

**Superintendents as a Catalyst of Economic Development:  
Academic Excellence vs. Economic Gardening**

by

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# **Superintendents as a Catalyst of Economic Development: Academic Excellence vs. Economic Gardening**

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Many school districts in Pennsylvania face severe cuts in basic education funding from the state as well as the loss of funding caused by students exiting the school district to charter and cyber charter schools. These diminishing revenues are pushing many school districts to reduce staff and programs. On top of these cuts, some districts have had to raise taxes to cover their remaining funding deficiencies. These funding challenges could threaten the financial stability of many small school districts and possibly, their very existence.

This research study focuses on understanding the needs of the local community and business leaders concerning the impacts of taxation, workforce preparation, and the creation of a viable local economic climate. This study examines the local school district's role and the superintendent's responsibilities, along with those of local community and business leaders, in promoting economic development and creating a sustainable local tax base. Specifically, this study compares two competing educational strategies, Academic Excellence and Economic Gardening. In researching how these two strategies are implemented, this study concluded that superintendents have a role as a catalyst for economic development through the development of business, education, and community partnerships.

To maintain the anonymity of the study region and the study's participants, the region was renamed to the Olympus Mount Region of Pantheon County. Specifically, this study focused on a metropolitan area of the Olympus Mount Region in Pantheon County. Choosing this region enabled the research to focus on a community that, within a five mile radius, contained three distinct economic growth rings generated from the life cycle of the steel and other related manufacturing industries. The chosen study area demonstrated the divisions among municipalities based on their economic viability. Investigating this geographic area exclusively offered depth of insight and context to the research less feasible in a more broadly designed research project. Future researchers of education and economic development are asked to consider using data-rich region-based models for case studies where appropriate.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1.0</b>	<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>14</b>
1.1	BACKGROUND.....	14
1.2	ISSUE.....	18
1.3	THE SUPERINTENDENT’S RESPONSIBILITIES.....	19
1.4	RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	20
1.5	OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY .....	21
1.6	LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY .....	22
<b>2.0</b>	<b>CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....</b>	<b>23</b>
2.1	INTRODUCTION .....	23
2.2	COMMUNITY LEADERS.....	25
2.3	BUSINESS LEADERS.....	33
2.4	FUNDING STRATEGIES, SHORT TERM AND LONG TERM SOLUTIONS.....	39
2.5	TWO STRATEGIES TO CREATE A SUSTAINABLE TAX BASE .....	43
2.6	SUPERINTENDENT’S RESPONSIBILITIES IN ENSURING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND A SUSTAINABLE LOCAL TAX BASE.....	51
2.7	THE NEED FOR FURTHER RESEARCH .....	57
<b>3.0</b>	<b>CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>59</b>
3.1	INTRODUCTION .....	59
3.2	THE STUDY .....	59
3.3	RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	60
3.4	THE CASE STUDY REASONING AND STRUCTURE.....	61
3.5	SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS .....	69
3.6	OUTLINING THE INTERVIEW PROCESS .....	71
3.7	SEVEN CASES COLLECTED INTO ONE COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY .....	74
3.8	CONCLUSIONS.....	80
3.9	SUMMARY .....	80
<b>4.0</b>	<b>CHAPTER IV: DATA DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS .....</b>	<b>82</b>
4.1	PREPARATION AND PRESENTATION OF DATA.....	82
4.2	DATA PROFILE .....	84
4.3	DISTRICT LEVEL STATISTICAL PROFILE DATA .....	91
4.4	DEDUCTIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWEE VOCABULARY AND CONCEPTS.....	100
4.5	VISUALIZATION OF RELATIONSHIPS .....	114

<b>4.6 ANALYSIS OF THE SEVEN CASE STUDIES' INTERVIEW DATA RESPONSES.....</b>	<b>129</b>
<b>5.0 CHAPTER V: CONSTRUCTION OF INDIVIDUAL CASES AND THE COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY.....</b>	<b>182</b>
<b>5.1 INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>182</b>
<b>5.2 INDIVIDUAL CASES.....</b>	<b>184</b>
<b>5.3 THE COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY.....</b>	<b>208</b>
<b>6.0 CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>218</b>
<b>6.1 RELATIONSHIP OF THE THEMES TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS..</b>	<b>219</b>
<b>6.2 DISCUSSION OF STUDY RESULTS BY THEME.....</b>	<b>220</b>
<b>6.3 BEST PRACTICES.....</b>	<b>225</b>
<b>6.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY .....</b>	<b>229</b>
<b>6.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY .....</b>	<b>229</b>
<b>6.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION.....</b>	<b>229</b>
<b>6.7 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH.....</b>	<b>231</b>
<b>6.8 CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>233</b>
<b>APPENDIX A: ANNOTATED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS .....</b>	<b>236</b>
<b>APPENDIX B: FORMATTED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.....</b>	<b>253</b>
<b>APPENDIX C: RESEARCH QUESTIONS TO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS MATRIX .</b>	<b>265</b>
<b>APPENDIX D: CONTENT LIST USED FOR DEDUCTIVE ANALYSIS DATA .....</b>	<b>275</b>
<b>APPENDIX E: BUSINESS MANAGER SURVEY AND LETTERS OF INVITATION..</b>	<b>276</b>
<b>APPENDIX F: CASE OF CASES MATRIX .....</b>	<b>283</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY.....</b>	<b>292</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Order of Presentation .....	82
Table 2 Census, Employment, and School Enrollment .....	92
Table 3 Comprehensive Planning Data.....	94
Table 4 Comprehensive Planning Data (cont.).....	95
Table 5 Annual Financial Report Data .....	97
Table 6 Business Manager Survey Data .....	97
Table 7 Millage Rate and Value .....	98
Table 8 Deductive Content Analysis Tool.....	101
Table 9 Links to Academic Excellence .....	103
Table 10 Links to Economic Gardening .....	104
Table 11 Composite tendency scores by stakeholder group.....	106
Table 12 Dionysus Deductive Content Analysis Scores.....	108
Table 13 Complete Deductive Content Analysis Scores .....	109
Table 14 Relationship rankings .....	127
Table 15 Discussions with local business and community leaders.....	149
Table 16 Discussions with local school district superintendents.....	153
Table 17 Discussions with the local school district superintendent .....	158

Table 18 School choice options .....	164
Table 19 Partnering with charter schools to improve educational quality.....	165
Table 20 Vouchers promoting school choice.....	166
Table 21 Regional magnet programs or schools.....	166
Table 22 School consolidations and mergers.....	167
Table 23 Partnering with a charter school: .....	170
Table 24 Vouchers for other public and private schools .....	171
Table 25 Regional magnet programs or schools.....	171
Table 26 School consolidation and school mergers.....	172
Table 27 Maintaining school as the number one educational source in the community .....	174
Table 28 Assisting schools to maintain their positions as the number educational source .....	174
Table 29 Partnerships with charter schools .....	176
Table 30 Tuition vouchers .....	177
Table 31 Magnet and programs and consortiums .....	177
Table 32 School consolidation and mergers .....	178
Table 33: Order of Presentation .....	183
Table 34 Focus and Position of the stakeholder groups .....	209
Table 35 Deductive content analysis scores .....	210
Table 36 The Study Region’s Graduate versus the Graduation Rates of Students Enrolled in Pennsylvania’s Four Year Public Universities .....	234

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Flow chart of data preparation.....	87
Figure 2 Example of Tendency Score Continuum.....	107
Figure 3 Superintendents' tendency continuum .....	110
Figure 4 Business leaders' tendency continuum.....	110
Figure 5 Community leaders' tendency continuum.....	111
Figure 6 Aphrodite's tendency continuum .....	112
Figure 7 Hermes' Tendency Continuum.....	112
Figure 8 Apollo's relationship diagram .....	117
Figure 9 Dionysus relationship diagram.....	118
Figure 10 Poseidon relationship diagram .....	119
Figure 11 Aphrodite relationship diagram.....	120
Figure 12 Hermes relationship diagram.....	121
Figure 13 Athena relationship diagram.....	122
Figure 14 Zeus relationship diagram .....	123
Figure 15 Dionysus relationship diagram.....	124
Figure 16 Zeus relationship diagram .....	125
Figure 17 Hermes relationship diagram.....	126
Figure 18 Dionysus relationship diagram.....	190

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

**Academic Excellence:** Since the 1983 report *A Nation At Risk* by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, many school districts have pursued raising the standards of academic excellence. This pursuit was further established with the passing of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and the implementation of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).

**Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP):** Adequate Yearly Progress is a measurement defined by the United States federal No Child Left Behind Act that allows the U.S. Department of Education to determine how every public school and school district is performing academically according to results on standardized tests (Wikipedia, 2013).

**Annual Financial Report (AFR):** This is a financial accounting and reporting (PDE 2057) document required by the Pennsylvania Department of Education to be submitted each school year by November 1<sup>st</sup>. This document lists the financial activities of a school district for the preceding school year.

**Average Daily Membership (ADM):** is the amount of money a school district spends to educate one student for an entire school year. ADM is the amount of money a school district has to pay a charter school to educate one of the district's students.

**Business Incubators:** Business incubators or technology clustering is used to promote economic development through networking of marketing strategies, connections to similar businesses, and the pooling of common services (Lichtenstein & Lyons, 2006).

**Computer-aided design (CAD):** is the use of [computer](#) systems to assist in the creation, modification, analysis, or optimization of a [design](#). Computer-aided drafting describes the process of creating a [technical drawing](#) with the use of computer software (Wikipedia, 2013).

**Deductive coding:** Deductive coding is when the researcher uses concepts and vocabulary found in existing literature to categorize and group interview responses (Kvale, 2008).

**Economic Gardening:** Economic Gardening is an economic development strategy that focuses on the development of assets and the creation of a business environment that is conducive to existing businesses and improving their economic vitality. Economic Gardening is centered around the development of strong business, education, and community partnerships (Roth, 2009).

**Elite Interview:** Elite interview is any interviewee who receives specialized or non-standardized treatment e.g. “letting the interviewee introduce to a considerable extent his notions of what he regards as relevant” (Dexter, 2008, p. 18).

