 editor of the *American School Board Journal*, William Bruce, “The superintendent’s position is a difficult one. He is the ready target for unreasonable parents, disgruntled teachers and officious school board members. In a vortex of school board quarrels, he is the first to become crushed” (McCurdy & Hymes, 1992, p. 9). In the foreword to *The 2000 Study of the American School Superintendency*, Paul Houston noted that the rapid shift in student demographics coupled with an explosion in information technology and access to knowledge presents new challenges to America’s schools. The call for standards and

accountability from the federal government adds to the complex environment facing the leaders of the nation's public schools (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000).

The relationship between the board and superintendent is at the heart of success for school districts. The board-superintendent relationship must be able to navigate the myriad of conflicts or unresolved issues that it faces in order to keep a focus on continuous improvement (Houston, 2001). Eadie (2003) pointed out that this is not an easy task to accomplish; if it were, superintendents would remain in their positions for a longer time period and board-superintendent relations would seldom be contentious. "The fact is, board-superintendent partnerships are not only extremely important to their school districts, but are also notoriously difficult to build, extremely fragile once built, and prone to deteriorate if not continuously and creatively supported and nurtured" (Eadie, 2003, p. 26). Some form of permanency needs to be attached to the superintendency because a change in leadership every few years disrupts an organization's ability to engage in meaningful reform (Peterson, 1999). Stufflebeam (1995) agreed by stating that, "If superintendents are as important to the quality of district schools as one believes they should be, then such a short tenure cannot be beneficial to schools" (p. 306).

The circumstances under which the superintendent was hired change over time, which means that school board expectations of superintendent leadership will change. This is a normal situation that may be addressed through a rigorous performance evaluation, which should keep the board-superintendent relationship from ending in a contract non-renewal (Eadie, 2003). The process of evaluating the superintendent should facilitate resolution of district issues. It should help define the role of the board and

superintendent, allowing the chief executive officer to focus on leading the district rather than on keeping his or her job. A breakdown in board-superintendent relationships may be avoided by setting up an evaluation system that monitors superintendent progress toward meeting school board expectations (Bippus, 1985; Houston 2001).

The evaluation process keeps the relationship vibrant so the district can keep moving forward, addressing the achievement goals and needs of students and the district. When board-superintendent relations are strong, the board is essentially providing permission for the superintendent to allocate resources as necessary to allow the district to flourish (Houston 2001).

The purpose of evaluating any school employee should be to improve the quality of education. Evaluating the superintendent is arguably one of the board's most important duties (Kowalski, 1998). The rationale for evaluating the superintendent includes the need for accountability and for assessment of district performance (Glass *et al.*, 2000; Norton, Webb, Dlugosh, & Sybouts, 1996). Candoli, Cullen, and Stufflebeam (1994) stated that "the precise role of the board is debatable, but generally it is responsible for establishing policy, based on state law; monitoring progress; and evaluating the results of a wide range of administrative duties" (p. 1). Conducting the performance evaluation of the public school superintendent allows the board of education to hold the superintendent accountable for reaching established goals.

The superintendent and board of education should determine the criteria to be used for the purposes of evaluation and then decide how to measure performance (Stufflebeam & Millman, 1995). The American Association of School Administrators

(AASA) provides eight professional standards for the superintendency that serve as a basis for a meaningful evaluation of the superintendent (DiPaola & Stronge, 2001). The superintendent must work cooperatively with the board of education to conduct the performance evaluation, enabling the superintendent to meet the expectations of the board and the district. “To do the job of superintendent you have to keep the job” (Norton *et al.*, 1996, p. 122).

Statement of the Problem

The relationship between the public school superintendent and board of education is critical to the successful operation of the public school district. In the state of Nebraska, there appears to be a lack of uniformity of purpose and practice in evaluating the public school superintendent. The purpose of the study was to determine the perceptions of Nebraska K-12 public school superintendents regarding the performance evaluation of superintendents serving K-12 public school districts in Nebraska. An investigation of superintendents’ perceptions of the purposes, criteria, and practices of the formal evaluation process was conducted. Comparisons of the superintendents’ perceptions were made based on school district enrollment, years as a superintendent within the school district, and total years of experience as a superintendent.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What is the purpose of performance evaluation of Nebraska public school superintendents as perceived by Nebraska public school superintendents?

2. What differences are there in the perceptions of superintendents regarding the purpose of the performance evaluation of Nebraska public school superintendents based on school district enrollment, years as a superintendent within the school district, and total years of experience as a superintendent?

3. In the most recent evaluation of the superintendent, to what extent were the American Association of School Administrator's eight professional standards utilized by the board of education to measure the performance of Nebraska public school superintendents?

4. What differences are there in the perceptions of superintendents regarding the extent of utilization of the American Association of School Administrator's eight professional standards by the board of education to measure the performance of Nebraska public school superintendents based on school district enrollment, years as a superintendent within the school district, and total years of experience as a superintendent?

5. How frequently are Nebraska public school superintendents formally evaluated as reported by Nebraska superintendents?

6. What relationships exist between the frequency with which Nebraska public school superintendents are formally evaluated and school district enrollment, years as a superintendent within the school district, and total years of experience as a superintendent?

7. To what extent are checklists/rating scales and written comments utilized in the performance appraisal during the formal evaluation of Nebraska public school superintendents?

8. What relationships exist between the frequency with which checklists/rating scales and written comments are utilized in the performance appraisal and school district enrollment, years as a superintendent within the school district, and total years of experience as a superintendent?

9. To what extent are job descriptions utilized in the performance appraisal during the formal evaluation of Nebraska public school superintendents?

10. What relationships exist between the frequency with which job descriptions are utilized in the performance appraisal and school district enrollment, years as a superintendent within the school district, and total years of experience as a superintendent?

11. To what extent is input gathered from the board of education, superintendent, school staff, and community in the formal evaluation of Nebraska public school superintendents?

12. What relationships exist between the frequency with which input from stakeholders (board of education, superintendent, school staff, and community) is utilized in the performance appraisal and school district enrollment, years as a superintendent within the school district, and total years of experience as a superintendent?

13. To what extent are superintendents satisfied with the criteria and practices utilized in the formal evaluation of Nebraska public school superintendents?

14. What differences are there in the perceptions of superintendents regarding the extent to which superintendents are satisfied with criteria and practices utilized in the performance appraisal based on school district enrollment, years as a superintendent within the school district, and total years of experience as a superintendent?

Significance of the Study

The relationship between the public school superintendent and board of education is critical to the successful operation of the public school district. This study provides information to the field of educational administration regarding the evaluation of public school superintendents in the state of Nebraska and adds to the existing knowledge base regarding performance evaluation of public school superintendents. The information is useful for superintendents, school boards members, and prospective superintendents to learn the current purpose, criteria, and practices for the performance evaluation of Nebraska public school superintendents. The results are relevant to certain groups, such as the Nebraska Council of School Administrators, the Nebraska Association of School Boards, and the Nebraska Association of School Administrators. The information is useful for administrator preparation programs, and it will assist superintendents and boards of education that are engaged in professional development activities to improve the superintendent evaluation process.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions are provided to ensure uniformity and understanding of these terms throughout the study.

Board of Education: The duly elected officials who represent patrons of the district (Johnson, 1988).

Criteria: Established guidelines for standards, norms, or levels against which any entity may be compared or evaluated (Hawes, 1982).

Formal evaluation: The appraisal of the superintendent's performance based on predetermined objectives and established policies, procedures, and criteria (Johnson, 1988).

Superintendent of Schools: A title customarily applied to the chief administrative officer of a public school district directly responsible to the school board for the district (Hawes, 1982).

Limitations of the Study

This study addressed the superintendents' perceptions of evaluation of public school superintendents in the state of Nebraska. The data collected and conclusions drawn are limited to the population of K-12 public school district superintendents employed in the state of Nebraska during the 2005-06 school year. Additional limitations to the study are that respondents understood the survey questions and directions, and answered honestly.

Organization of the Study

The study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 presented the introduction, statement of the problem, research questions, significance of the study, definition of terms, limitations to the study, and organization of the study. Chapter 2 contains the review of literature and research relating to conducting the performance evaluation of public school superintendents. The specific methodology and procedures that were used to develop the instrument and gather data are presented in Chapter 3. The results of analyses and findings that emerge from the study are presented in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 contains a summary of the study, the findings, and the conclusions that are drawn from the findings. A discussion of the findings and conclusions of the study and recommendations are also presented in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 2

Review of Related Literature and Research

Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature and research related to the evaluation of public school superintendents. The chapter is divided into sections which include (a) background information, (b) purposes for evaluating the superintendent, (c) selected criteria to measure the performance of the public school superintendent, and (d) practices for the evaluation of the superintendent. The purpose of the study will be to determine the perceptions of Nebraska public school superintendents regarding the performance evaluation of superintendents serving K-12 public school districts in Nebraska. An investigation of the purposes, criteria, and practices of the formal evaluation process will be conducted. Comparisons of the superintendent's perceptions will be made based on the characteristics of school district enrollment, years as a superintendent within the school district, and total years of experience as a superintendent.

Background

Boards of education precede the superintendency in the evolution of school governance. The appointment of full-time superintendents became widely accepted in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Since that time, the role of the superintendent and school board has continued to evolve (McCurdy & Hymes, 1992). The superintendent's original role of schoolmaster has evolved into that of a managing administrator with operational authority separate from school boards (DiPaola & Stronge, 2003). In *The Study of the American Superintendency* (Glass, 1992), it was stated that the role of the contemporary superintendent has changed due to social changes and tensions in the 1960s

and 1970s, reform in the 1980s and 1990s, and in the growth of state and federal mandates. In the 1990s, the school choice movement and advocacy for less centralized school districts brought additional challenges to the superintendency. These changes created a need for superintendents to engage in collaborative leadership (Glass, 1992). A challenge for superintendents has been to find ways to manage the various national, state, and local pressures when working with board and staff members to develop the most effective schools (Carter & Cunningham, 1997).

Public schools are expected to educate all students effectively, which is causing the role of schools and school leadership to change. Public schools are expected to develop students who possess more than basic skills; students must have critical thinking and problem-solving abilities that can be applied to their future careers and to life experiences. These changing conditions have placed education high on the national political agenda. Superintendents and school boards are being held accountable for all students meeting high standards. These additional pressures can strain the superintendent and board relationship (Negroni, 1999). Houston (2001) described the precarious nature of the superintendency:

Superintendents spend most of their careers between Palm Sunday and Good Friday. They enter the community as a new savior who is thought capable of performing miracles and healings. Sometime later, they are put on trial, marched through the streets in public humiliation and crucified.

(p. 2)

The superintendency is marked by short tenure, an uncertain future, district financial problems, state and federal accountability mandates, and a complex political climate and problems specific to the local district (Sharp & Walter, 2004). “Superintendents have a responsibility to work with boards in such a manner that we are able both to keep our jobs and do our jobs” (Negroni, 1999, p. 14).

Purposes for Superintendent Evaluation

The recent focus on high stakes student achievement and accountability-related state and federal mandates is creating political pressure to examine the performance of public school superintendents (Glasman & Fuller, 2002). The review of literature revealed many reasons to conduct a performance evaluation of the superintendent. Candoli, Cullen, and Stufflebeam (1994) listed the following purposes for superintendent evaluation:

- To improve educational performance
- To improve superintendent/board communication
- To clarify the roles of the superintendent and the board
- To improve board/superintendent relations
- To inform the superintendent of the board’s expectations
- To improve planning
- To aid in the professional development of the superintendent
- As a basis for personnel decisions
- As an accountability mechanism
- To fulfill legal requirements (p. 8).

The top reason to conduct the superintendent evaluation as identified by school board presidents in South Dakota public schools was to improve the educational performance of the district (Christensen, 2000). Slightly more than 95% of Nebraska superintendents either agreed or strongly agreed that the primary purpose for evaluating the superintendent is to improve performance, and an overwhelming majority (84%) disagreed that the primary purpose of evaluation is to rehire or dismiss the superintendent (Johnson, 1988). DiPaola & Stronge (2003) believe that evaluation should focus on improvement. The evaluation provides feedback from the board of education about job performance which is necessary for the superintendent's professional growth. According to Candoli, Nicholls, and Stufflebeam (1995), when evaluation is used correctly it is an essential tool for providing quality education and promoting student achievement.

Improve Board-Superintendent Relationships

The job satisfaction derived by the school district's top educational leader and longevity in the superintendency will be determined by the extent to which the superintendent is able to build and maintain a strong relationship with the board of education (Konnert & Augenstein, 1990). A 1994 joint publication by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) and the National School Boards Association (NSBA) promotes the ideal that public education in America is the foundation of democracy and that our society depends on the strength of relationships between school leaders. It was stated that the relationship between superintendents and school boards is important because their relationship will ultimately have either a positive or negative effect on what happens in the classroom. "How boards and superintendents

work together can mean the difference between exhilaration and frustration for both parties, and, more important, between the success and failure for the students in our nation's public schools" (p. 2). A study of board presidents and superintendents in South Dakota public schools revealed that superintendent relationships with school boards was the most important criterion upon which superintendents were evaluated (Christensen, 2000).