**Entrepreneurship:** “One who undertakes [innovations](#) or introducing new things, finance and business acumen in an effort to transform innovations into economic goods” (Wikipedia, Entrepreneurship, 2011).

**Inductive coding:** Inductive coding is when the researcher allows the categories or themes used to group interview responses to be generated by the interview responses themselves (McCracken, 1988).

**Infrastructure:** Infrastructure are the man-made improvements that promote economic development or raise quality of life for residents in a community. Local infrastructure usually consists of: public water and sewer service, transportation access (roads and highways), access to electricity and natural gas, telecommunications including high speed internet service (Dooley, 1994).

**LERTAs:** Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance Act (LERTA) is designed to promote reinvestment in blighted business property (bcrda, 2011).

**School Vouchers:** The school voucher program is designed for “children trapped in failing schools” (Corbett, 2011). This program is to provide children and their parents with educational options or choices of which school to attend to receive an education.

**Smartzones:** Through appropriate use of LERTAs and TIFs, communities create strong support economic environments to promote economic development (Morgan, Lambe, & Freyer, 2009).

**Snowball Interview:** The snowball technique is a method of eliciting the recommendations of current interviewees to ascertain names of strong candidates for the next round of interviews. “Although they violate the principles of sampling, the use of snowball strategies provides a means of accessing vulnerable and more impenetrable social groupings” (Atkinson & Flint, 2001).

**STEM:** STEM is an acronym for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics and is usually refers to the preparation of students and workforce candidate to fill those types of positions (Wikipedia, STEM fields, 2011).

**TIFs:** Tax Increment Financing promotes reinvestment in strong and reasonably healthy businesses by allowing businesses to reinvest their increases in tax assessment from capital improvement made to their businesses and companies (Rosen, 2011).

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## **1.0 CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 BACKGROUND**

#### **1.1.1 Aging Communities Fiscally Challenge Their Local Public School Districts**

“Sister cities share the same challenges, cooperation and promoting growth seen as solutions” (Biller, 2010).

This front-page headline appeared in the *Butler Eagle* on October 30, 2010. The article continued to outline the City of Butler’s issues with a shrinking tax base and growing fiscal responsibilities, i.e. salaries, sewer and water service, and road maintenance. The article compares four western Pennsylvania cities with similar fiscal and financial issues, Sharon, Hermitage, Greensburg, and Butler, describing how each city is promoting economic growth in its metropolitan area to develop the economic infrastructure necessary to stay fiscally sound (Biller, 2010). Many school districts in western Pennsylvania face similar issues as these local municipalities. While federal stimulus dollars help purchase equipment and pay salary increases, the monies offer only a short-term fix, as the root problems still exist and will only get worse (Robelen, 2009). Most school districts in western Pennsylvania, with limited exceptions in southern Butler and northern Allegheny Counties, face rising salary and other fixed costs with limited growth and development of their tax bases (Pennsylvania Economy League, 2009).

The Pittsburgh metropolitan area ranks 57<sup>th</sup> on the NAHB (National Association of Home Builders)/Wells Fargo Housing Opportunities Index (National Association of Home Builders, 2010). This reflects two different issues. First, housing costs in the Pittsburgh metropolitan area remain quite reasonable, if not depressed. Area housing costs stay low because of limited demand. When looking at the census data for western Pennsylvania, one sees a shrinking

population, outward migration, and an overall aging of the remaining population (Citi-Data.com, 2010). Second, housing costs are low because of the diminished values of an aging supply of houses and the general lack of demand for housing in western Pennsylvania. With the decline of the steel industry and its supporting economic supply chain, western Pennsylvania and other northern “rust belt” states experienced stagnation in economic growth and development. These regions are now forced to compete for businesses with more attractive locations in the southern United States and in foreign countries such as China, India, and other emerging third world growth markets (Friedman, 2007).

### **1.1.2 Pennsylvania Retirement System Underfunded**

The aging baby boomer population exacerbates these economic pressures and causes strain on the retirement systems both regionally and statewide. On June 24, 2010, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* ran an article entitled “School Districts Face Tax Hikes, Program Cuts to Pay for Teacher Pensions” (Neiderberger, 2010) which highlighted the pressures on the retirement system.

The bottom line for taxpayers is that the payment still would come due -- but perhaps a bit later than originally expected. School officials throughout the region are warning of the steep real estate tax hikes and program cuts that will be needed to fund their increased contributions. Some districts already have approved 2010-11 budgets that include tax hikes to pay for the cost of the coming year's anticipated 72 percent increase in contributions, which was set to climb from 4.78 percent of total payroll in 2009-10 to 8.22 percent in 2010-11. But the real fear for district officials was the looming spike in the 2012-13 school year under the current law, which would raise district contributions to 29.22 percent of payroll (Neiderberger, 2010).

The state legislature, however, actually lowered the district and state contribution rates. The change in the contribution rate occurred because of projected gains in the stock market that evaporated with the housing market crash in 2008 (Pennsylvania School Boards Association, 2009). When Neiderberger wrote the article, retirement costs for schools were projected to almost double for the 2011-12 school year and could have increased sevenfold by the 2012-13 school year. The increase, of up to 700% in retirement costs, could have caused school districts to cut programs and/or raise taxes just to cover the increase in fixed fiscal commitments. The pension crisis was averted with the passing of PA House Bill 2497, which changed the

contributions rate for all teachers. The multiplier<sup>1</sup> dropped from 2.5% to 2.0% for teachers hired as of July 1, 2011 along with other adjustments in employer contributions, employee purchase of service, and years of service to become vested in the pension fund (Pennsylvania Legislature, 2010).

### **1.1.3 State Reimbursement to Public Schools, Vouchers, and Act 1**

Other issues contributing to the financial worries of school districts include cuts to state reimbursements, vouchers, charter school reimbursements, and Act 1. Pennsylvania, as well as many other states, no longer receives the federal ARRA stimulus dollars from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 to balance its budget (111th Congress, 2009). Many states used these monies to continue funding public schools at existing or even higher levels to stimulate the economy through capital improvements, equipment purchases, and retention of instructional staff. With these monies gone and state revenues still lagging, Governor Corbett proposed a state budget that cut elementary, secondary, and higher education by approximately one billion dollars (Corbett, 2011). Also outlined was Governor Corbett's vision for a world-class education, which included making "funding available for children trapped in failing schools to enroll in achieving schools" (Corbett, 2011, p. 11). This funding program, commonly known as vouchers, would take the amount a school spends on a student's education and make it portable to another school. This initiative would further establish a form of school choice program in Pennsylvania, with a downside that already struggling schools would be further strapped for funds to run their educational programs. Governor Corbett's budget also cuts the state's reimbursement for charter school costs. Prior to the 2011-12 fiscal year, Pennsylvania reimbursed schools up to the amount of their per pupil state funding for students who opted to attend a charter school, saving the state \$224 million. The inability to raise taxes above the index, which ranges anywhere from 1.4 to 2.3 percent, further, weakens schools (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2011). With the adoption of Act 1 in

<sup>1</sup> The multiplier of 2.5 or 2.0 is the number that is multiplied by the years of service to create a percentage, which is then multiplied by the average of the last three year's salary of teaching. This multiplier is used to create the amount to be paid annually upon retirement. (35 years of service x 2.5 = 87.5%. The 87.5% is then multiplied by \$72,000.00 (the average of the three highest paid years of service) creating the annual retirement salary of \$63,000.00 (Clay, Jeffery B., 2007).

2006, the state effectively limited the reasons that school districts could raise taxes without a voter referendum. The total loss of funds to Pennsylvania's public schools in 2011-2012 reached just over one billion dollars (The Pennsylvania Budget and Policy Center, 2011). Given all of these fiscal constraints, school districts must seek other methods of increasing revenues.

#### **1.1.4 Promoting Growth**

With fixed costs rising and revenues shrinking, school districts and their taxpayers represent the only remaining source of revenue short of charging tuition or fees. This school funding dilemma brings to the forefront the deeper issue of how to promote local and regional economic growth. Supporting the growth and development of entrepreneurial enterprise by creating an environment conducive to local and regional business growth may be crucial to maintaining quality education programs. This type of direct involvement, in local and regional business development, along with community revitalization, stems directly from concepts such as Economic Gardening<sup>2</sup> (Economic Gardeners, 2006). With the globalization of manufacturing and intercontinental trade, school districts need to promote niche manufacturing and focused competitive strategies. Morgan, Lambe, and Freyer (2009) imply that school districts should be focusing on preparing students for high technology dependent businesses. The types of businesses that require specific training usually reflect a business and/or manufacturing market that represents a strength of that particular geographic region, given that regionally specific jobs resist against being exported overseas. This practice is called "Place-based Development" (Morgan, Lambe, & Freyer, 2009). Along with regionally focused businesses, educational programs need to deliver a curriculum that will produce the trained workforce required by these regionally specific enterprises (Morgan, 2009).

To its benefit, Pittsburgh is rated the number one city to which to relocate because of the low cost of living, health care, the arts, and other benefits of having survived the worst of the economic downturn prior to the housing crash of 2008 (Perman, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> Economic Gardening is defined as cultivating an economic environment that supports and develops existing local businesses, regionally specific workforce/manufacturing strengths, and educational resources. (Economic Gardeners, 2006)

“Pittsburgh has been quite good at urban development,” says Mark Robbins, urban design expert and dean of the architecture school at Syracuse University. “The misstep cities often make is saying ‘We should be like Chicago, like New York.’ Pittsburgh never did that. It invested in health care and education 50 years ago. It was early to recognize technology as a possible link to economic growth. It was one of the first to develop ways of creating jobs within a post-industrial economy (Laneri, 2009).

Robbins points out that Pittsburgh has realized significant growth as a technology hub, but with global markets changing faster than ever before, staying ahead of other cities and markets takes continued innovation and vigilance toward economic development (Friedman, 2007).