A poor working relationship between the school board and superintendent can quickly undermine the productive operation of the school district (Norton, Webb, Dlugosh, & Sybouts, 1996). A dysfunctional board-superintendent relationship deters school improvement, affects the quality of educational programs, causes instability within the district and weakens morale (Fusarelli & Peterson, 2002). Peterson (1999) stated that Louisiana superintendents perceived insufficient performance in the area of superintendent/board relations as the most likely reason for dismissal. Houston and Eadie (2002) noted that a vibrant district is characterized by positive and harmonious leadership at the highest level of the organization. This partnership enables the board and superintendent to deal effectively with the most important issues facing the district, and ensures a commitment to provide the necessary resources, and promotes decisions to overcome any obstacle. "The board-superintendent working partnership is notoriously fragile and erodes quickly when underplanned and undermanned" (Houston & Eadie, 2002, p. 75). Both the superintendent and the board must work to build a trusting relationship (Sharp & Walter, 2004). Fussarelli & Peterson (2002) discovered

Research has clearly articulated that as district leaders attempt to manage these complex changes and pressures, their success hinges on the relationship that have established with the board president (Allison, Allison, & McHenry, 1995; Campbell & Greene, 1994; Lunenburg and Ornstein, 1996; Peterson & Short, 2001) and with their board of education (Berg, 1996; Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Danzberger, 1993; Feuerstein & Opfer, 1998; Hoyle, English & Steffy, 1998; Kowalski, 1999; McCurdy & Hymes, 1992; Norton, Webb, Dlugosh, & Sybouts, 1996; Tallerico, 1989). Extant literature in this area has consistently asserted that a poor relationship between the superintendent and the board of education poses a threat to the district's ability to meet its goals. (p. 283)

Dillon & Halliwell (1991) conducted a survey of 250 randomly selected public school superintendents in the state of New York. Nearly a majority of respondents (49%) identified the purpose of superintendent evaluation to be “strengthening working relationships with the community, and between the board of education and superintendent” (p. 331). Although the media often portrays boards and superintendents as at odds with each other, AASA's latest 10-year study revealed that 69% of superintendents reported their evaluations from school boards to be “excellent,” and 22% were rated “good” (Glass *et al.*, 2000). A study in Oklahoma found that 97% of superintendents characterized their overall relationship with the board of education as positive (Garn, 2003).

Improve Communication between Board and Superintendent

Communication is essential to creating and maintaining a successful working relationship between the school board and superintendent. “Every superintendent innately knows that the most important element is communication, communication, communication. This mantra is often the means for improving relationships with boards” (Krysiak, 2002, p. 19). A superintendent spends a significant amount of time communicating with various constituencies. Interpersonal communication by the superintendent influences the leadership of the organization and district improvement (Peterson & Short, 2002). Kowalski (2005) stated that research has provided a link between interpersonal communications and organizational efficacy. Poor communication is an obstacle to building successful board and superintendent partnerships (Thomas, 2001). The superintendent may earn high marks from the board in areas such as school improvement, personnel, or budget management; but if communication between the superintendent and the board erodes to the point of diminished levels of confidence or trust, the formal evaluation is meaningless. If communication and trust are not re-established, the superintendent will probably either move on to another district or be asked to do so by the board (Hoyle & Skrla, 1999). Communication is the principal source of conflict between boards and superintendents but also serves as the primary means to resolve problems between them. Boards are willing to accept mistakes by superintendents, but an act of dishonesty causes an irrevocable loss of trust (Norton *et al.*, 1996).

In Oklahoma, interviews were conducted of 24 superintendents who had successfully served at least 12 years in the same district. Communication was identified by nearly all respondents as a key to their longevity (Chance, Butler, Ligon, & Cole, 1992). Superintendents have substantial input into the direction of the school district by communicating their vision to the board, district staff, and the community. They derive satisfaction from the district's progress and the opportunity to impact the teaching and learning process which directly impacts students (Sharp, Malone, & Walter, 2003). A strength of evaluation as identified by 34% of New York superintendents was "Provides written communication that improves the working relationship between the superintendent and board of education" (Dillon & Halliwell, 1991, p. 333). A formal superintendent evaluation conducted regularly by the board of education is a useful means to keep the channels of communication open (Glass *et al.*, 2000; Norton *et al.*, 1996; Robinson & Bickers, 1990; Stufflebeam & Millman, 1995).

Clarify Roles of Superintendent and Board Members

A well planned and thorough evaluation process may result in a stable relationship between the board of education and superintendent (Eadie & Houston, 2002). "Without clear demarcation between the roles of superintendents and school boards, tensions in many districts are part of daily life...role conflict is often the reason superintendents get into trouble with their school boards," (Glass *et al.*, 2000, p. 54). Evaluating the superintendent requires the board to understand the superintendent's role and responsibilities and to distinguish this from the role of the board (Cullen, 1995; Edington & Enger, 1992). Often the superintendent may perceive that tasks are being

carried out effectively, but the board may believe that too much autonomy is being exercised by the superintendent, thus creating conflict (Sharp & Walter, 2004). “The lack of clarity in roles, expectations, and scope of authority contributes to major disagreements between boards of education and their CEOs. This is largely related to the overlap in responsibilities” (Thomas, 2001, p. 9).

The superintendent is responsible for paying attention to the relationship on a day-to-day basis and playing a leading role if the partnership is to stand the test of time. School board members are generally unpaid volunteers who have multiple commitments in their professional and personal lives. They should not be expected to be a dominant partner in the board-superintendent relationship (Houston & Eadie, 2002). “The precise role of the board is debatable, but generally it is responsible for establishing policy, based on state law; monitoring progress; and evaluating the results of a wide range of administrative duties” (Candoli *et al.*, 1994, p. 1).

The process of evaluating the superintendent will help define the role of the board and superintendent, allowing the chief executive officer to focus on leading the district rather than on keeping his job. The evaluation keeps the relationship vibrant so that the district can keep moving forward, addressing the achievement goals and needs of students and the district. When board-superintendent relations are strong, the board is essentially providing permission for the superintendent to allocate resources as necessary to promote a positive learning environment, allowing the district to flourish (Houston, 2001). Informal evaluations cannot provide the board with a complete picture of the superintendent’s effectiveness in carrying out the complex job. Regular, formal

evaluations offer boards the best means of assessing the superintendent's total performance (DiPaola & Stronge, 2001). "The evaluation process can be a valuable tool in defining expectations, enhancing communications, identifying and prioritizing district goals, and holding the superintendent accountable for performance. Evaluations provide the superintendent an opportunity to assess the board's satisfaction with their performance" (DiPaola & Stronge, 2001, p. 108).

Inform Superintendent of Board's Expectations

An obstacle to achieving a solid board-superintendent relationship is the lack of understanding of what is expected on the part of both the superintendent and the board. Role confusion and ambiguity may cause disagreements and misunderstandings between boards and superintendents when expectations are not met (Krysiak, 2002; Peterson, 1999). By regularly delineating tasks, the board of education communicates its expectations to the superintendent. This communication is needed to clarify the evaluation process by determining how often the superintendent will be evaluated, what data or evidence will be collected, and who will conduct the evaluation (Hoyle & Skrla, 1999). The board and superintendent should prepare a written document that reflects their agreement in preparation for the evaluation process. The superintendent's job description should be reviewed and updated annually as the board and superintendent outline the criteria by which the superintendent will be evaluated for the upcoming year. The document should also include decisions about how the evaluation criteria will be assessed in determining the merit of the superintendent's performance (Candoli *et al.*, 1995). When New York superintendents were asked to identify the strengths of formal

evaluation, 44% responded that the process “Identifies the board of education’s goals, objectives and expectations for the superintendent” (Dillon & Halliwell, 1991, p. 333).

Negroni (1999) stated that it is vital for superintendents to create conditions within the district that allows them to serve a longer tenure. Sustainable improvements require a long-term commitment and “when a superintendent leaves a district, the schools, students and community lose vast amounts of continuity and progress towards sustainable reform” (p. 16). In *The Board-Savvy Superintendent* (2002) Houston and Eadie wrote,

If the relationship with the board is allowed to deteriorate past a certain point, one of the partners – in fact, always the superintendent since school boards do not typically fire themselves for dysfunctional relationships – must move on to other professional challenges, at a potentially high cost to the district in terms of damaged public credibility, internal anxiety, inaction on important matters during the transition to a new CEO, and the often substantial cost of finding a new occupant for the CEO’s seat. (p. 75)

Glowing evaluations will not assure the superintendent that the board will renew the contract the following year. The superintendent must continually communicate with the board to determine the expectations for the position (Konnert & Augenstein, 1990; Sharp & Walter, 2004).

Accountability

The Study of the American School Superintendency (Glass, 2000) reported that the chief reason superintendents are evaluated is to ensure systematic accountability (51% of

respondents) and to assess performance with standards (30% of respondents). Other reasons include “complying with board policy (28%), establish performance goals (24%), and identify areas needing improvement (21%)” (p. 61). Bippus (1985) suggested that an evaluation system is necessary to detect any problems with job performance.

Accountability is a key reason for the evaluation of superintendents by boards of education (Braddom, 1986; Candoli, 1994; Christensen, 2000; Cullen, 1995; Dillon, 1991; DiPaola & Stronge, 2001; DiPaola & Stronge, 2003; Houston & Eadie, 2002; Kowalski, 1998; Norton *et al.*, 1996; Sharp *et al.*, 2003). Glasman and Fuller (as reported in Cooper & Fusarelli, 2002) examined the contracts of 50 California school district superintendents and found the most cited reasons for evaluation were “providing periodic and systematic accountability; helping establish relevant performance goals; and identifying areas of needed improvement” (p. 137).

Improve Educational Performance

Another major purpose for superintendent evaluation is to improve educational performance (Christensen, 2000; DiPaola & Stronge, 2003; Edington & Enger, 1992; Kowalski, 1998; Robinson & Bickers, 1990). “Improving individual performance in order to provide quality services and programs to students is the ultimate purpose of evaluation,” (DiPaola & Stronge, 2003, p. 10). It is difficult to evaluate the superintendent based on outcomes, such as student test scores, budgetary targets, or curriculum goals. The administrative activities of planning, organizing, coordinating, staffing, and budgeting may be considered inputs, but the superintendent does not necessarily have a direct impact on the outcome due to an enormous number of variables,

such as student demographics and legislative mandates, that are often beyond the superintendent's control. The superintendent is one of the many contributing factors relating to student achievement, and the use of student test scores as the sole measure of school effectiveness is a questionable practice (Cullen, 1995). The superintendent should be held accountable only for areas in which there is direct operational control (Edington & Enger, 1992). When the school board and superintendent realize that their responsibilities are intertwined and that the success of the district relies upon their commitment to work together, a desire to strive for excellence in the school district may develop. The process of evaluating the superintendent contributes to organizational improvement (Kowalski, 1998).

Strategic Planning and Performance Goals

Boards and superintendents must work together to establish strategic directions, create policies, or decide how to tackle high-stakes issues; each needs the other as an active collaborator in the decision-making process (Houston & Eadie, 2002).

Superintendent evaluation provides data that the board and superintendent can use to make decisions about the district's goal setting, plans, and management. (Candoli *et al*, 1995). A fair and comprehensive system for superintendent evaluation will focus on the degree to which the superintendent has met the district goals and objectives established by the board of education (DiPaola & Stronge, 2003; Konnert & Augenstein, 1990).

District goals were used as criteria for evaluation as reported by 78% of superintendents (Sharp *et al.*, 2003). Setting goals and establishing priorities for the superintendent helps the board focus on educational planning within the district (Robinson & Bickers, 1990).

The evaluation should be based on the superintendent job description, which must be clearly articulated and aligned with the district's vision and strategic plan. When performance goals become the focus of the evaluation process, they are more likely to be accomplished (Hoyle & Skrla, 1999). It should be made clear how the goals will be met and how quickly each is expected to be attained. A list of activities and a schedule should be established. If the superintendent is unable to meet the goal, the board should be notified in writing as to the reasons and what the superintendent believes can be realistically accomplished (Bippus, 1985).

Personnel Decisions

An important reason for the board of education to evaluate the superintendent is to provide documentation prior to making a determination whether or not to renew the superintendent's contract (Braddom, 1986; Cullen, 1995). Glass *et al.* (2000) reported that a small percentage of superintendents (5%) thought the purpose of evaluation was to document dissatisfaction with their performance. In addition, 28% of superintendents felt that one of the reasons for evaluation was to comply with board policy (Glass *et al.*, 2000). State regulations, board policy, and the superintendent's contract will dictate the parameters for the superintendent evaluation. The evaluation must meet these specifications or the board faces the possibility of the superintendent retaining employment (Sharp *et al.*, 2003).

Enhancing professional development opportunities for the superintendent is another purpose for evaluation (Candoli *et al.*, 1995; Cullen, 1995; DiPaola & Stronge, 2001; DiPaola & Stronge, 2003; Houston & Eadie, 2002; Norton *et al.*, 1996). By

specifying the evaluation in the superintendent's contract, it will be addressed in the first year and when the contract is to be renewed. The evaluation will lead to knowledge of areas of skill development for the superintendent (Kowalski, 1998). "An effective appraisal should result in specific plans and goals to help the superintendent improve" (Braddom, 1986, p. 28).

Evaluation Criteria

Building a strong relationship with the board requires the superintendent to know what the board expects (Konnert & Augenstein, 1990). The number one criterion for superintendent evaluation as reported by school board presidents in South Dakota public schools was board/superintendent relations (Christensen, 2000). Board/superintendent relations were also considered the most important item in evaluating the performance of the superintendent in Nebraska (Johnson, 1988). The most often encountered criterion found in the 1992 AASA 10-year study was that of "general effectiveness," which echoed the 1982 study. Management functions, board/superintendent relationships, budget development, and educational leadership and knowledge were listed as important criteria (Glass *et al.*, 2000). "Because each district is unique, criteria and instruments should reflect local policy, the superintendent's job description, and agreed-upon needs and goals," (Kowalski, 1998, p. 43). The board should set specific target goals that are measurable so the performance of the superintendent is about meeting targets, not about functional competency. Once the board and superintendent reach agreement upon the goals, the superintendent should define how the goals will be reached and the board should provide the necessary support. The performance review should be measured

against achievement of the goals (Eadie, 2003). Regardless of the criteria utilized for superintendent evaluation, the board of education needs to have a common understanding of what each criterion means and what purpose it serves in the overall evaluation (Sharp *et al.*, 2003).

Job Description

Hoyle & Skrla (1999) recommended that the evaluation be based on the superintendent's job description and the district's strategic plan. DiPaola and Stronge (2001) believe the initial step in designing a superintendent evaluation system is to determine expectations. "Slightly more than 90% of responding superintendents had written job descriptions in 1992. This was an increase over 1982, when 75% had written job descriptions" (Glass *et al.*, 2000, p. 61). Half (50%) of the respondents who had a formal job description reported that they were evaluated against its criteria. The survey revealed that only 39% of superintendents in districts with less than 300 students thought they were evaluated against the job description. This suggests that superintendent job descriptions may be selected and placed in board policy without a determination of whether or not the criteria match the specific expectations for the local district (Glass *et al.*, 2000). The job description was used as a basis for evaluation as reported by 29% of Nebraska superintendents. Another 34% reported that a combination of the job description and other criteria was used in their evaluation (Johnson, 1988).

When the board and superintendent understand the mission and goals of the district, the information can be used to write a job description, which will influence the categories that should be reflected in the superintendent evaluation. (Norton *et al.*, 1996).

Job descriptions define what individuals should do in the performance of their duties and they can be used directly in the process of performance evaluation. Redfern (1984) wrote

The job description can be made more relevant if evaluation is directly related to the functions and responsibilities it contains. A rating scale can be designed and applied to these functions and responsibilities. By supplementing the ratings with comments, suggestions, and recommendations, the evaluator can show where performance has been praiseworthy and where it needs specific improvements. (p. 24)

Prior to the start of each school year, it is recommended that the board review the superintendent's job description and goals for the subsequent school year and make necessary adjustments. Through this process, the superintendent's responsibilities are clarified and the basic guidelines for the evaluation are established (Bippus, 1985; Candoli *et al.*, 1995; Stufflebeam & Millman, 1995). The superintendent evaluation policy should link to procedures that are "relevant to the district, grounded in solid practice, and enforceable; clear, concise, and concrete; taught and retaught through training; reviewed periodically; and followed by those responsible for implementing policy" (DiPaola & Stronge, 2003, p. 65).

American Association of School Administrator Professional Standards

The American Association of School Administrators presented professional standards for the superintendency in 1993. The research based report conducted by the AASA Commission on Standards for the Superintendency provided the knowledge and skills that superintendents should possess and be able to demonstrate (AASA-NSBA

Committee, 1994). *The Superintendent as CEO: Standards Based Performance* by John R. Hoyle, Lars G. Bjork, Virginia Collier and Thomas Glass (2005) provides the rationale for the AASA's eight professional standards to be used as the recommended framework to measure superintendent performance:

To date, most of the research linking student mastery of administrative standards and actual job performance uses the 1993 AASA standards and skills (Candoli, Cullen, & Stufflebeam, 1995; Collier, 1987; Glass 1998; Horler, 1996; Sass, 1989; Scalfani, 1983; Wells, 2003) (p. 209).

Additionally, Hoyle *et al.* (2005) wrote: "We feel that the AASA standards have a stronger research base and a richer connection to the role of superintendent than the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium standards for Chief State School Officers" (p. x). In a survey of Illinois superintendents and board presidents, Horler (1996) found that both groups favored the AASA Professional Standards for the Superintendency for use in the evaluation of public school superintendents. Carter and Cunningham (1997) stated that all superintendents should be held accountable for the AASA's professional standards. Hoyle & Skrla (1999) wrote

The eight AASA standards contain the key knowledge and skills superintendents must bring to the job if they wish to work well with their school boards to promote district harmony and improvement. It is logical to use these national standards in the evaluation process as a framework for discussion between the superintendent and board members. (p. 417)

The Professional Standards for the Superintendency (AASA, 1993) identify eight general standards and numerous indicators that effective superintendents possess. The standards are

- Leadership and district culture (shaping district culture and climate, providing direction, promoting diversity)
- Policy and governance (ability to formulate policy, ability to utilize procedures for superintendent-board interpersonal/working relationships)
- Communications and community relations (ability to articulate district vision, mission, and priorities, demonstrate consensus building and conflict mediation, apply communication skills, and align constituencies)
- Organizational management (understands the school district as a system, makes decisions based on data analyses, ability to develop and administer district budget)
- Curriculum planning and development (ability to design, implement, and evaluate scope and sequence of curriculum and assessment)
- Instructional management (maximizes student outcomes through research based instructional practice and pedagogy)
- Human resources management (develops staff evaluation and development system, selects appropriate models of supervision, and adheres to legal requirements for personnel selection, development, retention, and dismissal)
- Values and ethics of leadership (understands and models appropriate value systems, ethic, and moral leadership; exhibits multicultural and ethnic

understanding and related behavior, ability to coordinate social agencies and human services to help each student grow and develop as a caring, informed citizen) (pp. 5-10).

Superintendent Evaluation in a Standard-Based Environment: A Status Report from the States published by DiPaola and Stronge in 2001 provides an examination of each state's requirement or recommendation for superintendent evaluation. Information was gathered from state affiliates of the National School Boards Association (NSBA) and AASA to identify member recommendations regarding performance appraisal of the superintendent.

The performance competencies embedded in the evaluation materials were compared to the AASA Professional Standards for the Superintendency.

When language in a state document was not identical but clearly fell under a standard, it was considered to be a partial match. If no language addressing the AASA standards was present, the indicator was not counted as a match in this analysis. Only recommended evaluation materials from Texas, Hawaii, and Oregon fully matched all of the AASA professional standards. (p. 101)

The authors reported that the professional affiliates in eight states either did not have state guidelines or did not provide recommended guidelines or instruments to their members. There was disparity among the materials gathered from the 42 states as to the extent to which the AASA professional standards were expressed. The standard cited most frequently was organizational management (88%) and the least frequent was values and

ethics of leadership (26%). Seven out of eight AASA standards were reported as “partially present” in Nebraska after examining information provided by Nebraska state affiliates for NSBA and AASA (DiPaola & Stronge, 2001).

The AASA professional standards serve as a guide to bring the board and superintendent together, allowing them to construct specific evaluation criteria to meet expectations at the local district (DiPaola & Stronge, 2001). In practice, it is easier to evaluate by task rather than standards, but the superintendent is evaluated differently in every district. Since it would be extremely difficult to standardize the evaluation of superintendents, broad professional standards are recommended (Glasman & Fuller, 2002). Performance indicators should define the performance standards; but since it is not possible to compile an all-inclusive list of indicators, the superintendent’s performance should be measured by mastering the standards rather than on successful completion of all indicators. Performance standards ensure that the evaluation is based on what the superintendent was hired to do (DiPaola & Stronge, 2003). “There is general consensus that the AASA Standards for the Superintendency blended with generic duties and other tasks unique to the superintendent’s job description can form the best guidelines and criteria for the evaluation process” (Hoyle & Skrla, 1999, p. 414).

Evaluation Practices

Frequency of Evaluation

Robinson and Bickers (1990) reported that superintendents are evaluated on an annual basis regardless of school district size. An Educational Research Survey in 1989 reported 79% of superintendents were evaluated at least annually, with 7% of

respondents evaluated more than once per year. A survey of Arkansas superintendents reported only 67% were formally evaluated at least annually (Edington & Enger, 1992). Glass *et al.* (2000) reported that the board of education evaluated superintendent job performance annually in 80% of districts and 12% of districts semi-annually. In the three-state study (Illinois, Indiana, Texas), 83% of superintendents reported they were formally evaluated in writing, although only 77% said this occurred annually (Sharp *et al.*, 2003). Christensen (2000) found that over 90% of South Dakota superintendents were evaluated at least annually by the board of education. A Nebraska survey found that over 96% of superintendents were formally or informally evaluated at least annually, with formal evaluation by the board occurring in 88% of the districts. It was reported that as the size of the school district increased, so did the likelihood for the board of education to formally evaluate the superintendent (Johnson, 1988).

According to Kowalski (1998), the school board should commit to formal evaluation of the superintendent each year because as the composition of the board changes, the annual evaluation helps eliminate uncertainty and confusion about the educational direction of the district. He emphasized the importance of including the evaluation process in the superintendent's contract.

By specifying the evaluation in the contract, you ensure the topic will be discussed when the superintendent is first hired and when a contract is renewed, reminding the board and superintendent alike of their obligation. . . . Such a provision protects [superintendents] from being fired

for political reasons or because of personality conflicts with a few members of the board. (p. 14)

Eadie (2003) suggested a review of superintendent performance twice per year, or even quarterly, to provide an opportunity to adjust performance targets to reflect changes in district circumstances.

Type of Instrument

The ERS survey by Robinson and Bickers (1990) stated that the most common procedure for evaluating superintendent performance was through the use of checklists or rating scales (79%). In contrast, Glass (1992) found that this applied to 48% of superintendents nationwide. Findings presented by Edington & Enger (1992) reported that performance checklist/rating scales were used in 76% of formal evaluations. Only one-third of the Arkansas districts with student enrollments under 300 used the checklist or rating scale in comparison to more than 90% of districts with enrollments greater than 1,000 students. It was also more common for larger districts to use both written comments and checklist/rating scales. Cullen (1995) reported rating forms and checklists were commonly employed to evaluate superintendents, although a variety of methods were available. Two advantages cited for the use of checklists and rating scales are providing specific data, giving at least the appearance of precision, and they are quick and easy to complete. It is common practice when using checklists or rating scales that each board member independently assesses the superintendent. This is completed by indicating which one of several statements most accurately describes the superintendent or by rating performance criteria on a scale from one to five (Cullen, 1995).

“Board members sometimes use a numerical point system in conjunction with an appraisal by the board members of communication and other skills that are not easily quantified. Superintendents agree that subjective opinions of board members often enter the informal process” (Glass *et al.*, 2000, p. 64). A composite evaluation is used by board members as the starting point for discussion with the superintendent regarding performance (Edington & Enger, 1992). The 1989 ERS survey found 60% of responding superintendents had written comments in their evaluation (Robinson & Bickers, 1990). Written comments were incorporated in 61% of the formal evaluations of Arkansas superintendents (Edington & Enger, 1992). The primary benefit of the written statement is it allows for elaboration and explanation on specific aspects of the superintendent’s performance. This is not possible with a checklist or rating scale (Braddom, 1986). DiPaola and Stronge (2001) found that 89% of states used some type of printed rating forms, while 68% of the states incorporated management by objectives into the superintendent evaluation.

Individual or Groups that Provide Input

The overwhelming majority of school district superintendents are evaluated by their school boards, and often this is coupled with a self-evaluation by the superintendent. Robinson and Bickers (1990) found that in almost 98% of districts surveyed nationwide, the board has formal input into the evaluation process, and in 60% of the cases the superintendent has input. Similar findings by Edington and Enger (1992) reported that all Arkansas districts (100%) with a formal evaluation process included board input, while the superintendent had input in 56% of districts. Sharp *et al.* 2003 reported that nearly

83% of superintendents had input into their own evaluation process and almost 74% said they had been treated fairly in the evaluation.

Self-evaluation promotes reflection upon experiences and encourages the establishment of goals and strategies to achieve them. However, the objectivity of the superintendent may be questionable. In turn, data collection and methods used by school board members may rely more on feelings and opinions than on objective data (Cullen, 1995). More than half (56%) of Nebraska superintendents engaged in a self-appraisal during the evaluation process. Only 45% of them indicated that input from individuals other than the board of education was essential (Johnson, 1988). Robinson and Bickers (1990) conducted a nationwide Educational Research Study (ERS) investigation and found that almost a quarter of the respondents (24%) replied that superintendent evaluation criteria were determined solely by the board of education. However, a majority (66%) of respondents said the criteria for their evaluations were determined jointly by the school board and superintendent. Edington and Enger (1992) determined that Arkansas public school districts established criteria jointly by the school board and superintendent in 46% of districts that conducted a formal superintendent evaluation. A comprehensive evaluation system should connect district and school board goals to superintendent performance (DiPaola & Stronge, 2003).

Glass (1992) found that the board consults others during the evaluation process in less than 3% of districts. Data collected by Edington and Enger (1992) found that central office staff have input in 8% of districts that have a formal evaluation in place, followed by principals (11%) and teachers (13%). Robinson and Bickers (1990) supported those

results with 7%, 11%, and 12% reported for each respective group. Bippus (1985) suggested that an interview of other district administrators should be conducted and in districts with fewer than 3,000 students, teachers should be interviewed as well. In a South Dakota survey, almost 98% of school board presidents reported that the entire board had input into the superintendent evaluation. Few districts reported allowing teacher (11%) or principal (7%) input (Christensen, 2000). Johnson (1988) concluded, “The use of people other than the board of education in the evaluation of the school’s chief executive was not an accepted practice according to superintendents included in this study” (p. 131).

Superintendents are always alienating someone with their decisions, and over time support may waver. The superintendent is the board’s employee and all other staff are employees of the superintendent. Staff, normally, cannot evaluate their “boss” objectively. The superintendent, however, may want to receive a performance assessment from colleagues, the results of which may be shared with the board (Carter & Cunningham, 1997). Bippus (1985) cautioned that care must be taken to keep bias from the interview data. Glass *et al.* (2000) reported superintendents indicated in the 2000 and 1992 studies that school board members are generally qualified but not well qualified. When superintendents were queried as to the major weaknesses of formal evaluation, 40% reported it “requires evaluation skills most board members do not possess” (Dillon & Halliwell, 1991, p. 335). Johnson (1988) concluded that Nebraska superintendents did not perceive board members to be adequately prepared to evaluate superintendent performance.