## 1.2 ISSUE

Many Pennsylvania school districts face shrinking populations, both in actual residents and student population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). These areas are still trying to rebound from the decline of the steel industry and, because of that, the labor market presents limited local opportunities. Finally, every school year these districts face increasing contractual obligations through rising salaries and health care costs (Baldarelli, 2008). Even though the current political attitudes add to their financial troubles, these challenged school districts would still struggle with generating adequate tax revenues to fund their programs. The fiscally struggling school districts throughout western Pennsylvania need to find feasible solutions to strengthen the tax base and at least end the exodus of funding sources. With shrinking tax bases, diminishing student populations, and rising fixed costs in many western Pennsylvania school districts, how can the superintendents of these fiscally struggling school districts become more proactive in facilitating economic development and entrepreneurial growth in their local and regional areas?

### 1.3 THE SUPERINTENDENT’S RESPONSIBILITIES

School districts deal with fiscal challenges that threaten their ability to continue to deliver instruction in the manner and quality previously achieved. This study focuses on economic strategies and funding alternatives developed by school districts and local and regional civic leaders. In conjunction with these efforts, what are the superintendent’s responsibilities in developing and sustaining a vibrant local economy and a strong tax base?

School districts are currently attempting to balance their budgetary needs with their educational mandates through implementing two different long-term strategies. This study examines how districts are balancing the implementation of these two, dichotomous long-term strategies and how these strategies are impacting the districts’ interactions with other regional stakeholders.

#### *Strategy #1*

Superintendents focus their attention on the district’s instructional quality, leaving concerns for local tax structures and development to others. This path assumes a ‘Field of Dreams’ strategy of build it and they will come. A study by Doms, Lewis and, Robb (2010) found the following:

Initial results indicate that more educated entrepreneurs tend to be located in metropolitan areas with more educated workforces. Moreover, highly educated areas have above average entrepreneurship rates. Finally, the level of education of entrepreneurs is strongly related to positive business outcomes (Doms, Lewis, & Robb, 2010, p. 75).

Doms, Lewis, and Robb (2010) find that strong academics lead not only to high numbers of college enrollments, but also local returns on investments. This philosophy of rigorous academic programs and high quality instruction provides the premise for the *A Nation at Risk* report by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983). *A Nation at Risk* found that the United States of America risked being economically surpassed by other nations because of the lack of focus on academic excellence in our nation’s schools. By itself, is an “Academic Excellence” strategy (links to Question #2, p. 18) enough to ensure the financial resiliency of local school districts’?

## *Strategy #2*

In direct contrast to the *laissez-faire* attitudes of market-based national reforms, the strategy of “Economic Gardening” emerged. In this “Economic Gardening” strategy, superintendents work with school boards to help ‘grow’ local and regional economies and in turn, their tax bases. In an Economic Gardening scenario, the superintendent and other key administrators maintain their central responsibility with student achievement and success, but they strengthen the roles of the district’s principals and staff in developing and sustaining instructional quality. This shift of responsibility allows the superintendent and the school board to refocus some of their energies towards working with local community leaders to create economically related local and regional development partnerships (Roth, 2009).

These two strategies represent the extremes of a wide spectrum of approaches to promoting economic development and the resulting tax revenues for school districts. With the current political and economic climate, many districts are using a blend of these two philosophical extremes. Some school districts may even be looking at other options or strategies to close the gap between district expenses and incoming revenues. What are these other options? Are districts using Academic Excellence, Economic Gardening, another strategy, or a blend of these divergent options? This study examines the superintendent’s responsibilities in promoting economic development by analyzing the approaches superintendents implement to maximize economic growth and tax base stability. This study then investigates how these approaches are coordinated with the other stakeholders in local and regional economic development.

### **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Through the use of the literature review and a combination of Personal and Elite<sup>3</sup> interview techniques, this study investigates current practices and strategies being implemented by the major stakeholders in communities and school districts faced with economic and revenue

<sup>3</sup>*Elite Interviews:* Rigor in elite interviews is more straightforward, and more closely analogous to traditional journalists’ ethics and rules of engagement. The interviewer must know as much as possible about the context, stance, and past behavior of the interview subject before beginning the conversation; that seems obvious for a member of Parliament or corporation president, but is equally true for a community organizer or foreman on the assembly line (Hochschild, 2009).

creation challenges. The following questions focus the research on the creation of general standards of best practice in the development and sustenance of enduring economic development and tax base stability:

*Question #1:* How does the literature frame two possible long-term economic development strategies: “Academic Excellence” and “Economic Gardening”?

*Question #2:* How do local leaders, including superintendents, support education for local economic development?

*Question #3:* To what extent does professional and social networking provide support for education and local economic development?

*Question #4:* How are these local leaders responding to current education initiatives being promoted by Pennsylvania’s legislative leaders?

## **1.5 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY**

This study examines the responsibilities of the school district’s superintendent and the roles of the community and business leaders in promoting economic development and creating a sustainable local tax base. In assessing the current economic realities in the local municipalities and school districts, the study will construct a consensus of needs, define opportunities for coordination of efforts, and synthesizes ways to improve the effectiveness of the economic initiatives. The study will use an instrumental case study design developed to look at the seven school districts and their communities that make up the extended Olympus Mount Region of Pantheon County. The instrumental case study design was chosen because each case will be examined to provide insight into the issue of closing the revenue gap faced by many school districts in Pennsylvania (Stake, 1994). Each instrumental case consists of four parts: the literature research, U.S. census data regarding each community’s population and economic trends, a business manager survey to support the census data, and a series of elite interviews of each district’s business, education and community leaders. The interview pool will have one representative from each stakeholder group to create the instrumental case study of each school

district and their communities. This series of small case studies will establish the economic viability of each district and what strategies business, education, and community leaders are implementing to improve the economic viability of the local community and region. These seven individual cases will then be combined to create a collective case study that compares the economic viability and quality of collaboration among the seven districts and their stakeholders (Stake, 1994). The extended Olympus Mount Region clearly demonstrates the divisions between the municipalities based on economic viability. Investigating this geographic area exclusively gives depth of insight and context to the research that would be unfeasible in a more broadly designed research project. (The elements of the case study will be discussed in detail in Chapter III, methodology.)

## **1.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

This study investigates current trends in local economic development, school districts' roles in those trends, and community and school efforts to create an environment that supports economic development. Because of the current economic focus of this study, available research literature may be limited. The parameters of this compilation study focuses the interview research on a selected sample of 22 stakeholders (seven superintendents, eight business leaders, and seven community leaders) who have explicit knowledge and insights into initiatives that create the greatest impact on the region's economic development and stability.

## **2.0 CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

#### **2.1.1 Current Context**

Western Pennsylvania, and the Pittsburgh metropolitan area in particular, weathered the recession easier and stronger than the rest of the nation (Rotstein, 2011), but financially strapped school districts still have many areas of concern. Governor Corbett announced a state budget that calls for across-the-board flat funding at the 2011-2012 levels while rising wages and state pension costs demand additional cuts and efficiencies (Corbett, 2011). This latest round of budget cuts pits school district budgets against the Act 1 index limits, which require a voter referendum for any school district real estate tax increase above the state set cost-of-living allowance (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2011). School district superintendents face harsh economic realities that require decisive leadership, creativity, and willingness to actualize all viable options to ensure financial stability for their school districts.

#### **2.1.2 The Problem**

While some geographic areas of western Pennsylvania grow economically, many local communities continue the struggle to rebuild from the decline of the steel and other manufacturing industries. Many school districts must solve challenges created by a shrinking tax base and rising fixed costs. These same school districts face shrinking populations, both in student population and actual residents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Faced with rising salaries, pension contributions, and health care costs, these districts' increased contractual obligations

exacerbate their revenue shortfalls (Baldarelli, 2008). Pennsylvania's budget cuts and the state government's legislation limiting the ability to raise revenue through increasing taxes compound the situation (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2011). With these obstacles to financial stability, many school districts in western Pennsylvania search to find feasible solutions. These school districts' superintendents are left to identify feasible to strengthen and grow their tax bases or at least curtail the exodus of strong and reliable funding sources.

### **2.1.3 Areas Addressed in the Review of Literature**

The purpose of this study is to explore the responsibilities of the superintendent as a facilitator of economic development and a sustainable local tax base. To successfully address these issues, an understanding of the triangular relationship of the community, business, and educational stakeholders in economic development process is needed. This complex relationship requires the creation of a narrative that connects these stakeholders' efforts and directly examines those efforts' impact on local economic development. The challenge of this partnership is that it involves three distinct groups that are actually very interdependent. While individuals from each group may be able to function with total independence, the better these groups work together, the more effective their efforts will be in creating the strong economic base that they all require to thrive (Desplaces, Wergeles, & McGuigan, 2009). The superintendent plays a pivotal role in this triangular relationship because the district controls a major portion of tax liability and workforce development that directly impacts business viability (Dooley, 1994; Bias, 2010). The literature review addresses the following areas: 1) identifying the key leaders in the local and regional communities and businesses, 2) what initiatives are the different stakeholders putting in place to promote economic development and generate revenues and how effective are these economic efforts, 3) are they actively collaborating among the stakeholder groups and how effective is that collaboration in promoting economic development, and 4) in what ways can the district superintendent act as a catalyst to promote economic development, ensure a sustainable tax base, and meet the economic development needs of the business and community stakeholders (Peel, 1988).

As school district superintendents search for solutions, they must find their district's place in the actual economic structure of the community they serve. Only by understanding the positions and purposes of the stakeholders in local economic development will superintendents understand how to effectively engage in the economic development process.

## **2.2 COMMUNITY LEADERS**

Superintendents and the school districts they lead represent larger local and regional communities. The township officials, borough supervisors, and city council members, who represent these communities, are elected in the same way as members of the local school board (PSBA, 2011). Through understanding what parts of the local and regional economic development structure these officials control, superintendents can better match their school districts' visions and missions to their local community's vision and mission.