The Study of the American School Superintendency (Glass *et al.*, 2000) found that “nearly 30% of reporting superintendents indicate their boards to be under qualified,” although “the number of superintendents being evaluated as excellent or good by these same boards is 91%” (p. 60). Sharp *et al.* (2003) reported that 73% of survey respondents felt their current board of education had given them a fair evaluation, plus they indicated that during their overall career, 77% had been treated fairly by boards of education. Superintendents reported that they had received rating of “excellent” (69%) or “good” (22%) in the past year. “It is evident from the 2000 data that boards of education across the nation are satisfied with the performance of superintendent” (Glass *et al.*, 2000, p. 63).

Providing Feedback

A common practice is to have the performance evaluation discussion held at a board meeting with the superintendent present (Cullen, 1995). The goal for the evaluation is to summarize the board’s findings and reach some clear conclusions about the superintendent’s performance. The formal evaluation should provide a summary from the board’s viewpoint of the superintendent’s accomplishments for each school year. When the final evaluation results are presented to the superintendent, the results should be the consensus of the board on all items. A board cannot give five, seven, or nine different evaluations to the superintendent and expect it to be a clear direction for the superintendent’s performance (Bippus, 1985). Board members may have difficulty discerning their role in the evaluation process. In addition, some board members may view the superintendent’s performance as acceptable while others may not (Castallo,

1999). “A sound evaluation system will always be based on actual performance data collected through multiple means that are representative of the superintendent’s total performance during the period covered by the performance assessment” (DiPaola & Stronge, 2003, p. 51). “Employing multiple models would enable boards to enjoy the benefits of the strengths of each model while compensating for the individual models’ weaknesses. In essence, there was no perfect superintendent model, policy, or practice.” (DiPaola & Stronge, 2001, p. 106).

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

The methodology and procedures for conducting the study are presented in Chapter 3. The methodology of the study includes the following: (a) review of related literature, (b) description of the population to be studied, (c) instrumentation, (d) data collection, and (e) data analysis.

The purpose of the study was to determine the perceptions of Nebraska K-12 public school superintendents regarding the performance evaluation of superintendents serving K-12 public school districts in Nebraska. An investigation of superintendents' perceptions of the purposes, criteria, and practices of the formal evaluation process were conducted. Comparisons of the superintendents' perceptions were made based on the following characteristics: school district enrollment, years as a superintendent within the school district, and total years of experience as a superintendent. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What is the purpose of performance evaluation of Nebraska public school superintendents as perceived by Nebraska public school superintendents?

2. What differences are there in the perceptions of superintendents regarding the purpose of the performance evaluation of Nebraska public school superintendents based on school district enrollment, years as a superintendent within the school district, and total years of experience as a superintendent?

3. In the most recent evaluation of the superintendent, to what extent were the American Association of School Administrator's eight professional standards utilized by

the board of education to measure the performance of Nebraska public school superintendents?

4. What differences are there in the perceptions of superintendents regarding the extent of utilization of the American Association of School Administrator's eight professional standards by the board of education to measure the performance of Nebraska public school superintendents based on school district enrollment, years as a superintendent within the school district, and total years of experience as a superintendent?

5. How frequently are Nebraska public school superintendents formally evaluated as reported by Nebraska superintendents?

6. What relationships exist between the frequency with which Nebraska public school superintendents are formally evaluated and school district enrollment, years as a superintendent within the school district, and total years of experience as a superintendent?

7. To what extent are checklists/rating scales and written comments utilized in the performance appraisal during the formal evaluation of Nebraska public school superintendents?

8. What relationships exist between the frequency with which checklists/rating scales and written comments are utilized in the performance appraisal and school district enrollment, years as a superintendent within the school district, and total years of experience as a superintendent?

9. To what extent are job descriptions utilized in the performance appraisal during the formal evaluation of Nebraska public school superintendents,?

10. What relationships exist between the frequency with which job descriptions are utilized in the performance appraisal and school district enrollment, years as a superintendent within the school district, and total years of experience as a superintendent?

11. To what extent is input gathered from the board of education, superintendent, school staff, and community in the formal evaluation of Nebraska public school superintendents?

12. What relationships exist between the frequency with which input from stakeholders (board of education, superintendent, school staff, and community) is utilized in the performance appraisal and school district enrollment, years as a superintendent within the school district, and total years of experience as a superintendent?

13. To what extent are superintendents satisfied with the criteria and practices utilized in the formal evaluation of Nebraska public school superintendents?

14. What differences are there in the perceptions of superintendents regarding the extent to which superintendents are satisfied with criteria and practices utilized in the performance appraisal based on school district enrollment, years as a superintendent within the school district, and total years of experience as a superintendent?

Review of Related Literature

The review of literature was related to the performance evaluation of the public school superintendent. The literature review was conducted utilizing a variety of resources which included professional periodicals, books, research reports, dissertations, papers, and related state and professional association publications. The research was conducted primarily through the I.D. Weeks Library at the University of South Dakota, Vermillion. Computerized databases accessed through the I.D. Weeks library included Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), *Resources in Education (RIE)*, *Dissertation Abstracts International (DAI)*, *Psychological Abstracts* and Interlibrary Loan (ILLiad). Information was accessed through the online websites for the American Association of School Administrators and the Nebraska Association of School Boards.

Population

The population for this study was comprised of all K-12 public school superintendents in the state of Nebraska. This population consisted of the 238 individual districts that are served by 229 superintendents. The superintendency is shared in nine K-12 public school districts. The names and mailing addresses of the superintendents were obtained from the Nebraska Department of Education website.

Respondents were asked on the survey instrument to identify the student enrollment of their district and years of superintendent experience. For data analysis purposes, the completed surveys were divided into three equal groups based on respondents' identification of the district's K-12 student enrollment.

Instrumentation

A survey instrument (Appendix A) was used to gather data for this research study. The survey was developed by the researcher through a review of literature related to the purposes, criteria, and practices regarding the performance evaluation process for public school superintendents. The survey instrument was critiqued by four Nebraska administrators (two Educational Service Unit Directors and two high school principals) for clarity of instructions and content (Appendix B). The written instructions on the instrument were revised based on their feedback, but no content changes were made.

The demographic information that was requested of the respondents was the K-12 student enrollment of their district, the years of experience as superintendent within the district, and the respondent's total years of experience as superintendent. Respondents who indicated they were not formally evaluated by the board of education skipped questions numbered six through 13 which dealt specifically with the formal evaluation.

Respondents used a five-point Likert scale to rate the degree of importance of the purposes for conducting the evaluation of the superintendent. Purpose statements included on the survey instrument were identified through the review of literature (Appendix C). They were also asked to rate the extent that the American Association of School Administrators eight professional standards are utilized by the board of education in their district as criteria to measure superintendent performance. Content validity was established by creating a matrix (Appendix D) that links the items on the instrument to the literature and to the professional standards developed by the AASA which is an established national administrative organization.

A four-point scaled response where 1 = *not satisfied* and 4 = *very satisfied* was used by respondents to rate the level of satisfaction with the evaluation criteria and practices currently used in their district. Additional items asked respondents to identify the superintendent evaluation practices in their district. A survey instrument matrix (Appendix E) links the literature to the survey instrument for these items. Responses to all survey items are based upon the respondents' perceptions of their own evaluation. The last item on the survey instrument was an open-ended item allowing comments regarding any items, questions, or issues that arise during the survey.

Data Collection

The survey was mailed on March 26, 2006 with a cover letter (Appendix F) to each of the Nebraska public school superintendents. A self-addressed stamped envelope was included for the return of the survey. The surveys were coded for the purpose of identifying non-respondents and the surveys were destroyed after tabulation. A follow-up letter (Appendix G) and a second copy of the survey were mailed to all non-responding participants on March 22, two days after the initial requested return date.

Data Analysis

The responses to the survey instrument items were entered into a computer data spreadsheet using Microsoft Excel. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 14, software was used to analyze the data. All inferential analyses used the .05 level of significance. Responses to survey items were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics as described below.

Research Question 1: What is the purpose of performance evaluation of Nebraska public school superintendents as perceived by Nebraska public school superintendents? The mean score and standard deviations for each item related to importance were reported.

Research Question 2: What differences are there in the perceptions of superintendents regarding the purpose of the performance evaluation of Nebraska public school superintendents based on school district enrollment, years as a superintendent within the school district, and total years of experience as a superintendent? A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine if a significant difference was indicated when superintendent responses were examined. School size groupings and superintendent experience were the independent variables and the mean score for each item related to the purpose of the performance evaluation was the dependent variable. For significant differences found, Tukey's Honestly Significant Difference (HSD) post-hoc test was performed to identify the source of those differences.

Research Question 3: In the most recent evaluation of the superintendent, to what extent were the American Association of School Administrator's eight professional standards utilized by the board of education to measure the performance of Nebraska public school superintendents? The mean and standard deviations of responses related to the utilization of the eight AASA professional standards was reported.

Research Question 4: What differences are there in the perceptions of superintendents regarding the extent of utilization of the American Association of School Administrator's eight professional standards by the board of education to measure the

performance of Nebraska public school superintendents based on school district enrollment, years as a superintendent within the school district, and total years of experience as a superintendent? A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine if a significant difference was indicated when superintendent responses were examined. School size groupings and superintendent experience were the independent variables and the mean score for each item related to the utilization of the eight AASA professional standards was the dependent variable. For significant differences found, Tukey's HSD post-hoc test was performed to identify the source of those differences.

Research Question 5: How frequently are Nebraska public school superintendents formally evaluated as reported by Nebraska superintendents? The frequency and percentage of responses related to the frequency of formal superintendent evaluation were reported.

Research Question 6: What relationships exist between the frequency with which Nebraska public school superintendents are formally evaluated and school district enrollment, years as a superintendent within the school district, and total years of experience as a superintendent? A chi-square analysis was conducted to determine if significant relationships exist between superintendent responses regarding frequency of formal evaluation and school district enrollment, years as a superintendent within the school district, and total years of experience as a superintendent.

Research Question 7: To what extent are checklists/rating scales and written comments utilized in the performance appraisal during the formal evaluation of Nebraska

public school superintendents? The frequency and percentage of responses related to the extent with which checklists/rating scales and written comments are utilized were reported.

Research Question 8: What relationships exist between the frequency with which checklists/rating scales and written comments are utilized in the performance appraisal and school district enrollment, years as a superintendent within the school district, and total years of experience as a superintendent? A chi-square analysis was conducted to determine if significant relationships exist between checklists/rating scales and written comments and school district enrollment, years as a superintendent within the school district, and total years of experience as a superintendent.

Research Question 9: To what extent are job descriptions utilized in the performance appraisal during the formal evaluation of Nebraska public school superintendents? The frequency and percentage of responses related to the extent job descriptions are utilized were reported.

Research Question 10: What relationships exist between the frequency with which job descriptions are utilized in the performance appraisal and school district enrollment, years as a superintendent within the school district, and total years of experience as a superintendent? A chi-square analysis was conducted to determine if significant relationships exist between the frequency with which job descriptions are utilized and school district enrollment, years as a superintendent within the school district, and total years of experience as a superintendent?

Research Question 11: To what extent is input gathered from the board of education, superintendent, school staff, and community in the formal evaluation of Nebraska public school superintendents? The frequency and percentage of responses related to the extent input is gathered from the board of education, superintendent, school staff, and community were reported.

Research Question 12: What relationships exist between the frequency with which input from stakeholders (board of education, superintendent, school staff, and community) is utilized in the performance appraisal and school district enrollment, years as a superintendent within the school district, and total years of experience as a superintendent? A chi-square analysis was conducted to determine if significant relationships exist between the extent with which input is gathered from stakeholders (board of education, superintendent, school staff, and community) and school district enrollment, years as a superintendent within the school district, and total years of experience as a superintendent.

Research Question 13: To what extent are superintendents satisfied with the criteria and practices utilized in the formal evaluation of Nebraska public school superintendents? The mean and standard deviation of responses related to the extent superintendents are satisfied with the criteria and practices utilized in the performance appraisal were reported.

Research Question 14: What differences are there in the perceptions of superintendents regarding the extent to which superintendents are satisfied with criteria and practices utilized in the performance appraisal based on school district enrollment,

years as a superintendent within the school district, and total years of experience as a superintendent? A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine if a significant difference is indicated when superintendent responses are examined.

School size groupings and superintendent experience were the independent variables and the mean score for each item related to the extent superintendents are satisfied with the criteria and practices utilized in the performance appraisal was the dependent variable.

For significant differences found, Tukey's HSD post-hoc test was performed to identify the source of those differences.

CHAPTER 4

Findings

This chapter discusses the response rates and demographic information of respondents, and research findings derived from the data analyses of the study. The survey was designed to collect data regarding the perceptions of Nebraska K-12 public school superintendents regarding the performance evaluation of superintendents serving K-12 public school districts in Nebraska. An investigation of superintendents' perceptions of the purposes, criteria, and practices of the formal evaluation process was conducted. The population for this study consisted of the 238 individual K-12 public school districts that are served by 229 superintendents.

Response Rates

Of the 238 surveys distributed, 217 were returned for a response rate of 91.2%. Four of the returned surveys were completed incorrectly and therefore were considered invalid, resulting in data from 213 surveys used in the analyses (89.5% usable response rate). A total of 204 surveys contained responses regarding the purpose and practices for the formal performance evaluation of the superintendent because nine respondents reported that the board of education does not formally evaluate the superintendent.

Demographic Data

The completed surveys were divided into three equal groups based on the reported student enrollment of the K-12 districts. Each group was categorized as small, medium, or large. The demographic data collected are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Information

Characteristics	Frequency	Percent
District Enrollment		
Group 1 (Small) 103-270 students	71	33.3
Group 2 (Medium) 271-525 students	72	33.8
Group 3 (Large) 526-46000 students	70	32.9
Total	213	100.0
Years of Superintendent Experience within District		
1-2 years	57	26.8
3-5 years	64	30.0
6 years or more	92	43.2
Total	213	100.0
Total Years of Superintendent Experience		
1-5 years	67	31.5
6-10 years	43	20.2
11 years or more	103	48.4
Total	213	100.0*

*Percentage equals more than 100.0 due to rounding

The 213 survey respondents were K-12 superintendents in Nebraska, the majority of whom (67.1%) work in school districts with fewer than 526 students. Respondents in the 71 (33.3%) smallest school districts (Group 1) reported district enrollments ranging

from 103 to 270 students. The school districts in Group 3 (Large) had a vast range of student enrollment, from 526 to 46,000 students. Respondents from Group 3 included 32 districts with a K-12 enrollment of 1,000 or more students. Of the respondents, 92 (43.2%) had served as superintendent in the same district for six years or longer, while 57 (26.8%) superintendents were in their current district for two years or less. Close to half of all respondents (48.4%) reported total superintendent experience at 11 years or more, while 67 (31.5%) respondents indicated five years or less of experience as a superintendent.

Research Findings

Purpose of Performance Evaluation

Research Question 1 addressed the purpose of performance evaluation of Nebraska public school superintendents. Respondents rated their perception of the importance of each purpose statement using a five-point Likert-type scale (*1 = not important at all; 5 = very important*). Table 2 presents the response to this research question which was generated using descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations. In general, the 204 superintendents perceived all items regarding the purpose of performance evaluation to be of some importance. Nebraska superintendents perceived the most important purposes of performance evaluation as informing the superintendent of the board's expectations ($M = 4.39$), providing accountability ($M = 4.25$), improving communication between the board and superintendent ($M = 4.23$), and improving board-superintendent relations ($M = 4.08$). Guiding the professional development of the

superintendent ($M = 3.25$) was perceived as the least important purpose of performance evaluation.

Table 2

Purpose of Performance Evaluation

Purpose	M ($n=204$)	SD
To inform the superintendent of the board's expectations	4.39	0.83
To provide accountability	4.25	0.87
To improve communication between the board and superintendent	4.23	0.92
To improve board-superintendent relations	4.08	1.01
To establish performance goals	3.94	1.03
To provide a basis for renewal of the superintendent's contract	3.94	1.06
To improve the educational performance of the district	3.88	1.08
To comply with policy/contractual requirement	3.88	1.05
To clarify the roles of superintendent and board members	3.77	1.17
To guide the professional development of the superintendent	3.25	1.15

Differences in the Purpose of Performance Evaluation

Research Question 2 examined differences in the perceptions of superintendents regarding the purpose of the performance evaluation of Nebraska public school superintendents based on school district enrollment, years as a superintendent within the

school district, and total years of experience as a superintendent. Analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted to determine if a significant difference existed based on school size groupings and superintendent experience.

When comparing by district enrollment size of the respondents in each of the purpose statement categories, a significant difference was found in two areas: professional development, $F(2, 201) = 4.223, p = .016$, and policy/contractual requirement $F(2, 201) = 4.643, p = .011$. Results of the post-hoc test (Tukey's HSD) show that superintendents of small school districts ($M = 3.49$) reported a significantly higher level of perceived importance for conducting professional development as a purpose of the performance evaluation than did superintendents of large school districts ($M = 2.94$). Policy/contractual requirement was perceived as a significantly more important purpose of performance evaluation by superintendents in small school districts ($M = 4.16$) than by superintendents in large school districts ($M = 3.61$). There were no other significant differences found regarding the purpose of performance evaluation based on district enrollment (Table 3). In addition, no significant differences were found regarding the purpose of performance evaluation based on years of experience as superintendent within the district and total years of superintendent experience.

Table 3

Differences Regarding the Purpose of Performance Evaluation Based on District Enrollment

Purpose	<i>M</i>			<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
	Small (n=63)	Medium (n=72)	Large (n=69)		
Improve board-superintendent relations	4.06	4.01	4.17	0.456	.634
Communication between the board and superintendent	4.24	4.21	4.25	0.033	.967
Clarify roles	3.78	3.78	3.77	0.002	.998
Inform superintendent of expectations	4.38	4.38	4.41	0.027	.974
Provide accountability	4.22	4.21	4.32	0.327	.721
Improve educational performance	3.71	3.90	4.00	1.179	.310
Establish performance goals	3.83	3.92	4.07	0.979	.377
Professional development	3.49 (L)	3.33	2.94 (S)	4.223	.016*
Policy/contractual requirement	4.16 (L)	3.89	3.61 (S)	4.643	.011*
Basis for contract renewal	3.94	3.96	3.91	0.032	.968

*Indicates significant difference at the .05 level. Letters in parentheses indicate those groups indicating a significant difference.

Performance Evaluation Criteria - AASA Professional Standards

Research Question 3 addressed the extent to which the American Association of School Administrator's eight professional standards were utilized by the board of

education as criteria to measure the performance of Nebraska public school superintendents. Using a five-point Likert-type scale (*1 = never used at all; 5 = used all the time*), respondents rated their perception of the extent to which each AASA standard was utilized as a criterion in the superintendent's most recent evaluation. Table 4 presents the response to this research question which was generated using descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations.

In general, the 204 superintendents perceived all items regarding the AASA professional standards as being utilized in the performance evaluation. Nine superintendents (out of 213) did not respond to this survey item because their respective boards of education did not formally evaluate superintendent performance. The AASA professional standards perceived by Nebraska superintendents as being utilized the most often in the performance evaluation were communications and community relations ($M = 4.35$), values and ethics of leadership ($M = 4.14$), organizational management ($M = 4.11$), human resources management ($M = 4.07$), and leadership and district culture ($M = 4.02$). Instructional management ($M = 3.53$) and curriculum planning and development ($M = 3.44$) were perceived as being utilized less often in the performance evaluation.

Table 4

AASA Professional Standards Utilized in Performance Evaluation

Standard	<i>M</i> (<i>n</i> =204)	<i>SD</i>
Communications and Community Relations	4.35	0.88
Values and Ethics of Leadership	4.14	1.01
Organizational Management	4.11	1.01
Human Resources Management	4.07	0.96
Leadership and District Culture	4.02	0.99
Policy and Governance	3.86	0.98
Instructional Management	3.53	1.02
Curriculum Planning and Development	3.44	1.02

Differences Regarding Utilization of AASA Professional Standards for Performance Evaluation

Research Question 4 examined differences in the perceptions of superintendents regarding the extent of utilization of the American Association of School Administrator's eight professional standards by the board of education to measure the performance of Nebraska public school superintendents based on school district enrollment, years as a superintendent within the school district, and total years of experience as a

superintendent. ANOVAs were conducted to determine if a significant difference existed based on school size groupings and superintendent experience.

When comparing by district enrollment size of the respondents in each of the AASA professional standards categories, a significant difference was found in four areas: leadership and district culture, $F(2, 201) = 4.632, p = .011$, policy and governance $F(2, 201) = 3.245, p = .041$, communications and community relations $F(2, 201) = 4.017, p = .019$, and human resources management $F(2, 201) = 5.281, p = .006$. Results of the post-hoc test (Tukey's HSD) show that superintendents of large school districts ($M = 4.26$) reported a significantly higher level of perceived utilization of leadership and district culture as a criterion of the performance evaluation than did superintendents of small school districts ($M = 3.75$). The AASA professional standard policy and governance was perceived by superintendents in medium size school districts ($M = 4.04$) as utilized significantly more often as a criterion in the performance evaluation than by superintendents in small school districts ($M = 3.62$). The AASA professional standard communications and community relations was perceived by superintendents in large school districts ($M = 4.54$) as utilized significantly more often as a criterion in the performance evaluation than by superintendents in small school districts ($M = 4.11$). The AASA professional standard human resources management was perceived by superintendents in large school districts ($M = 4.28$) and medium school districts ($M = 4.15$) as utilized significantly more often as a criterion in the performance evaluation than by superintendents in small school districts ($M = 3.76$).

There were no other significant differences found regarding the utilization of AASA professional standards for performance evaluation based on district enrollment (Table 5). In addition, no significant differences were found for the utilization of AASA professional standards for performance evaluation based on years of experience as superintendent within the district.

Table 5

Differences Regarding Utilization of AASA Professional Standards for Performance Evaluation Based on District Enrollment

Standard	<i>M</i>			<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
	Small (<i>n</i> =63)	Medium (<i>n</i> =72)	Large (<i>n</i> =69)		
Leadership and District Culture	3.75 (L)	4.04	4.26 (S)	4.632	.011*
Policy and Governance	3.62 (M)	4.04 (S)	3.90	3.245	.041*
Communications and Community Relations	4.11 (L)	4.39	4.54 (S)	4.017	.019*
Organizational Management	3.95	4.22	4.13	1.225	.296
Curriculum Planning and Development	3.22	3.60	3.48	2.382	.095
Instructional Management	3.29	3.65	3.62	2.664	.072
Human Resources Management	3.76 (M)(L)	4.15 (S)	4.28 (S)	5.281	.006*
Values and Ethics of Leadership	3.97	4.22	4.22	1.344	.263

*Indicates significant difference at the .05 level. Letters in parentheses indicate those groups indicating a significant difference.

When comparing by total years of superintendent experience of the respondents in each of the AASA professional standards categories, a significant difference was found in the area of human resources management, $F(2, 201) = 3.508, p = .032$. Results of the post-hoc test (Tukey's HSD) show that superintendents with 11 years or more of experience ($M = 4.24$) reported a significantly higher level of perceived utilization of the AASA professional standard human resources management as a criterion for the performance evaluation than did superintendents with five years or less of total experience ($M = 3.85$). There were no other significant differences found regarding the utilization of AASA professional standards for performance evaluation based on total years of superintendent experience (Table 6).

Table 6

*Differences Regarding Utilization of AASA Professional Standards for Performance
Evaluation Based on Total Years of Superintendent Experience*

Standard	<i>M</i>			<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
	1-5 (<i>n</i> =65)	6-10 (<i>n</i> =41)	≥ 11 (<i>n</i> =98)		
Leadership and District Culture	3.85	4.20	4.07	1.788	.170
Policy and Governance	3.82	3.88	3.89	0.111	.895
Communications and Community Relations	4.25	4.34	4.43	0.835	.435
Organizational Management	4.02	3.98	4.22	1.277	.281
Curriculum Planning and Development	3.43	3.41	3.46	0.032	.968
Instructional Management	3.46	3.59	3.55	0.226	.798
Human Resources Management	3.85 (L)	4.02	4.24 (S)	3.508	.032*
Values and Ethics of Leadership	4.05	4.10	4.22	0.651	.522

*Indicates significant difference at the .05 level. Letters in parentheses indicate those groups indicating a significant difference.

Frequency of Formal Evaluation

Research Question 5 examined the frequency with which Nebraska public school superintendents are formally evaluated. Participants were asked on the survey instrument to select a response that indicates how frequently the board of education formally evaluates superintendent performance. The frequency and percentage of responses are

presented in Table 7. Of the 203 responses, 172 (84.7%) superintendents reported a formal evaluation conducted by the board of education once per year.

Table 7

Frequency of Formal Evaluation

Characteristic	Frequency	Valid Percent
Twice per Year	31	15.3
Once per Year	172	84.7
Total	203	100.0

Relationships between Frequency of Evaluation and Superintendent Characteristics

Research Question 6 examined the relationships that exist between the frequency with which Nebraska public school superintendents are formally evaluated and school district enrollment, years as a superintendent within the school district, and total years of experience as a superintendent. Table 8 displays results of the chi-square analyses which were conducted to determine if significant relationships existed.

Table 8

Relationship between Frequency of Evaluation and Superintendent Characteristics

Characteristic	<i>n</i>	<i>X</i> ²	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
School District Enrollment	203	2.703	2	0.259
Superintendent Experience within District	203	22.425	2	0.000*
Superintendent Total Experience	203	11.407	2	0.003*

*Indicates significant relationship at the .05 level.

The data analysis indicates a significant relationship existed between the frequency with which superintendents are formally evaluated and years of experience as a superintendent. There was no significant relationship between frequency of superintendent evaluation and school district enrollment.

The data presented in Table 9 show the results of the chi-square analyses for years of superintendent experience within the district. The higher than expected response totals for respondents having two years experience or less as superintendent within the district and evaluated twice per year were the greatest contributors to the overall significant chi-square value. The lower than expected response totals for respondents having six or more years experience within the district as superintendent and evaluated twice per year also were major contributors to the overall significant chi-square value. In addition, the lower than expected response totals for respondents having two years experience or less as superintendent within the district and evaluated once per year contributed to the overall significant chi-square value.

Table 9

Relationship between Frequency of Evaluation and Years of Superintendent Experience within the District

Years of Experience		Frequency of Evaluation		
1-2 Years	Count	=	19.0	Twice per year
	Expected	=	8.4	
	Std. Residual	=	3.7	
3-5 Years	Count	=	7.0	Twice per year
	Expected	=	9.6	
	Std. Residual	=	-0.8	
6 Years or more	Count	=	5.0	Twice per year
	Expected	=	13.0	
	Std. Residual	=	-2.2	
1-2 Years	Count	=	36.0	Once per year
	Expected	=	46.6	
	Std. Residual	=	-1.6	
3-5 Years	Count	=	56.0	Once per year
	Expected	=	53.4	
	Std. Residual	=	0.4	
6 Years or more	Count	=	80.0	Once per year
	Expected	=	72.0	
	Std. Residual	=	0.9	

Note. $n = 203$

The data presented in Table 10 shows the results of the chi-square analyses for total years of superintendent experience. The higher than expected response totals for respondents having five years or less total experience as superintendent and evaluated twice per year were the greatest contributors to the overall significant chi-square value.

The lower than expected response totals for respondents having 11 or more total years of experience as superintendent and evaluated twice per year also were major contributors to the overall significant chi-square value. In addition, the lower than expected response totals for respondents having five years or less total experience as superintendent and evaluated once per year contributed to the overall significant chi-square value.