“Good government cannot ensure economic development, but bad government is a definite road block to economic growth.” Pamela Syfert, Deputy City Manager, Charlotte, NC (The Committee to Prepare Allegheny County for the 21st Century, 1996)

This quotation taken from a Pennsylvania Economy League (PEL) report on the preparedness of Allegheny County for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century puts a sharp focus on the need for effective local government. PEL (2007) published a report, “Structuring Healthy Communities,” which further elaborates on the responsibilities of government officials. The PEL stated,

Local officials, many of whom serve part-time, are expected to make knowledgeable decisions and to take action on complicated technical issues like water pollution control, landfills, economic development incentives, collective bargaining agreements, debt financing, infrastructure repair, and growth management (Pennsylvania Economy League, 2007).

Communities depend on part-time elected officials to make difficult, long-term decisions about topics of which they have limited practical knowledge. Their decisions are extremely important to their communities and create a lasting impact on their communities' fiscal health. These elected officials possess many different titles and job descriptions, but their responsibilities are very similar. Their main charge is to “improve the well-being and quality of life of their constituents” (County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania, 2009-2011).

These government officials' responsibilities are directly related to their respective level in the governmental structure.

The state of Pennsylvania maintains three levels of government. The first level includes the local (municipal) level and consists of cities, townships, and boroughs. Local government officials are mayors, council members, and supervisors. The second level includes the county government and includes elected county commissioners. The final governmental level is the state, which includes legislators and the governor (Yorczyk & Associates, 2009). This review of the literature focuses on local and county government officials. While counties and larger municipalities may hire managers and administrators to handle the everyday operations, local community elected officials are tasked with actually running the local government (U.S. Department of State, 2008). Regardless of their abilities or preparation, these elected officials are making critical decisions that have long-term effects on their local communities. What strategies are these community leaders implementing to promote economic development?

### **2.2.1 How Community Leaders Impact Economic Development**

Local municipalities and county governments control several key areas of economic influence that positively or negatively impact local and regional development. These areas are: investments in infrastructure, the use of restrictive or non-restrictive zoning and tax policies, and finally, coordinated planning (Bias, 2010). It is important to coordinate the efforts of all community stakeholders in this process to maximize their success (The Committee to Prepare Allegheny County for the 21st Century, 1996). Before delving into the dynamics of partnerships and focused strategic planning, participants need a strong understanding, of the elements that local municipalities and county governments control. One of the main structural elements that local and county governments may control is the development of the local infrastructure.

### **2.2.2 Infrastructure Development**

Dooley (1994) cites eight characteristics to consider in selecting a site for a business to locate: “1) access to markets and resources, 2) the community, 3) competitive conditions, 4) environmental considerations, 5) labor, 6) site characteristics, 7) transportation, and 8) utilities”

(Dooley, 1994, p. 2). The local infrastructure directly impacts four of these issues: access to markets and resources, the community, transportation, and utilities. Local infrastructure needs to facilitate transportation and the ability to move goods and services into and out of an area. Other elements of infrastructure refer to establishing utility and resource capacities that promote business development and home construction, primarily the availability of public water and sewage treatment facilities, electricity and natural gas, and broadband Internet service. Looking at the impact of transportation infrastructure:

When transport systems are efficient, they provide economic and social opportunities and benefits that result in positive multipliers, effects such as better accessibility to markets, employment and additional investments. When transport systems are deficient in terms of capacity or reliability, they can have an economic cost such as reduced or missed opportunities (Rodrigue, 2009, p.83).

Jean-Paul Rodrigue (2009) states that the easier moving products, raw materials, and human capital into or out of an area is, the more conducive that area is to economic growth. This ability to grow translates directly into improved production capabilities, industrial location, distribution systems, and housing and labor markets (Rijn, 2004). Local municipalities and county governments support of transportation infrastructure equates to improved economic opportunity for the local and regional economies. For this body of research, maintenance of transportation infrastructure receives higher relevancy than new road and bridge construction because most of the major road and bridge construction projects come through the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) (Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, 2009). Probably the biggest infrastructure items that fall under the control of local municipalities are public sewage treatment facilities and public water systems.

While the Department of Environmental Protection regulates drinking and wastewater facilities, municipalities and their elected officials maintain a large amount of the control over the planning and development of these types of facilities. This local control comes to municipalities because a large portion of the funding comes from tap-in<sup>4</sup> fees and the ongoing water and sewage bill expenses (Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 2011). The loans required to do these types of projects come from the Pennsylvania Infrastructure Investment Authority and are repaid over a period of 240 months (20 years) using the monthly water and sewage treatment

<sup>4</sup> Tap-in fees are the costs paid by the owner of the property to connect his home to the local water or sewer lines. These fees are on top of the monthly service fees and do not include the cost of running the connecting piping from the house to the actual water or sewer lines.

bills. Since these projects place the burden on local homeowners and taxpayers, the local municipalities hold the power to vote for or against these types of infrastructure projects. However, the availability of public water and sewage treatment facilities equates to economic growth and financial stability.

The availability of public water and sewage treatment facilities translates directly to the ability to create housing plans with  $\frac{1}{4}$  acre or smaller lots. Areas where public sewage treatment is not available require between  $\frac{1}{2}$  to one-acre minimum lot size (Taylor, 2003), which raises the hard costs per unit and makes building less profitable. The smaller the lot, the more houses per acre and the lower the construction costs per unit. Housing plans need roads, electricity, and natural gas. All these utilities require density to make them cost efficient. Since the availability of public water and sewage treatment facilities directly impacts housing development, municipalities carry the initial infrastructure costs to provide these utilities. The availability of utilities such as public water and sewage treatment leads to the next issue under local municipal control, zoning. Several types of zoning exist: residential, commercial, industrial, and agricultural. Also, in existence are various levels to the types of zoning regarding the density or number of homes or business types that can use certain locations (Philadelphia Zoning Code Commission, 2011). Municipalities literally map out the developmental areas or zones of their townships or boroughs to guide and control development to ensure the stability of their communities. Obviously, zoning laws give municipal leaders power over the structures approved for building and their location. While exclusionary zoning ordinances are against the law, until successfully challenged in court, the zoning ordinance will be enforced (FindLaw, 2011). Another way to stimulate growth is the use of LERTAs and TIFs.

### **2.2.3 LERTAs and TIFs**

Colloquial wisdom says that, “Everybody loves a sale.” Why should business owners be any different? The design of the Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance Act (LERTA) creates a sale of sorts when considering redevelopment of blighted business property. “A major deterrent to improving the deteriorating business property has been that improvements result in higher property value and therefore, result in higher local property taxes” (bcrda, 2011). With

developers conscious of the additional expense of making improvements to deteriorated properties, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania enacted the LERTA law to assist in implementing Article VIII, Section (2b) (iii) of the Constitution of Pennsylvania. Article VIII permits the general assembly to pass legislation that allows local municipalities to enact a uniform tax relief, for a limited period of time, to encourage improvements to deteriorating property (bcrda, 2011). The LERTA law design promotes reinvestment in abandoned or otherwise rundown industrial and manufacturing areas by providing tax relief for ten (10) years on any improvements made to the property. Within certain restrictions and rules, the LERTA law gives local municipalities the ability to encourage and promote redevelopment in depressed areas. The Tax Increment Financing districts (TIFs) created another option to provide financing for improvements to areas already generating good revenues.

The TIFs program focuses on the idea of local municipalities promoting reinvestment in strong and reasonably healthy businesses, business owners making capital improvements, and owners continuing to grow their businesses. Considered one of the most popular tools in a community's economic development arsenal, TIFs are used by more than half of the jurisdictions that participated in the International City Management Association Survey (Rosen, 2011). The TIFs program design allows a municipality to create a geographic area where businesses reinvest their increases in property values directly back into the TIF district (geographic area) itself. This reinvestment generates more capital improvements, more economic development, and increased growth throughout the municipality. In place for 25 to 35 years, the TIFs usually generate strong business reinvestment (Schnitzler, 2008). Some critics of TIFs question the loss of revenue because, due to the length of the TIF, the assessed value of these properties could be double the actual taxable value (Rosen, 2011). In spite of these critics, Tax Increment Financing is an effective way to promote economic growth through allowing businesses to increase development without being penalized for reinvesting in and improving their facilities. Because developers like TIFs, they attempt to play municipalities against one another to get the best possible tax incentives (Andrews, 1999). While LERTAs focus on redeveloping brownfields and deteriorated buildings and businesses, the TIFs design actually lures new businesses to an area and injects new economic engines to boost the local economy. Between LERTAs and TIFs, municipalities can effectively cut the development cost of established businesses or new businesses to the local market. Coupling these tax incentives with the ability to control water and sewer development,

the borough council members and township supervisors control the local community's promoting or limiting economic growth based on the desires of their constituencies. Taking advantage of opportunities requires strategic planning and the creation of a political mindset that welcomes those opportunities.

#### **2.2.4 SmartZones and Business Incubators**

Working with parents and other community members, superintendents must design a plan to move the district forward. Likewise, communities need a strategic plan to guide their decision making process. Through the appropriate use of zoning regulations, effective design of LERTAs or TIFs, and insurance of the appropriate infrastructure necessary to support local business and industrial development, communities create strong and supportive economic environments in which economic development flourishes. One way that municipalities promote economic development and use their ability to control property tax impacts on businesses is the creation of innovation and SmartZones.

Supporting the use of SmartZone type development to maximize local creative talent and resources, Morgan, Lambe, & Freyer (2009) state the following:

Homegrown approaches to rural development operate at the intersection of people and place. These approaches accentuate the job - and wealth - creating potential of individuals as entrepreneurs and are rooted in the distinctive characteristics of a particular community or region. Creative talent, leadership, innovation, and social capital are the common threads among the rural communities that successfully deploy these approaches. Our experience studying rural development leads us to conclude that a majority of the responsibility for initiating homegrown approaches to rural development lies squarely in the hands of the local leadership (Morgan, Lambe, & Freyer, 2009, p.2).