Table 10

Relationship between Frequency of Evaluation and Total Years of Superintendent Experience

Years of Experience		Frequency of Evaluation	
1-5 Years	Count	=	18.0
	Expected	=	9.9
	Std. Residual	=	2.6
6-10 Years	Count	=	4.0
	Expected	=	6.3
	Std. Residual	=	-0.9
11 Years or more	Count	=	9.0
	Expected	=	14.8
	Std. Residual	=	-1.5
1-5 Years	Count	=	47.0
	Expected	=	55.1
	Std. Residual	=	-1.1
6-10 Years	Count	=	37.0
	Expected	=	34.7
	Std. Residual	=	0.4
11 Years or more	Count	=	80.0
	Expected	=	82.2
	Std. Residual	=	0.6

Note. $n = 203$

Evaluation Practices

Research Question 7 examined the extent checklists/rating scales and written comments were utilized in the formal performance appraisal of Nebraska public school superintendents. Participants were asked on the survey instrument to select a response (*yes* or *no*) to specific statements regarding formal evaluation practices. The frequency and percentage of responses related to the extent with which checklists/rating scales and written comments were utilized is reported in Table 11. Of 204 respondents, only 71 (34.8%) had an evaluation instrument with a checklist, but 158 (77.5%) superintendents reported a rating scale was used. Nearly all (96.6%) superintendents reported their board provided verbal and/or written feedback, and 96.1% had narrative comments on the evaluation instrument. Respondents (89.7%) reported that the board provided feedback collectively, but only 52.0% of the boards attempted to reach consensus on each item.

Table 11

Frequency of Formal Evaluation Practices

Formal Evaluation Practices	Frequency (yes)	Valid Percent
Instrument includes checklist	71	34.8
Instrument includes rating scale	158	77.5
Instrument includes narrative comments	196	96.1
Board attempts to reach consensus on each evaluation item	106	52.0
Board provides verbal and/or written feedback	197	96.6
Feedback from board is compiled and presented collectively	183	89.7

Note. $n = 204$

Relationships between Evaluation Practices and Superintendent Characteristics

Research Question 8 examined the relationships that existed between the frequency with which checklists/rating scales and written comments are utilized in the performance appraisal and school district enrollment, years as a superintendent within the school district, and total years of experience as a superintendent. Table 12 displays the chi-square analyses which were conducted to determine if significant relationships exist.

The data analysis indicates a significant relationship existed between the practice of utilizing a checklist on the formal evaluation instrument and total years of experience as a superintendent. There were no other significant relationships between the frequency

with which checklists/rating scales and written comments are utilized in the performance appraisal and superintendent characteristics.

The data presented in Table 13 show the results of the chi-square analyses for total years of superintendent experience. The higher than expected response totals for respondents having five years or less total experience as superintendent and the practice of utilizing a checklist on the formal evaluation instrument were the greatest contributors to the overall significant chi-square value. The lower than expected response totals for respondents having six to 10 total years of experience as superintendent and the practice of utilizing a checklist on the formal evaluation instrument also were contributors to the overall significant chi-square value.

Table 12

Relationship between Evaluation Practices and Superintendent Characteristics

Characteristic	<i>n</i>	<i>X</i> ²	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
School District Population				
Checklist	204	0.897	2	0.638
Rating Scale	204	1.076	2	0.584
Narrative Comments	204	5.523	2	0.063
Board attempts to reach consensus	204	0.479	2	0.787
Board provides verbal and/or written feedback	204	4.146	2	0.126
Feedback compiled and presented collectively	204	2.650	2	0.266
Years of Experience Within District				
Checklist	204	5.160	2	0.076
Rating Scale	204	2.118	2	0.347
Narrative Comments	204	0.173	2	0.917
Board attempts to reach consensus	204	0.768	2	0.681
Board provides verbal and/or written feedback	204	0.020	2	0.990
Feedback compiled and presented collectively	204	0.572	2	0.751
Total Years of Experience				
Checklist	204	6.875	2	0.032*
Rating Scale	204	0.913	2	0.634
Narrative Comments	204	0.375	2	0.829
Board attempts to reach consensus	204	0.943	2	0.624
Board provides verbal and/or written feedback	204	1.087	2	0.581
Feedback compiled and presented collectively	204	0.729	2	0.695

*Indicates significant relationship at the .05 level.

Table 13

Relationship between Frequency of Checklists on the Evaluation Instrument and Total Years of Superintendent Experience

Years of Experience			Checklist Used
1-5 Years	Count	= 30.0	Yes
	Expected	= 22.6	
	Std. Residual	= 1.6	
6-10 Years	Count	= 9.0	Yes
	Expected	= 14.3	
	Std. Residual	= -1.4	
11 Years or more	Count	= 32.0	Yes
	Expected	= 34.1	
	Std. Residual	= -0.4	
1-5 Years	Count	= 35.0	No
	Expected	= 42.4	
	Std. Residual	= -1.1	
6-10 Years	Count	= 32.0	No
	Expected	= 26.7	
	Std. Residual	= 1.0	
11 Years or more	Count	= 66.0	No
	Expected	= 63.9	
	Std. Residual	= 0.3	

Note. $n = 204$

Job Descriptions

Research Question 9 examined the extent job descriptions were utilized in the formal performance appraisal of Nebraska public school superintendents. The frequency and percentage of responses related to the extent job descriptions are utilized are reported in Table 14. Participants were asked on the survey instrument to select a response (*yes* or

no) to indicate the existence of a written job description for the superintendent and whether participants were evaluated against its criteria. Of 213 respondents, 198 (93.0%) had a written job description. Of the 204 superintendents that had a formal evaluation, 134 (65.7%) reported that they were evaluated against the criteria of the written job description.

Table 14

Job Description

Characteristic	Frequency	Valid Percent
Superintendent has a written job description		
Yes	198	93.0
No	15	7.0
Total	213	100.0
Formal evaluation against job description criteria		
Yes	134	65.7
No	70	34.3
Total	204	100.0

Research Question 10 examined the relationships that existed between the frequency with which job descriptions were utilized in the performance appraisal and school district enrollment, years as a superintendent within the school district, and total years of experience as a superintendent. Table 15 displays the chi-square analyses which were conducted to determine if significant relationships existed. The data analyses indicated there were no significant relationships between the frequency with which job descriptions are utilized in the performance appraisal and superintendent characteristics.

Table 15

Relationship between Frequency of Evaluation Against Job Description Criteria and Superintendent Characteristics

Characteristic	<i>n</i>	X^2	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
School District Enrollment	204	5.646	2	0.059
Superintendent Experience within District	204	1.138	2	0.566
Superintendent Total Experience	204	2.281	2	0.320

*Indicates significant relationship at the .05 level.

Input into the Formal Evaluation

Research Question 11 examined the extent to which input gathered from the board of education, superintendent, school staff, and community in the formal evaluation of Nebraska public school superintendents. The frequency and percentage of responses

related to the extent input is gathered from the board of education, superintendent, school staff, and community are reported in Table 16. Participants were asked on the survey instrument to select a response to indicate the stakeholders that have input into the formal evaluation of the superintendent. The groups most frequently reported as having input into the performance appraisal were the board of education (98.5%) and superintendent (24.5%), while community members (3.4%) were reported with the least frequency.

Table 16

Frequency of Stakeholder Input into the Formal Performance Appraisal

Stakeholder Group	Frequency (yes)	Valid Percent
Entire Board of Education	201	98.5
Superintendent	50	24.5
Board of Education President	46	22.5
Central Office Personnel	15	7.0
Principal(s)	15	7.0
Certified Staff	13	6.4
Classified Staff	9	4.4
Community Members	7	3.4

Note. $n = 204$

Research Question 12 examined the relationships that existed between the frequency with which input from stakeholders (board of education, superintendent, school staff, and community) were utilized in the performance appraisal and school district enrollment, years as a superintendent within the school district, and total years of experience as a superintendent. Table 17 displays the chi-square analyses which were conducted to determine if significant relationships existed. The data analyses indicated there were no significant relationships between the frequency with which input from stakeholders (board of education, superintendent, school staff, and community) were utilized in the performance appraisal and superintendent characteristics.

Table 17

Relationship between Frequency of Stakeholder Input into the Performance Appraisal and Superintendent Characteristics

Characteristic	<i>n</i>	X^2	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
School District Population				
Board President	204	3.384	2	0.184
Entire Board	204	5.582	2	0.061
Superintendent	204	3.666	2	0.160
Central Office Personnel	204	2.380	2	0.304
Principal	204	2.380	2	0.304
Certified Staff	204	3.432	2	0.180
Classified Staff	204	2.686	2	0.261
Community Members	204	5.583	2	0.061
Years of Experience Within District				
Board President	204	0.084	2	0.959
Entire Board	204	3.070	2	0.215
Superintendent	204	0.856	2	0.652
Central Office Personnel	204	0.050	2	0.975
Principal	204	1.601	2	0.449
Certified Staff	204	0.401	2	0.818
Classified Staff	204	0.382	2	0.826
Community Members	204	1.009	2	0.604
Total Years of Experience				
Board President	204	1.554	2	0.460
Entire Board	204	5.580	2	0.060
Superintendent	204	0.701	2	0.704
Central Office Personnel	204	2.760	2	0.252
Principal	204	0.711	2	0.701
Certified Staff	204	1.017	2	0.602
Classified Staff	204	3.900	2	0.142
Community Members	204	0.272	2	0.873

*Indicates significant relationship at the .05 level.

Research Question 13 addressed the extent to which superintendents were satisfied with the criteria and practices utilized in the formal evaluation of Nebraska public school superintendents. Using a four-point Likert-type scale (*1 = not satisfied; 4 = very satisfied*), respondents rated their perception of satisfaction with the criteria and practices in the superintendent's most recent evaluation. Table 18 presents the response to this research question which was generated using descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations. In general, the 204 superintendents reported a perceived level of satisfaction with both the criteria ($M = 3.10$) and practices ($M = 3.00$) utilized in the most recent formal evaluation of Nebraska public school superintendents.

Table 18

Superintendent Satisfaction with Criteria and Practices of Performance Evaluation

Characteristic	<i>M</i> (<i>n</i> =204)	<i>SD</i>
Satisfied with Criteria	3.10	0.84
Satisfied with Practices	3.00	0.90

Research Question 14 examined differences in the perceptions of superintendents regarding the extent with which superintendents are satisfied with criteria and practices utilized in the performance appraisal based on school district enrollment, years as a

superintendent within the school district, and total years of experience as a superintendent. ANOVAs were conducted to determine if significant differences existed based on school size groupings and superintendent experience. There were no significant differences found when comparing by school size groupings and superintendent experience regarding the extent with which superintendents are satisfied with criteria and practices utilized in the performance appraisal.

CHAPTER 5

Summary, Conclusions, Discussion, and Recommendations

This section of Chapter 5 provides an overview of the study that states the purpose of the study and the research questions that guided the study, provides a brief appraisal of the literature related to this study, reiterates the methods used to gather data, and reviews the findings of the study. The summary is followed by conclusions, discussion, and recommendations from the research and for further study.

Summary

Purpose

The purpose of the study was to determine the perceptions of Nebraska K-12 public school superintendents regarding the performance evaluation of superintendents serving K-12 public school districts in Nebraska. An investigation of superintendents' perceptions of the purposes, criteria, and practices of the formal evaluation process was conducted. Comparisons of the superintendents' perceptions were made based on the following characteristics: school district enrollment, years as a superintendent within the school district, and total years of experience as a superintendent. Specifically, the following research questions guided this study:

1. What is the purpose of performance evaluation of Nebraska public school superintendents as perceived by Nebraska public school superintendents?
2. What differences are there in the perceptions of superintendents regarding the purpose of the performance evaluation of Nebraska public school superintendents based

on school district enrollment, years as a superintendent within the school district, and total years of experience as a superintendent?

3. In the most recent evaluation of the superintendent, to what extent were the American Association of School Administrator's eight professional standards utilized by the board of education to measure the performance of Nebraska public school superintendents?

4. What differences are there in the perceptions of superintendents regarding the extent of utilization of the American Association of School Administrator's eight professional standards by the board of education to measure the performance of Nebraska public school superintendents based on school district enrollment, years as a superintendent within the school district, and total years of experience as a superintendent?

5. How frequently are Nebraska public school superintendents formally evaluated as reported by Nebraska superintendents?

6. What relationships exist between the frequency with which Nebraska public school superintendents are formally evaluated and school district enrollment, years as a superintendent within the school district, and total years of experience as a superintendent?

7. To what extent are checklists/rating scales and written comments utilized in the performance appraisal during the formal evaluation of Nebraska public school superintendents?

8. What relationships exist between the frequency with which checklists/rating scales and written comments are utilized in the performance appraisal and school district enrollment, years as a superintendent within the school district, and total years of experience as a superintendent?

9. To what extent are job descriptions utilized in the performance appraisal during the formal evaluation of Nebraska public school superintendents,?

10. What relationships exist between the frequency with which job descriptions are utilized in the performance appraisal and school district enrollment, years as a superintendent within the school district, and total years of experience as a superintendent?

11. To what extent is input gathered from the board of education, superintendent, school staff, and community in the formal evaluation of Nebraska public school superintendents?

12. What relationships exist between the frequency with which input from stakeholders (board of education, superintendent, school staff, and community) is utilized in the performance appraisal and school district enrollment, years as a superintendent within the school district, and total years of experience as a superintendent?

13. To what extent are superintendents satisfied with the criteria and practices utilized in the formal evaluation of Nebraska public school superintendents?

14. What differences are there in the perceptions of superintendents regarding the extent to which superintendents are satisfied with criteria and practices utilized in the

performance appraisal based on school district enrollment, years as a superintendent within the school district, and total years of experience as a superintendent?

The results of this study provide information to the field of educational administration regarding the evaluation of public school superintendents in the state of Nebraska. The information may be useful for superintendents, school boards members, and prospective superintendents to learn the purpose, criteria, and practices for the performance evaluation of Nebraska public school superintendents. The results may be relevant to certain groups, such as the Nebraska Association of School Boards, and administrator preparation programs.

Review of Related Literature and Research

The review of literature was related to the evaluation of public school superintendents. The literature review was organized into the following sections: background information, purposes for evaluating the superintendent, selected criteria to measure the performance of the public school superintendent, and practices for the evaluation of the superintendent.

The results of the literature review indicated that the school board-superintendent relationship plays a vital role in the success of the school district. The performance evaluation is a means for the board of education to communicate expectations and responsibilities to the superintendent (Hoyle & Skrla, 1999; Sharp & Walter, 2004) and hold the district's top administrator accountable (Braddom, 1986; Candoli, 1994; Christensen, 2000; Cullen, 1995; Dillon & Halliwell, 1991; DiPaola & Stronge, 2001; DiPaola & Stronge, 2003; Houston & Eadie, 2002; Kowalski, 1998; Norton *et al.*, 1996;

Sharp *et al.*, 2003). Other purposes for evaluating the superintendent provided in the literature include improving the educational performance of the district, improving board-superintendent relationships, clarifying roles of the superintendent and board, strategic planning and performance goals, and making personnel decisions (Candoli, Cullen, & Stufflebeam, 1994).

Building a strong relationship with the board requires the superintendent to know what the board expects (Konnert & Augenstein, 1990). The American Association of School Administrators professional standards were presented in the literature as criteria that should be used as a framework to measure superintendent performance. The literature review also suggested district goals and the superintendent job description should be reflected in the evaluation. Regardless of the criteria utilized for superintendent evaluation, the board of education needs to have a common understanding of what each criterion means and what purpose it serves in the overall evaluation (Sharp, Malone, & Walter, 2003).

The review of literature provided information regarding practices for the evaluation of the superintendent. A regular formal review of superintendent performance is typically conducted by the board of education with limited input from other district stakeholders (Christensen, 2000; Edington & Enger, 1992; Glass, 1992). The evaluation instrument often includes checklists, rating scales, and written comments (Robinson & Bickers, 1990). The feedback provided by the board of education is the basis for conversations with the superintendent regarding established performance criteria. The

evaluation allows the board to summarize their findings and reach conclusions about the superintendent's performance.

Methodology

The population for this study consisted of the 238 individual K-12 public school districts that were served by 229 superintendents. The survey instrument was developed by the researcher through a review of literature related to the purposes, criteria, and practices regarding the performance evaluation process for public school superintendents. Respondents were asked on the survey instrument to identify the student enrollment of their district and years of superintendent experience. Respondents were requested to rate, using a five-point scaled response, both the degree of importance of the purposes for conducting the evaluation of the superintendent and the extent that the American Association of School Administrators' eight professional standards are utilized by the board of education as criteria to measure superintendent performance. Respondents also rated, using a four-point scaled response, the level of satisfaction with the evaluation criteria and practices currently used in their district. Additional items asked respondents to identify the superintendent evaluation practices in their district. Responses to all survey items are based upon the respondents' perceptions of their most recent evaluation.

The completed surveys were divided into three equal groups based on respondent's identification of the district's K-12 student enrollment. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used to analyze the data. Responses to survey items were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics including means and standard deviations were computed and reported for the

purposes of performance evaluation, the utilization of the AASA professional standards in the performance evaluation, and the extent superintendents are satisfied with the criteria and practices utilized in the performance appraisal.

Further analyses of the data used analyses of variance (ANOVAs) to obtain information about differences in the perceptions of superintendents regarding purposes of performance evaluation, the utilization of the AASA professional standards in the performance evaluation, and the extent superintendents are satisfied with the criteria and practices utilized in the performance appraisal. Differences for each item were examined based on the following characteristics: school district enrollment, years as a superintendent within the school district, and total years of experience as a superintendent. All significant ANOVAs were followed by Tukey's Honestly Significant Difference (HSD) test to identify the source of those differences.

The frequency and percentage of responses were calculated and reported for the formal superintendent evaluation regarding the extent with which the following items were utilized in the performance appraisal: checklists/rating scales and written comments; job descriptions; and input gathered from district stakeholders. For each item which frequencies and percentages were collected, a chi-square analysis was conducted and reported to determine if significant relationships exist between each item examined and school district enrollment, years as a superintendent within the school district, and total years of experience as a superintendent.

Findings

Based upon the statistical analyses, the following research findings were noted:

1. Of the 213 survey respondents, the majority (67.1%) worked in school districts with fewer than 526 students. Nebraska superintendents serving in the same district for six years or longer totaled 92 (43.2%), while 57 (26.8%) were in their current district for two years or less. Nearly half of all respondents (48.4%) reported total superintendent experience at 11 years or more, while 67 (31.5%) respondents indicated five years or less of experience as a superintendent.

2. Nebraska superintendents perceived the most important purposes of performance evaluation as informing the superintendent of the board's expectations ($M = 4.39$), providing accountability ($M = 4.25$), improving communication between the board and superintendent ($M = 4.23$), and improving board-superintendent relations ($M = 4.08$).

3. Superintendents of small school districts perceived professional development ($M = 3.49$) and policy/contractual requirements ($M = 4.16$) as significantly more important purposes of the performance evaluation than did superintendents of large school districts.

4. The AASA professional standards perceived by Nebraska superintendents as being utilized the most often in the performance evaluation were communications and community relations ($M = 4.35$), values and ethics of leadership ($M = 4.14$), organizational management ($M = 4.11$), human resources management ($M = 4.07$), and leadership and district culture ($M = 4.02$).

5. Superintendents of large school districts perceived a significantly higher level of utilization for two AASA professional standards (leadership and district culture; communications and community relations) as criteria of the performance evaluation than

did superintendents of small school districts. Policy and governance was the AASA professional standard perceived by superintendents in medium size school districts as utilized significantly more often as a criterion in the performance evaluation than by superintendents in small school districts. The AASA professional standard human resources management was perceived by superintendents in large and medium size school districts as utilized significantly more often as a criterion in the performance evaluation than by superintendents in small school districts.

6. The AASA professional standard human resources management was perceived by respondents with 11 years or more of superintendent experience as utilized significantly more often as a criterion for the performance evaluation than superintendents with five years or less of total experience.

7. A majority of superintendents (172, 80.8%) reported a formal evaluation conducted annually by the board of education. A formal evaluation conducted twice per year was reported by 14.6% (31) superintendents. There were nine (4.2%) out of 213 survey respondents that reported the board of education did not conduct a formal performance evaluation of the superintendent.

8. A significant relationship existed between the frequency with which superintendents are formally evaluated and years of experience as a superintendent.

9. A majority of superintendents reported rating scales (89.7%) and checklists (77.5%) were used regularly on the evaluation instrument. Nearly all (96.6%) superintendents reported their board provided verbal and/or written feedback, and 96.1%

had narrative comments on the evaluation instrument, but only 52.0% of the boards attempted to reach consensus on each item.

10. A significant relationship existed between the practice of utilizing a checklist on the formal evaluation instrument and total years of experience as a superintendent.

11. Nebraska superintendents (93.0%) reported having a written job description but slightly less than two-thirds (65.7%) reported being formally evaluated against the job description criteria.

12. There were no significant relationships between the frequency with which job descriptions were utilized in the performance appraisal and superintendent characteristics.

13. The stakeholders that most frequently had input into the formal evaluation of the superintendent were the board of education (98.5%) and superintendent (24.5%).

14. There were no significant relationships between the frequency with which input from stakeholders were utilized in the performance appraisal and superintendent characteristics.

15. In general, superintendents reported a level of satisfaction with both the criteria ($M = 3.10$) and practices ($M = 3.00$) utilized in the most recent formal evaluation. There were no significant differences found when comparing by school size groupings and superintendent experience regarding the extent with which superintendents were satisfied with criteria and practices utilized in the performance appraisal.

Conclusions

The following conclusions emerged from the data analyses and findings of the study:

1. Most Nebraska superintendents have relatively little experience in their current district and only slightly more in the profession.
2. Regardless of the school district enrollment or superintendent experience, Nebraska superintendents believe the most important purposes of performance evaluation to be related to documenting accountability and communicating with their boards.
3. Boards of education in Nebraska regularly conduct a formal evaluation of the superintendent and the board is the only stakeholder group that consistently has formal input into the formal performance evaluation of superintendents.
4. The AASA professional standards are utilized in the performance evaluation of Nebraska superintendents, with standards related to communication and community relations examined most often.
5. Performance evaluation practices conducted by boards of education are similar in Nebraska regardless of the district enrollment or superintendent experience.
6. Nebraska superintendents are generally satisfied with the criteria and practices utilized in their most recent performance evaluation.
7. There is no clear agreement regarding the purpose, criteria, and practices for the performance evaluation of Nebraska public school superintendents.

Discussion

The findings and conclusion of this study support the emphasis placed upon the relationship between the board of education and the superintendent. The literature is replete with information concerning the importance of communication between the board and superintendent. Many superintendents in this study who indicated dissatisfaction with their evaluation criteria or practices wrote comments about a lack of understanding or communication with the board of education. Given the complex nature of the superintendent position and the reported relatively short tenure within the school district, it is not surprising that regardless of district enrollment, the responses to the survey instrument revealed that Nebraska superintendents perceive the purpose for performance evaluation as a means to inform the superintendent of the board's expectations, hold the superintendent accountable, and to serve as a communication tool to maintain a successful working relationship.

The findings of this study show that superintendents of small school districts had significantly different perceptions of importance for two purposes of the performance evaluation than superintendents of large school districts. Although the difference is significant, professional development is perceived as the least important purpose for each of the three population groups. While this significance could be due to many variables, the researcher believes that superintendents in larger school districts are more likely to have professional development expectations specified within their contract, thus reducing the need to address the issue in the evaluation. Small school superintendents may view policy/contractual agreement as a significantly more important purpose of evaluation

because smaller districts, in general, tend to have less experienced school board members. For this reason, in the researcher's opinion, the smaller district's board of education tend to not fully understand the potential benefit of the evaluation process and conducts the evaluation because it is a requirement.

Since communication was perceived as an important purpose of evaluation, it is not surprising that communication and community relations was perceived by superintendents in this study as the most often used AASA standard in their evaluation. Statistical significance was found in four of the AASA professional standards for performance evaluation based on district enrollment. As the size of the school district increases, so does the amount of time superintendents focus on leadership activities, developing a district culture, and communicating with various groups both inside and outside of the school community. Larger districts have more administrators or central office personnel to carry out tasks while most small school superintendents have multiple administrative roles to perform, often carrying out daily management functions such as serving as a principal or special education director. These reasons could also explain the differences perceived by superintendents reported for human resources management and the significant difference when comparing by total years of superintendent experience. Superintendents with 11 years or more total experience are more likely to be in larger districts, typically because smaller districts are used as a "stepping stone." Superintendents of medium size school districts perceived policy and governance as being utilized significantly more often as a criterion in the performance evaluation than did superintendents in small school districts. Due to the size of the district, governance

may be conducted more formally in medium sized districts because they may have more comprehensive policies in place that are more frequently applied in a given situation.

More than 95% of survey respondents are formally evaluated each year. The high occurrence of superintendent evaluation corresponds with previous studies conducted, including the national AASA survey (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000), South Dakota (Christensen, 2000), and Nebraska (Johnson, 1988). Nebraska law requires superintendents new to a district to be evaluated twice in their first year and annually each subsequent year. This is a probable explanation for the existence of the significant relationship found in this study between the frequency with which superintendents are evaluated and years of experience as superintendent.

The responses to the survey instrument indicate that Nebraska performance evaluation practices are similar to superintendent evaluations nationwide, regardless of district characteristics. This may be attributed to the success of national organizations for school boards, school administrators, and their local affiliates, such as NASB and AASA. A composite evaluation is used by board members as the starting point for discussion with the superintendent regarding performance (Edington & Enger, 1992). Glass *et al.* (2000) reported that 90% of superintendent respondents had written job descriptions in 1992 but only 50% were evaluated against its criteria. Similar results were reported in this study. The superintendent job description may be placed in board policy without determining if the criteria match local district expectations (Glass *et al.*, 2000). Johnson's (1988) conclusion "the use of people other than the board of education in the evaluation of the school's chief executive was not accepted practice" (p. 131) still holds true in

Nebraska today. The superintendent evaluation should summarize the board's findings and allow conclusions about the superintendent's performance to be reached. This study reported that nearly all boards provided feedback, but only 52% attempted to reach consensus. If the evaluation process does not force board members to reach consensus, the feedback provided to the superintendent can be difficult to decipher.

The researcher believes there are several reasons why Nebraska superintendents are generally satisfied with the criteria and practices utilized in their performance evaluation. Many superintendents work with their board of education to develop a performance appraisal process and an evaluation instrument that reflects their respective situation. Another reason is the superintendent provides much of the information to the board that is used in the evaluation. In addition, board members who lack evaluation skills may be inclined to give the superintendent satisfactory ratings. Most superintendents are well qualified, dedicated professionals so regardless of the type of evaluation criteria or practices used, the results would be positive.

Recommendations for Practice

The following recommendations are made on the basis of the results of this study:

1. School boards should have a formal process in place to assess the performance of the superintendent. Specific consideration should be given to the purpose of the evaluation.

2. School boards should consider utilizing evaluation criteria based upon nationally recognized standards and competencies, such as the American Association of

School Administrator professional standards. A determination as to how the criteria will be assessed should be mutually agreed upon by the board and superintendent.

3. School boards should relate their superintendent evaluation instruments specifically to job descriptions that include clear job expectations for the position of superintendent. Job descriptions should be customized by the local board of education to reflect the duties and responsibilities of the superintendent.