Morgan, Lambe, & Freyer place the ability to create strong partnerships between a region's creative resources and aggressive growth businesses in the hands of local and state governments. "SmartZones provide distinct geographical locations where technology-based firms, entrepreneurs, and researchers can locate in close proximity to all of the community assets that will assist in their endeavors" (Johnson & Singh, 2003, p. 4). Pennsylvania's version of the SmartZone is the Keystone Innovation Zones (KIZ) (Armstrong & Yazdi, 2004). "The design of the KIZ program focuses on creating 'knowledge neighborhoods' so that educational institutions, economic developers, businesses, investors, and community leaders can connect with one

another through an institutionalized network of support and resources” (Morgan, Lambe, & Freyer, 2009, p. 10). These types of enterprise zones directly connect the training and research strength’s of local institutions of higher learning with the local businesses that need their talents and resources. In effect, SmartZone projects create a win-win situation that supports business development, research and development programs, local institutions of higher learning, and the local region and communities (Morgan, 2009). Along with the development of SmartZones, local and state governments may create specific locations that serve as a resource or training hub for a municipality or region. These geographic concentrations of related businesses, with their supporting training and networking opportunities, are called Business Incubators or Regional Technology Clusters.

### **2.2.5 Business Incubators and Regional Technology Clusters**

Business incubators comprise businesses that are new and often developing new products and services, but within a real or virtual complex. Incubators allow you to quickly develop your core structure and business strategies for your new or developing business or simply enhance your marketing strategies by clustering with other businesses. (Economic Gardeners, 2006)

Business incubators serve as a controlled environment for the development of companies that create new products and services. These types of businesses represent high-risk ventures. Incubators offer an optimum environment for development and growth, which adds to these companies overall viability through connecting them to other similar or related businesses. These business clusters then share and enhance each other through networking of marketing strategies and the pooling of common services (Lichtenstein & Lyons, 2006).

Linda Knopp (2009) in *Business Incubators are Best Investment of Public Dollars* states: “According to a research study conducted for the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration, business incubators provide communities with significantly greater results at less cost than do any other type of public works infrastructure project.” Knopp’s position states that not only do business incubators pool and maximize local resources, but they also do so at a lower cost to the local and regional community.

The LindenPointe technology park, created through a public-private partnership, specifically promotes the development of high technology industries in the Athena/Apollo areas

of Pantheon County (Reichard, 2010). The technology park takes advantage of the local training capacities of universities, colleges, and technical centers. LindenPointe stresses the advantage of being located within driving distance of the nation's five largest markets. The technology park provides businesses with access to an on-campus training and workforce development center. In addition, LindenPointe uses the community of Hermitage, with its high quality schools, low crime rates, and affordable housing, as a major selling point (Reichard, 2010). LindenPointe demonstrates a strong example of using transportation infrastructure and tax incentives to create an economic growth area or zone. The LindenPointe design pulls many different elements together in one place to maximize the value of locating a business in Hermitage, Pennsylvania. LindenPointe demonstrates what community leaders, with a level of foresight and planning, can do to create a strong business and economic climate. However, after ten years, LindenPointe sits three-fourths empty on Pennsylvania Route 18 because community leaders are only part of the equation.

Could better coordination with local school district superintendents have improved the available workforce candidates and assisted in drawing more businesses to LindenPointe? Could the local communities, that saw LindenPointe as competition for local businesses, have been brought into a partnership that would have increased occupancy and therefore the viability of the LindenPointe project? No research or documentation exists regarding either of these questions. The only definite fact is that LindenPointe represents a major capital investment for the Hermitage community, via taxes and other financial supports, and after eight years the site is less than halfway complete. Some local businesses relocated into the business park section, but many looked beyond the tax incentives and simply stayed in their present locations. This lack of entrepreneurial support for the project causes the asset to remain under-developed. As stated in the introduction to the research question, while stakeholders can function independently, teaming with other stakeholders may ensure greater effectiveness of projects and strategies. In addition to partnering with local school districts, could better coordination with local business partners improve the site's occupancy and its positive economic impact on the local community and region?

## 2.3 BUSINESS LEADERS

Business and industrial leaders in the local community and surrounding region represent the second set of stakeholders in the business, education, and community partnership. One needs only to flip through the cable news channels to learn which businesses the community perceives as saviors or villains based on how their economic development strategies impact the local communities and school districts. Since businesses impact the economy through taxes and employment opportunities, superintendents' developing a good working relationship with local and regional business leaders makes sense. The local Chamber of Commerce provides access to local business leaders, encourages networking and collaboration with local companies. The Chamber of Commerce's purpose in promoting economic development reflects this quotation from the Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce website:

The enduring contribution of the Chamber is its ability to bring people and organizations together around issues critical to regional business and, through a unified voice, effectively convey the needs and priorities of the region to local, state and federal decision makers (The Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce, 2011).

The Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce sees its position in the region as a unifying organizer of local businesses and a political advocate for business and economic development. In the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Area, similar economic development organizations come together under the umbrella of The Allegheny Conference on Community Development. Similarly, the Allegheny Conference positions its agenda through this quotation, "The Allegheny Conference on Community Development is a private, non-profit leadership organization dedicated to improving the economy and quality of life of the Pittsburgh region" (The Allegheny Conference, 2011). Other organizations such as the Penn-Northwest Development Corporation and Butler County Chamber of Commerce represent business interests in most municipalities and counties throughout Pennsylvania. All of these local organizations focus on promoting and developing local business interests and improving the business climates in their geographic regions. A search for individual community business leaders does not need to go further than the board of directors for these organizations and their executive directors (Butler County Chamber of Commerce, 2011). To discover what these organizations actually do to promote economic development, an understanding of the basic concept of "developing local" needs to be established. This concept is called "Economic Gardening."

### 2.3.1 Local Economic Development Strategies

To answer the question of what business leaders are currently doing to promote economic development, understanding of the concepts behind Economic Gardening must be established.

Economic gardening is an entrepreneurial approach to economic development that seeks to grow the local economy from within. First pioneered in Littleton, Colorado in 1989, its premise is that local entrepreneurs create the companies that bring new wealth and economic growth to a region in the form of jobs, tax revenues, per capita income, and a vibrant local business sector. Economic gardening seeks to focus on growing and nurturing local businesses rather than hunting for "big game" outside the area (Hamilton-Pennell, Economic Gardening, 2011).

The premise behind the Economic Gardening concept strives to develop existing assets to create an excellent business climate and local economy and not spend time trying to lure outside businesses into the local economy. Economic Gardening promotes an asset-based approach instead of a needs based approach.

### 2.3.2 Needs-Based vs. Asset-Based

Instead of seeking a quick fix to replace lost jobs by offering relocation incentives and tax breaks to firms outside the region — an approach known as “economic hunting” — they (Littleton, CO) embraced an alternate, long-term entrepreneurial strategy designed to generate new jobs from the community’s existing base of businesses. This approach, which became known as “economic gardening,” yielded remarkable results. (Roth, 2009, p. 17)

Roth (2009) and Allen (2007) discuss the paradigm shift from working to attract businesses to a geographic location to the development of a strong economic climate that supports the growth and development of existing local businesses. Gunderson (2010) in his article *High Growth Firms: The Key to Job Growth, Already in your Backyard* further supports the concept of asset development. Gunderson points to the fact that “These new jobs are overwhelmingly generated through the sustained profitable expansion of existing companies, known as ‘high growth’ firms” (Gunderson, 2010). Existing local assets create the majority of job growth in a geographic region and represent the key to the local community’s economic health. In western Pennsylvania, many local municipalities struggle to deal with the loss of population and contracting local tax bases. Growing and developing their economic and entrepreneurial base is crucial to the economic

health of their communities and school systems. Gunderson (2010) expresses many solid reasons to support existing local businesses and entrepreneurs over attempting to lure outside companies.

Supporting Gunderson, the Economic Gardeners development firm puts forth the following reasons why local businesses should be supported (Economic Gardeners, 2006):

- Local business owners and operators show greater loyalty to the wellbeing of their communities than non-local owners and operators.
- Local businesses support community projects.
- Local businesses keep dollars in their communities.
- Local businesses tend to identify with local culture and heritage and assist in maintaining those values and the distinctiveness of the community.
- Local businesses provide new employment and management opportunities for young people and so enable young people to build a worthwhile career in the local community.
- Local businesses promote local entrepreneurship.
- Local businesses promote product and service diversity.

This strategy shows how local businesses value social capital and how local businesses have a stake in the community (Staples, 2007). Jonathan Q. Morgan (2009) from the University of North Carolina School of Government discusses these points as relating directly to the local context of a community. Morgan points to the ability to leverage local assets, thereby strengthening the local economic infrastructure and making a community attractive to other outside entrepreneurial interests (Morgan, 2009). Small, local communities strengthen their economic bases by creating solid support systems and networks to meet the developmental needs of established businesses already committed to their regions and people. Having already committed to the local community and region, these businesses have a stake in the vitality of the region. As Morgan (2009) points out, a strong local economy serves to attract outside businesses and enterprises to a community. Businesses, looking to relocate into a region, search for a healthy and vibrant community to relocate their upper level leadership (Dooley, 1994). A strong and healthy local economy serves to attract businesses and make strong communities even stronger. As a part of their community, “Schools need to build partnerships with (local) business and industry to promote connections between education and workforce development and (to) understand their needs for a skilled workforce by preparing students for careers and employment in the high demand occupations of the future” (Kerr, 2010). Through extending curriculum to include entrepreneurial education, schools work to ensure the creation of creative and talented business leaders in their region.

### 2.3.3 Nurturing Entrepreneurship

“Fast-growing young firms, comprising less than 1 percent of all companies, generate roughly 10 percent of new jobs in any given year” (Stangler, 2010).

Stangler (2010) makes the point that young aggressive entrepreneurs, while only a small portion of the business-generating sector, create a disproportionately large number of jobs. Finding ways to support and maximize the effectiveness of these “gazelle” organizations is crucial to developing a strong economic base (Birch, 1987). This is further supported in the recent Kauffman report, *Where Will the Jobs Come From?*,

Authors Litan and Stangler analyze Census data, which reveals that two-thirds of new job growth comes from companies that are between one and five years old. Job creation comes from three sources: startups; young firms, ages one to five; and the largest and oldest companies (Stangler & Litan, 2009 as cited in Hamilton-Pennell, 2010).

Litan and Stangler (2009) point out that maximizing economic development and the corresponding job growth means supporting the new and the young while ensuring the strong, old, and reliable companies are still able to thrive and compete.

...new and young companies and the entrepreneurs that create them are the engines of job creation and eventual economic recovery. The distinction of firm age, not necessarily size, as the driver of job creation has many implications, particularly for policymakers who are focusing on small business as the answer to a dire employment situation. (Hamilton-Pennell, 2010)

Hamilton-Pennell (2010) takes this position one step further and states that “new and young companies” are the engines of job creation. Roy Powell (2005), of the Centre for Agricultural and Regional Economics, calls this type of high-risk entrepreneur a swashbuckler (growth) entrepreneur. A swashbuckler entrepreneur takes chances to develop and build his company. If successful, he will employ more people and turn more profits. However, what do local communities need to undertake to create a climate in which these types of young start-ups, “gazelles and swashbucklers,” can flourish?

Questions then arise, who will create this pool of local, young entrepreneurial talent? Who will assume the risk and absorb the training costs? As a key link in the developmental chain, local school districts (high school technology education and business departments in particular) may be best suited to cultivate the next generation of entrepreneurial talent. Do school district superintendents make this connection between secondary school level training and

support for the local economy through workforce development? Before looking at school district leaders and their roles, a note has to be made that not everyone agrees with how to promote community economic development and how to create strong sustainable tax structures.

#### **2.3.4 Not All Research is Positive**

While many see business incubators and local cultivation of small business and entrepreneurship as the way to develop a strong local economic base, some research questions whether the business incubators provide any increased economic growth. Roxas, Lindsay, and Ashill (2008) have stressed that creation of a quality economic climate depends greatly on social acceptance of the risks inherent in entrepreneurship. As seen in the section on community leaders, local and regional government officials significantly influence infrastructure development which in turn directly affects economic growth and stability. If the community leaders are not on board with the needs of local business, economic growth may suffer or even cease. Glaser, Rosenthal, and Strange (2010) cited the lack of compelling evidence to support the connection between local support for a quality entrepreneurial climate and actual impact on entrepreneurship and small business development. Fritsch and Mueller's (2005) research shows a significant positive effect of economic climate policy on actual entrepreneurial activity, but in the long term. While most researchers find that Economic Gardening and entrepreneurial development activities make solid economic sense, many facets can both positively and/or negatively affect economic policy effectiveness. Also, the policies that promote economic climate require a long-term commitment and the Economic Gardening model is still in its infancy as a local, governmentally supported program. Understanding the need for all stakeholders to be actively involved in this long-term commitment, how will or can the Economic Gardening policies impact local school districts?

#### **2.3.5 How Does Economic Gardening Directly Impact or Support Local School Districts?**

Entrepreneurial investment and business development transfer directly into job growth and regional economic stability (Chase, 2008). As a region gains economic strength, it becomes more attractive to outside entrepreneurship and this boosts economic development and growth

(Hamilton-Pennell, 2010). The logical extension is that school districts thrive in times of economic growth because it means more jobs and more tax revenues. This increased employment demand translates into a population growth to fill those jobs, an increased demand for housing and other community services, and a financially healthy community that is able to support the local school system through an extended tax base and other forms of monetary support.

The current trend is to move low and middle level jobs overseas to take advantage of cheaper labor (Friedman, 2007). Districts should be concerned about how this exodus of jobs will impact local businesses and industry workforce needs. Since Economic Gardening can stabilize and grow the local economic tax base (Morgan, 2009), school leaders may decide to revamp their efforts to promote business, education, and community partnerships. As illustrated in many elements of Economic Gardening, the development of a strong culture and environment for economic development requires a determined and coordinated effort among the three primary stakeholders (McFarland & Seeger, 2010). When added to their existing responsibilities, superintendents as facilitators of economic and workforce development face many challenges, which will vie for the already limited revenues, facilities, and instructional time. To gain insight into the economic issues currently facing school superintendents, the researcher needs an understanding of the strategies currently being implemented by school districts to reduce funding gaps between tax revenues and operating expenses.

## 2.4 FUNDING STRATEGIES, SHORT TERM AND LONG TERM SOLUTIONS

In the 2011-2012 school year, all of the public schools in western Pennsylvania experienced cuts in state funding, the elimination of the Dual Enrollment and the Accountability Block and Educational Assistance Grants, and hidden cuts in the loss of state reimbursements for students in charter schools (Neiderberger, 2011). These cuts put the programs they funded in jeopardy and force schools to find alternative ways to continue these successful initiatives. Poorer districts that depend more on the state allocation to fund programs were hit the hardest by the state funding cuts. How will districts go about bridging this gap between funding and operating expenses?

Three temporary solutions include:

**Wage Freezes:** The Pennsylvania School Boards Association published a list of the 169 school districts whose administration, teachers, or staff agreed to a wage freeze for the 2011-2012 school year (Pennsylvania School Boards Association, 2011). At least 93 school districts reached an agreement with their teachers to freeze wages at the 2010-2011 levels. Many districts that had a wage freeze will receive a monetary payback in 2012-2013. An example of this approach is the West Middlesex Area School District collective bargaining agreement that froze wages in the final year of the contract and then completed early-bird negotiations on a five-year contract. This six-year agreement effectively repays the faculty over the final five years of the contract for their willingness to take an immediate freeze in 2011-2012 (West Middlesex Area School District, 2011). These types of agreements push the cost into the future while creating an immediate savings. This maximizes the ability to use time and the value of today's dollars versus the value of tomorrow's dollars to help alleviate the immediate budget impact (Garner, 2004). While cutting costs on the front end, the districts still have the same financial commitment to the faculty and administration at the end of the contract. Many of these solutions represent simply a time shifting of the costs to create a temporary fix. A permanent option would be a reduction in force or R.I.F.ing (firing) employees.

**Cutting Faculty, Programs, or Adding Participation Fees:** To bridge the gap between state funding shortfalls and operating expenses caused by the recession and budget cuts, districts enacted several cost saving measures. The Pennsylvania Association of School Business Officials (2011) reported that school districts cut or eliminated more than 3,556 teaching positions, 809 administrative positions, and 3,641 other employees from their payrolls. These

cuts resulted in 70% of school districts increasing class sizes, doing away with programs, reducing elective offerings, or eliminating full-day kindergarten (PASBO, 2011). To generate revenue, 31% of the districts enacted participation fees for sports and extra-curricular activities or increased the fees charged to outside groups to use school facilities. Another option taken by school districts was to postpone capital improvements.

**Cuts to Capital Improvements, Fund Balances, and Tax Increases:** The Pennsylvania Association of School Business Officials (PASBO) reported that 10% of school districts closed buildings, 37% delayed maintenance to facilities, and many delayed construction or renovation projects. Seven out of ten school districts tapped into their budgetary reserves to balance their budgets, and many districts eliminated the reserve funds to balance their budgets (PASBO, 2011). Depleting entire reserve fund balances points to more budget cuts next year. These types of cost saving measures may be expedient and politically prudent but are stopgap measures that place the district's future stability in jeopardy (McClure, 2009) The last option taken by districts was to increase property taxes. Surprisingly, only 65% of the school districts surveyed by PASBO raised property taxes and only 38% of those districts raised taxes above the Act I index (PASBO, 2011).

The situation faced by small, struggling school districts, revolves around what will happen when the stopgap measures expire. As explained above, only 25% of the 500 Pennsylvania school districts that responded to the PASBO survey increased taxes above the Act I index (PASBO, 2011). While there are many reasons why districts chose not to raise taxes, the most obvious is that property taxation in many districts has reached the maximum limit tolerable by the taxpayers (Merges, 2005). Are these solutions actually solving the problem or pushing it further into the future? What other revenue options are available and being implemented?

#### **2.4.1 Other Revenue Options**

No readily available research exists on other options taken by local school districts to counteract the revenue shortfall, but some districts are investigating long-term solutions to improve the economic stability of their local municipalities and regions.

These options include:

- 1) Partnering with local intermediate units to create in-house cyber academies. The purposes of these academies is to reduce the number of students exiting local school districts for cyber charter schools and to limit the loss of local school funding (Manczka, 2011).
- 2) Creating of side-by-side charter schools so that tuition students can turn into fully funded charter school students (Baldarelli, The community leadership academy, 2011).
- 3) Bringing back outsourced services such as special education students' attending the regional intermediate unit. This move saves money based on the schools' being able to provide services at a lower per pupil cost and allows the district to sell excess student capacity as a tuition service to other districts (Baldarelli, Personnal interview, 2011).
- 4) Continuing development of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Workforce and other STEM related efforts.

One recommendation from the literature is the development of business-education-community partnerships. These partnerships strive to establish a strong, integrated approach to economic development involving all three major stakeholders and were discussed earlier in sections 2.2.4 and 2.2.5. The research of literature uncovered one western Pennsylvania district that is very active in the development of business-education-community partnerships with specific emphasis on workforce development, the Armstrong School District in Armstrong County, Pennsylvania.

#### **2.4.2 Armstrong County Forum for Workforce Excellence**

Mission Statement:

The mission of the Armstrong County for Workforce Excellence is to develop strategic partnerships among education, business and government, which attract, educate, and train students and workers to better prepare a highly skilled workforce. (Armstong Educational Trust, 2010)

The forum's primary goal develops the workforce and economic vitality through collaborations among all stakeholders: students, parents, professionals, businesses, nonprofits, teachers, schools, and communities (Armstong Educational Trust, 2010).

The Armstrong County Forum for Workplace Excellence has several key initiatives:

- The ARMTech Showcase of Industry and Technology Student Forum
- Educator in the workplace programs
- Early career awareness and exploration, establishing a single point of contact for workforce development connections between employers and education for Armstrong County
- Work-related opportunities for students
- STEM-related programming for young women

The purpose of these initiatives is to building a strong workforce with direct ties and relevance to local labor needs (Armstrong Educational Trust, 2010).