4. The board of education should conduct a performance evaluation of the superintendent at least once per year.

5. Evaluation practices should allow board members to determine whether or not the superintendent has met district expectations. The board of education should reach a consensus regarding the superintendent's performance.

6. The board of education should provide the superintendent with specific feedback that may be used for the purpose of improvement.

7. Specific training should be provided to boards of education and superintendents in the area of improving the superintendent performance evaluation.

Recommendations for Further Study

The following recommendations for further research are suggested for consideration:

1. Since this study was conducted in the state of Nebraska, a study should be completed nationally to determine if the purpose, criteria, and practices for the superintendent performance evaluation are similar and consistent.

2. A study of Nebraska's K-12 public school board members should be conducted to determine if their perceptions of the purpose, criteria, and practices for the superintendent performance evaluation are similar.

3. Additional research with Nebraska superintendents should be conducted to obtain more detailed information to investigate the reasons why they are, or are not, satisfied with their district's performance evaluation criteria and practices.

4. A study should be completed nationally to determine if there are differences between urban and rural districts in the performance evaluation criteria and practices for public school superintendents.

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APPENDIX A
Survey Instrument

SUPERINTENDENT EVALUATION SURVEY

Instructions: Please read each of the following items and select a response that best reflects actual practice in your school district. Confidentiality of responses is assured to each participant.

1. What is the total student enrollment (K-12) in your school district?

(Please specify) _____

2. How many years experience as superintendent within your current district?

a. 1-2 b. 3-5 c. 6 or more

3. How many total years of superintendent experience?

a. 1-5 b. 6-10 c. 11 or more

4. The superintendent has a written job description.

a. Yes b. No

5. The board of education formally evaluates the performance of the superintendent.

a. Yes b. No

If no, proceed to item number 14.

6. How frequently does the board of education formally evaluate superintendent performance in your district?

a. More frequently than twice per year b. Twice per year
c. Once per year d. Every two years e. Less frequently than every two years

7. Use the following scale to indicate the degree of importance for each purpose statement as it relates to your own evaluation. Please circle the number for each statement that corresponds to your perception:

1 = NOT IMPORTANT AT ALL	4 = IMPORTANT
2 = NOT VERY IMPORTANT	5 = VERY IMPORTANT
3 = SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | A. To improve board-superintendent relations. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | B. To improve communication between the board and superintendent. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | C. To clarify the roles of superintendent and board members. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | D. To inform the superintendent of the board's expectations. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | E. To provide accountability. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | F. To improve the educational performance of the district. |

12. Answer each of the following statements regarding the most recent **formal** superintendent evaluation practices in your district:

- | | | |
|--|-----|----|
| a. Instrument includes a checklist. | Yes | No |
| b. Instrument includes a rating scale. | Yes | No |
| c. Instrument includes narrative comments. | Yes | No |
| d. The board attempts to reach consensus on each evaluation item. | Yes | No |
| e. Board provides either verbal and/or written feedback to the superintendent. | Yes | No |
| f. Feedback from all the board members is compiled and presented collectively to the superintendent. | Yes | No |
| g. Other _____ | | |

13. Concerning the most recent formal superintendent evaluation, rate your level of satisfaction with the following items:

a. Evaluation Criteria

1. Not satisfied 2. Somewhat Satisfied 3. Satisfied 4. Very Satisfied

b. Evaluation Practices

1. Not satisfied 2. Somewhat Satisfied 3. Satisfied 4. Very Satisfied

14. Please make any comments that may be helpful in describing the superintendent's evaluation in your school district.

APPENDIX B

Survey Instrument Critique Form

SURVEY CRITIQUE FORM**PERFORMANCE EVALUATION OF NEBRASKA'S K-12
PUBLIC SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS**

Please check one response for each of the following items:

1. I completed the survey in:
 Less than 10 minutes
 Ten to 15 minutes
 Sixteen to twenty minutes
 Over 20 minutes
2. I felt that the written instructions on the survey were:
 Very clear
 Clear but could have been more precise
 Unclear in areas
 Very unclear and difficult to follow
3. Please circle or highlight any questions on the survey that you feel were unclear.
4. Please mark any changes on the survey that would make these items more clear to the reader.
5. List the number or letter of any items on the survey that you feel should be omitted from the survey.

COMMENTS:

Thank you for your assistance in refining this survey instrument. The feedback you have provided will assist me to prepare the final survey instrument that will be sent to Nebraska public school superintendents.

Sincerely,

Bill Heimann

APPENDIX C

Purpose for Superintendent Evaluation Matrix

Purpose for Superintendent Evaluation - Matrix

	Improve educational performance	Improve communication between board and superintendent	Clarify roles of superintendent and board members	Improve board/ superintendent relations	Inform superintendent of board's expectations	Strategic planning and performance goals	Professional development	Accountability	Basis for personnel decisions	Legal requirements
Research Article										
Bippus, 1985				X	X	X				
Braddom, 1986	X							X	X	
Candoli <i>et al.</i> , 1994	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Candoli <i>et al.</i> , 1995			X		X	X	X	X		
Christensen, 2000	X			X	X	X		X	X	
Cullen, 1995	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Dillon & Halliwell, 1991	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	
DiPaola & Stronge, 2001		X			X	X	X	X		
DiPaola & Stronge, 2003	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Edington & Enger 1992	X		X		X	X			X	
Glass <i>et al.</i> , 2000	X			X	X	X		X	X	X
Houston & Eadie 2002	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Johnson, 1988	X								X	
Kowalski, 1998	X					X		X	X	
Norton <i>et al.</i> , 1996		X				X	X	X		
Robinson & Bickers 1990	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	
Sharp <i>et al.</i> , 2003	X		X			X		X		X

APPENDIX D

Criteria for Superintendent Evaluation Matrix

Criteria for Superintendent Evaluation - Matrix

	Job Description	AASA Professional Standards
Research Article		
AASA, 1993		x
AASA-NASB, 1994		x
Bippus, 1985	x	
Candoli <i>et al</i> , 1995	x	
Carter and Cunningham, 1997		x
DiPaola and Stronge, 2001	x	x
DiPaola and Stronge, 2003		x
Glasman and Fuller, 2002		x
Glass <i>et al.</i> , 2000	x	
Horler, 1996		x
Hoyle and Skrla, 1999	x	x
Hoyle <i>et al</i> , 2005		x
Johnson, 1988	x	
Kowalski, 1998	x	
Norton <i>et al.</i> , 1996	x	
Redfern, 1984	x	
Stufflebeam and Millman, 1995	x	

APPENDIX E

Practices for Superintendent Evaluation Matrix

Practices for Superintendent Evaluation - Matrix

	Frequency of Formal Evaluation	Individual or Groups that Provide Input	Evaluation Instrument		
			Checklist	Rating Scale	Written Comments
Research Article					
Bippus, 1985		x			
Braddom, 1986					x
Christensen, 2000	x	x	x	x	x
Cullen, 1995		x	x	x	
DiPaola and Stronge, 2001				x	
Eadie, 2003	x				
Edington and Enger, 1992	x	x	x	x	x
Glass, 1992	x	x	x	x	x
Glass, 2000	x	x	x	x	x
Johnson, 1988	x		x	x	x
Kowalski, 1998	x				
Robinson and Bickers 1990	x	x	x	x	x
Sharp <i>et al.</i> , 2003	x	x			

APPENDIX F

Survey Instrument Cover Letter

March 6, 2006

Dear Superintendent,

This letter is being sent to invite your participation in a doctoral study entitled "Performance Evaluation of Nebraska's K-12 Public School Superintendents." This research is being conducted as a partial requirement for the Doctor of Education degree at the University of South Dakota.

To successfully lead a school district, superintendents must be aware of the expectations placed upon them. A successful evaluation system will facilitate superintendent progress toward meeting school board expectations. It is important to determine the criteria and practices utilized to evaluate the leaders of Nebraska's public schools. It is my hope that the results of this survey will help superintendents and school boards employ an evaluation process that keeps the relationship between the board of education and superintendent vibrant so the district can address the needs of students and the district.

The information that you provide will become part of the data for identifying criteria and practices in evaluating Nebraska public school superintendents. The coding will be used only for the purpose of sending follow-up letters to non-responders, and all returned surveys will be destroyed after tabulation. Neither you nor your school district will be identified in connection with any specific reports or publications. Please take approximately ten minutes of your time to complete this survey. Return of the completed survey will serve as your informed consent.

Please return the survey in the self-addressed, postage-paid envelope by March 20, 2006. Should you have any questions about the survey, or if you would like a summary of the results of this study, please contact me at 402-287-2012, or via email at bheimann@usd.edu. If you have questions regarding your rights as a human subject, please contact the University of South Dakota Research Compliance Office at 605-677-6184.

Sincerely,

Bill Heimann
Doctoral Student

Enclosures

This study is being conducted under the direction of and with the approval of the student's doctoral committee at the University of South Dakota.

APPENDIX G
Follow-Up Letter

March 22, 2006

Dear Superintendent:

Approximately two weeks ago you received a survey entitled *Performance Evaluation of Nebraska's K-12 Public School Superintendents*. The survey was developed for the purpose of research that I am conducting for the Doctor of Education degree in Educational Administration.

For the study to be complete and to be representative of all Nebraska's public school districts, I need information from as many Nebraska public school superintendents as possible. Your responses to the items are completely confidential. The survey is numbered only for the purpose of determining who has or has not responded, and all returned surveys will be destroyed after tabulation.

Your participation would be greatly appreciated. A copy of the survey is enclosed for your convenience. If you have already completed the survey upon receipt of this mailing, thank you for your time. If you have questions regarding the survey, please contact me at 402-287-2012 or at bheimann@usd.edu. If you have questions regarding your rights as a human subject, please contact the University of South Dakota Research Compliance Office at 605-677-6184. Thank you for your attention to this research.

Sincerely,

Bill Heimann
Doctoral Student

Dr. Jay A. Heath, Advisor
Professor of Educational Administration

APPENDIX H

Superintendent Comments from Survey

Superintendent Comments from the Survey

- We have recently used a goal oriented instrument which has been very good.
- The board does a mid-year informal evaluation in which they look at specific items from the evaluation instrument to discuss or make points of emphasis. They developed their evaluation over several years by combining various other evaluation instruments into one.
- Though formal by board policy, sometimes board members have trouble being professional about superintendent evaluations and allow personal and unverified opinions to enter the process.
- Information is gathered from all board members by the board president. President presents all information to superintendent in executive session.
- Board members views tend to be influenced by a superintendent's visibility in the community or interpersonal skills. What goes on behind the scenes regarding personnel, finance, legal issues, etc. is not as noticeable.
- Strategic planning goals developed by the board are also part of the evaluation. They help provide direction and a way to prioritize what one does. Good to have as the board still wants you to "walk on water."
- I don't think my board members know what my job is and have not made a great effort to find out. I am the superintendent and K-12 principal so I am very busy.
- My board goes through the motions to comply with the law.
- The evaluation process depends upon if I have angered any board members or if a board member does not like me.
- The evaluation instrument is designed to have each board member indicate agreement or disagreement with performance statements...in addition board members are encouraged to identify possible performance targets for the next evaluation cycle.
- This board cannot agree upon what is important. They want the superintendent to please all members even when demands are diametrically opposed. After four months of discussion there is still no final document. I am ready to look for a new board to serve despite my belief that this is an excellent district. High turnover of board members and an unwillingness to learn their appropriate role is leading to micromanagement and dissatisfaction among the entire administrative team.
- The board needs to move away from anonymous responses from board members themselves, and be accountable for their evaluation of their superintendent.
- Instrument rates each item on my job description on a 5-point scale and provides for a summary rating and comments. Each board member completes it and a board officer compiles an average rating.
- Needs to be tied closer to job expectations or performance objectives.
- We have moved from a checklist instrument to a standards based rubric. There are many reasons why superintendents take other jobs.
- My dissatisfaction with this process is one reason I am moving!

- We worked to get the board to provide a more meaningful evaluation. I had to educate them that this is part of a meaningful process in which I could grow and they could reach some goals they had. The instrument itself may not be great, but the dialogue created is outstanding.
- We are presently updating our evaluation instrument of the superintendent.
- I have not had a formal evaluation in 14 years. In 31 years, I have been formally evaluated in 3.
- Goal setting by both the board and superintendent jointly would greatly help performance evaluation.
- Having a board that usually agrees and gets along is a good thing.
- The board and I have produced a well-fitting set of expectations that appears mutually beneficial. However, any superintendent is only 1 election from possible new adventures at a new school district.
- We set goals for the superintendent that reflects district goals.
- It is difficult for board members because many do not feel equipped to evaluate.
- The key in my mind is for the board to hire a superintendent that matches their values.
- We spent a year putting the process in place.
- I think it is difficult for the school board to evaluate superintendents. As one board member told me “I sure am glad you are self-motivated and very driven because I have no idea how to direct you.”
- It needs to remain a fluid document as different years present different goals and evaluation indicators should change to reflect those.
- I always ask for input from all school employees and give these ratings and feedback to the board president.
- Our district has a formal evaluation instrument but has chosen not to use it. When it was brought up to them, their response was, “we’ll talk about it later.”
- The board’s written comments become “cheap shots” which do not promote improvement. Although comments can be positive or negative, they are 90% negative even though the board speaks positively about performance.
- It should be done but has not been a priority the past seven years.
- I have a great relationship with the BOE.
- I see the whole process as an opportunity to improve and create a better working relationship with the board of education.
- We are working toward an evaluation that measures the criteria of the job description.
- The superintendent’s evaluation should include the opinions of the district administrative staff because the superintendent spends 75% or more of his time with the admin team implementing, directing, setting goals, establishing priorities and generally charting the course and vision for the district. Input from those who work most closely with the superintendent is essential for an appropriate and accurate appraisal.