The Armstrong County for Workforce Excellence consists of three local organizations that represent the community through Armstrong County Forum, education through the Educational Trust, and business through the Armstrong County Industrial Development Council (Armstrong County IDC, 2010). These organizations, in conjunction with the Armstrong County Board of Commissioners, create the three-way partnership of business, education, and community in Armstrong County. This partnership develops the Economic Gardening model in much the same way as other communities such as San Bernardino, California (See Section 2.5.6).

Some school districts are implementing other initiatives to generate revenue sources or stem the loss of revenues, but fiscal impacts of these remain unknown. The development of business-education-community partnerships, as in the case of the Armstrong School District, is an ongoing endeavor that started several years ago. The big test of the effectiveness of the Armstrong School District approach will be how effectively they develop and train the workforce for the Marcellus Shale industry, which is starting to take hold in Pennsylvania (Marcellus Shale Coalition, 2011). Are the majority of school districts investigating business-education-community partnerships or simply cutting expenses to meet budget constraints?

As outlined in the available literature, many school districts' only financial solution focuses on cutting teaching positions and eliminating programs, but how long before these cuts are not enough? How long before student achievement starts to fall? Continued research into ways to improve revenue streams and create a sustainable tax base needs to occur. Is academic achievement and quality instructional programs enough to create a sustainable tax base, or do school district superintendents need to implement other strategies such as outlined in the Economic Gardening model?

## **2.5 TWO STRATEGIES TO CREATE A SUSTAINABLE TAX BASE**

### **2.5.1 Strategy 1: Academic Excellence**

Superintendents focus their attentions on their district's instructional quality, leaving concerns for local tax structures and development to others. This path assumes a 'field of dreams' strategy of build it and they will come. The assumption is that strong academics lead not only to college enrollments, but also to local returns on investments. Wayne Labs (2008) sees a crucial link between academic excellence and the availability of a quality workforce. Labs (2008) lists workforce quality third in his factors that affect site selection just after supply chain logistics and transportation. In his article *Key Factors Influencing Site Selection Decisions for Data Center Facilities*, Gigerich (2011) lists labor availability and quality fourth behind electricity, natural disasters, and various forms of taxes. Both Labs and Gigerich remain consistent with the research of Dr. Frank Dooley (1994) who listed labor as the fifth consideration for site selection for manufacturing facilities. Superintendents who focus only on academic excellence are working from a traditional premise for instructional and school design. What influence then does a school's academic quality have on local economic development and sustainability of the school district's tax base?

### **2.5.2 Education's Impact on Economic Development**

Michael Peters (2001) in his article *National Education Policy Constructions of the 'Knowledge Economy'*, stresses the "significance of education and training as keys to participation in the new global knowledge economy for the development of 'human resources'; for up-skilling and increasing the competencies of workers; and for the production of research and scientific knowledge" (p. 1). Education, skills development, creativity, and flexibility of skill application will be crucial in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Global Economy (Friedman, 2007). President, George W. Bush (2006) stated this, "America's economic strength and global leadership depend in large measure on ... a strong education system that equips our workforce with the skills necessary to transform those ideas into goods and services that improve our lives and provide our Nation with

the researchers of the future (p. 1).” Peters, Friedman, and Bush emphasize education’s role in maintaining global competitiveness, which translates in economic competitiveness on the local and regional level.

Former Armstrong County Superintendent and current Norwin Area School District Superintendent, William Kerr (2010) sees the school’s role as essential to the creation of a new level of workers through the creation of a “Gold Collar” workforce.

As more high-tech businesses and industries expand or locate in the region, there is a greater need for educated, well-trained “gold collar” workers who possess a strong academic background, sophisticated technical skills and personal commitment to excellence (Kerr, 2010, p. 1).

This philosophy of academic excellence remains a common educational theme regardless of location. Wally Northway (2009), in an article for the *Mississippi Business Journal*, points out that the areas with the highest achieving school districts are the areas with the strongest economic development, and those schools actually attract businesses and manufacturing. Rosie Vassallo, the Executive Director of Madison the City (Mississippi) Chamber of Commerce, states: “(Education) is very important (in luring business and industry). That’s the No. 1 question prospects have, is the schools” (Northway, 2009). With many areas in the south growing significantly in population (Citi-Data.com, 2010), both Northway and Vassallo see the way to attract growth to their area is through strong schools and educational programs. The positions of all these sources supports the premise put forth by Doms, Lewis, and Robb (2010) that entrepreneurial activities migrate to areas with a strong concentration of highly educated and well-trained workers. The question then becomes what accounts for the exodus of highly educated individuals from western Pennsylvania to other areas of the country?

### **2.5.3 Brain Drain and Exodus**

With rising costs, limited revenue growth, and few employment opportunities for graduates, some school districts are preparing students who actually plan to move elsewhere for gainful and meaningful employment. This traditional approach of blanket educational development ignores the actual local employment opportunities and may create a mismatch of educational preparation with the existing labor needs of local businesses. Also, many of these graduates who move away

to find work want to move back to be with family, but employment opportunities remain limited (Citi-Data.com, 2010). The Marcellus Shale gas industry provides a case study of this phenomenon. The rise of Marcellus Shale drilling operations in Pennsylvania created many new jobs for well drillers, but currently most of these positions employ migrant workers from Texas and other parts of the United States. Oil and gas drilling are mobile professions and the skilled Texas workers will leave once the wells are drilled and take their expertise with them (Wishard, Falk, Graham, Hutcheson, & Wicker, 2010). At this time, the oil and gas companies are unable to fill these positions with local skilled labor because of the need for a specific set of gas-drilling related skills. Once the wells are established, local labor will operate and maintain the wells. Also, training programs for these higher-level jobs are just starting to be established in western Pennsylvania.

Just as companies import skilled drilling labor into Pennsylvania, many young people, educated and trained in local and economically depressed areas, plan to move to an area where their educations generate the most money (Dahl, 2002). Greenwood and Hunt (1984) held that

Many factors may underlie such a relationship. Among these are: 1) the skills, inventiveness, and innovativeness of the migrants themselves, who may possess differential endowments of human capital (in the form of education, accumulated skills, or entrepreneurial talent, for example) relative to the population of the sending or receiving areas. (p. 957)

What Greenwood, Hunt, and Dahl point out is the fact that people go where the employment opportunities exist. The quality of their education and skills directly translates into a greater chance of finding quality employment. This migration of quality and trained labor creates or adds to the brain drain in certain areas of western Pennsylvania.

The exodus of educated and skilled human capital increases in areas of higher unemployment such as Pantheon County. Current national educational reforms do not appear to address issues related to local education and local economic development. Investigating deeper, are good schools driving students away from local communities and what are the shorter and the longer-term consequences for both the schools and the local economy? Should superintendents, as national reforms suggest, just dig in and work harder with the hopes that the local economic environment will prosper? This type of approach may create an investment without a measurable return for many school districts. What if, instead, this approach pushes push local districts

toward bankruptcy? Is the creation of business, education, and community partnerships using an Economic Gardening model a feasible long-term solution?

#### **2.5.4 Strategy 2: Economic Gardening**

The Economic Gardening strategy promotes that the concept of school districts and, in particular, their superintendents become more involved in helping to ‘grow’ the local and regional economy and in turn, their own local tax bases. School leadership needs to collaborate with local community and business leaders to create economic development related partnerships (Roth, 2009). Superintendents and their school boards need to be both knowledgeable about and sensitive to the local tax capacities and development options. For example, by limiting tax increases in the short term, local communities might have the additional resources they need to update their infrastructures (i.e. roads, public utilities, and internet/technology capacity) that can then help attract new development, and consequently, a stronger local tax base (McClure, 2010).

School districts are a major source of potential tax burden to the local community, and districts have the ability to control some of that burden. Tax policies that sacrifice infrastructure or undermine basic educational performance could have a greater negative impact on the economic environment. However, tighter control of costs could help ease the tax burden on the community, thereby making a location more supportive of economic development and conducive to general business health (CompetePA, 2009).

Tax dollars are not the only local development issue. Surveys of area businesses that hire local students and invest in globalizing their businesses may lead to greater internationalization of the district’s curriculum (Powell, 2005). Entrepreneurship skills and adult education classes may be introduced in communities where students want to stay, but few jobs are available. Educational institutions that work with businesses in a regional “Economic Gardening” strategy could help ‘grow’ quality sources of skilled or highly trained employees. This, in turn, could promote the economic competitiveness of the area by improving the quality of intellectual infrastructure (Community Futures Alberta, 2007). Pittsburgh is an excellent example of a metropolitan area that has effectively implemented the Economic Gardening strategy, and in 2010 and 2011, is being touted as a turnaround city. With an Economic Gardening strategy that

is technology rich, the area's low cost of living, and the city's number one rating as the best place to relocate (Perman, 2010), Pittsburgh created an environment that supports entrepreneurial and economic development through established high quality labor resources and low fixed costs. Can the rest of the region make the same turnaround?

For example, some school districts might benefit from the development of an economic gardening strategy of creating business-education-community partnerships. These partnerships could be instrumental in the development of strong local and regional economies through small business development and entrepreneurship. This type of development translates into an increased demand for infrastructure and public services, plus creates a vibrant tax base to sustain public services such as schools. In this way, schools become a crucial partner in the development and enhancement of local and regional economic assets. (Also see section 2.3.5 How Does Economic Gardening Directly Impact or Support Local School Districts)

### **2.5.5 Needs-Based vs. Asset-Based**

As stated in the business leadership section (2.3), Economic Gardening emphasizes existing assets and strengths, not the luring of outside businesses to fill an economic need (Allen, 2007). In his presentation *Homegrown Approaches to Creating Sustainable Economies*, Jonathan Q. Morgan (2009) creates a visual of three circles that demonstrates the balance of the social (community), entrepreneurial (business), and human capital (educational) elements found in every local community. Morgan stresses how, with these entities working in an economic gardening partnership, they can create an environment that supports and develops a sustainable local economy and a strong, local tax base. Morgan (2009), Gibbons (2006), and Roth (2009) agree that the local school district's main role is to train a future workforce that can thrive in the community of their childhood. The San Bernardino County School District in San Bernardino, California is an excellent example of creating a strong business-education-community partnership using the Economic Gardening strategy. Morgan (2009), Gibbons (2006), and Roth's (2009) beliefs are demonstrated by the San Bernardino County School District's creation of an economic hub in which the school district fosters the connection between businesses and the

quality workforce. (Also see sections: 2.2.8 Needs-Based vs. Asset-Based, 2.2.9 Nurturing Entrepreneurs, and 2.3.5 Armstrong County Forum for Workforce Excellence <sup>5</sup>.)

### **2.5.6 School Districts as Networking Hubs**

One of the key aspects to ‘Economic Gardening’ is the creation of inter-related supports among the three stakeholders to ensure the developmental health of all three. This form of networking builds capacity and magnifies effectiveness of the regional and local resources (Powell, 2005, p. 2).

Rural and neighborhood schools frequently become a social hub for the community. Athletic events, plays, and graduation ceremonies all bring people together and provide opportunities to network with one another. Being a natural gathering place, the local public school becomes the most logical choice to host these networking events. School superintendents can facilitate structured conversations between other local economic stakeholders. Hosting economic round tables, business brunches, and other events, solely focused on improving dialogue among the school district, community, and businesses are ways that the school district can serve as a think tank for mutual benefit. A strong example of a networking hub is the San Bernardino County School District in San Bernardino, California, which sponsors the Alliance for Education.

#### *Alliance for Education in San Bernardino, California:*

The Alliance for Education is a San Bernardino County partnership with business, labor, government, community, and education to align common goals in order to produce an educated and skilled community that will provide a qualified workforce (San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools, 2006-2010).

The San Bernardino Alliance for Education’s dynamic networking system strives to ensure economic vitality in San Bernardino County. The alliance uses a corporate structure with an executive board and leadership team comprised of the Superintendent of Schools, President of the Arrowhead Credit Union, and the Executive Vice President of the Lewis Operating Corporation. The Alliance for Education boasts 800 separate stakeholders and focuses three

<sup>5</sup> The Armstrong County Forum for Workforce Excellence is another strong example of using the Armstrong County Educational Trust to focus the efforts of various training providers and the Armstrong School District to develop a high quality workforce.

system components: education, family involvement/literacy, and economic workforce development (San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools, 2006-2010).

*Serving the Community's Needs:*

The Alliance represents an unprecedented, evolving commitment of influential leaders in the county who are committed to producing an educated and skilled community that provides a qualified workforce for the continued economic well-being and improved quality of life for all residents. (Thomas, 2006-2010).

The Alliance exists for one focused purpose - the economic well-being of the residents of San Bernardino, California. This alliance connects all facets of the community, including faith-based organizations.

*Actively developing a synergistic community*

The alliance supports family involvement/literacy through:

- Tutoring
- Literacy support training
- AVID program training in homework skills, writing, note taking, and inquiry-based strategies
- Virtual Pre-K training
- Reading buddies
- Resources and instructional staff

The alliance supports economic/workforce development through:

- Job shadowing
- Mentoring
- Internships
- Advisory committee
- Business and industry apprenticeships
- Resources and staff
- Providing specific workforce training (San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools, 2006-2010).

This support system benefits all of the stakeholders by developing strong community and family ties among the school system, the local businesses, and the community as a whole and creates a true Economic Gardening environment. This alliance ties all of the pieces for a quality workforce together under one banner. Just as the Armstrong County School District's regional development program fostered direct involvement of the school district superintendent, the San Bernardino County Schools' program similarly positioned the school district superintendent as a key member of the alliance. In understanding effective group dynamics, one can appreciate the

power gained through coordinating all these stakeholders' efforts toward local economic development. The main premise of Economic Gardening focuses on creating employment opportunities in the local community through economic development. By having a demand for a highly skilled and trained workforce, the homegrown talent (human capital) stays in the local or regional area.

### **2.5.7 Economic Gardening is Designed to Limit or Stop the Brain Drain**

To develop the concepts stated in section 2.5.3, depressed regions and their local municipalities continue to operate quality schools even when the human capital they are creating is leaving to find gainful employment elsewhere (Dahl, G. B., 2002). Michael Dahl (2010), in his article *The Migration of Technical Workers*, frames the key difference between the strategy of pure academic excellence and use of an Economic Gardening model. Michael Dahl states, "Technical workers exhibit substantial sensitivity to differences in wages but they have even stronger preferences for living close to family and friends" (p. 1). G. Dahl and M. Dahl agree that money obviously draws skilled labor and/or college-trained professionals even though the desire to be close to family and friends is stronger. As Michael Dahl (2010) points out, people have a stronger preference to living close to family or friends, and the Economic Gardening model builds directly on that fact

As demonstrated in the San Bernardino County School System, the priority of meeting the workforce needs of businesses and industries strengthens the economy by keeping workforce capital in their local communities (Roth, 2009). As discussed in section 2.3.2, William Kerr (2010) builds on this concept by pointing to the need for local school districts, working with local businesses and industry, to create a "Gold Collar" workforce that will meet the needs of local businesses in the near future. Kerr (2010), Roth (2009), building off the work of G.B. Dahl (2002) and M. Dahl (2010), support building local workforce capacity to fill employment demands using the Economic Gardening strategy. While extensive anecdotal evidence exists in newspaper articles and business journals, true substantial research into Strategy #2, Economic Gardening is virtually nonexistent. Existing literature into the development of human capital and a quality workforce has been referenced in earlier sections of the literature review, yet Economic

Gardening has not been researched well enough to determine its effectiveness. Merging the unproven effectiveness of the Economic Gardening concept with the current fiscal challenges facing local western Pennsylvania school districts, what are the responsibilities of the superintendent to ensure a viable local economy and a sustainable tax base?

## **2.6 SUPERINTENDENT'S RESPONSIBILITIES IN ENSURING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND A SUSTAINABLE LOCAL TAX BASE**

As observed in the previous sections of this chapter, limited research exists regarding defining the role of the superintendent in creating economic development and a sustainable local tax base. Outside of the limited anecdotal evidence provided by the Economic Gardening strategy, research that could be used to guide a superintendent assuming the responsibility of ensuring a school district's fiscal security consists of three dissertations that will be discussed in this section. Regardless of the limited research, many of the community and business leaders view education as crucial to local and regional economic development and fiscal stability. With the migration of businesses to the Sunbelt, many communities in the southern part of the United States see education as a way to attract the businesses and build their local economic vitality.

This quotation from the New Carolina, South Carolina's Council on Competitiveness demonstrates businesses' perceptions regarding education's impact on economic development:

The South Carolina Council on Competitiveness views education and economic development as inextricably linked. But this is not a question of which comes first, such as the chicken or egg debate. It is clear in today's global high-tech economy, that the ability to attract, create and grow a set of robust businesses in South Carolina that create value and improve per capita income is dependent on the caliber of workforce skills and knowledge. M. Edward Sellers, (New Carolina, South Carolina's Council on Competitiveness, 2005).

South Carolina's Council on Competitiveness links high quality education to workforce caliber and economic growth. Does this same attitude exist in Pennsylvania? Do our public school superintendents feel their responsibility is to be an active partner in economic development? Do our public school superintendents understand the impact local school districts are perceived to have in creating and nurturing the partnerships between businesses and the schools that provide their workforce? There is a small body of research literature that gives

insight into the superintendent's role or responsibilities in developing business-education-community partnerships.

### **2.6.1 Existing Literature**

An extensive search of existing literature found three dissertations that are related to the superintendent's role in economic development. Two of these dissertations dealt directly with the issue: *The Superintendents', Business Leaders', and Board Chairmen's Expectations of the Superintendent in the Area of Local Economic Development* by Henry A. Peel (1988) and *The Role of the Public School Superintendent in Local Economic Development* by Cheryl Kelly Thompson (2002). The third dissertation, *A Triangular Model of Relationships: State Government, Economic Development, and Education Policies* by William Hale Kerr, Jr. (1994) examined tax policy, regional workforce quality, and education tax base stability. While not focused directly on the superintendent, a small pool of available scholarly articles and newspaper editorials centers on education's role in economic development. These documents include positive and negative opinions of schools centered on workforce development. It is important to analyze the findings of the dissertations concerning the responsibility of the superintendent to develop and ensure a sustainable local tax base.

### **2.6.2 Dissertation Research on the Superintendent's Responsibility**

Henry A. Peel's (1988) research concluded the following:

1. The school superintendent must make businesses aware of current programs and current school initiatives.
2. The superintendent must establish himself as a viable player in the community's pursuit of economic stability.
3. The majority of business leaders do not view the superintendent as a key figure in economic development.

In 1988, Peel's dissertation, *The Superintendents', Business Leaders', and Board Chairmen's Expectations of the Superintendent in the Area of Local Economic Development*, found that business leaders needed to see the school district's commitment to create a true partnership

through program design and openness for dialogue. To that end, Peel recommended that superintendents review and upgrade existing programs to “insure quality for both the college bound and vocational students” (Peel, 1988, p. 96) and open up these programs for business leaders to be informed and see the value of the superintendent beyond the boundaries of the walls of the school (Peel, 1988). Peel proposed that the superintendent would be the liaison between the businesses and the local school district. The superintendent needed to be aware of business opportunities and the necessary labor resources available or needed to support these opportunities. Peel believed that superintendents were uniquely suited to support industry recruiting efforts and developing good communications with industry recruiters. Finally, Peel (1988) expressed that the superintendent needed “to be available to meet with industry prospects, offer help to industry recruiting groups, and get together with business and industry clients” (Peel, 1988, p. 97).

The most important aspect to Peel’s 1988 research focused on the idea that business leaders and school board chairmen indicated, “that the superintendent’s becoming involved in local economic development would be the choice of the superintendent” (Peel, 1988, p. 98). According to Peel, in 1988 the responsibility fell to the superintendent to decide whether or not to be involved in local economic development. If the superintendent chose not to be involved, local businesses and local governments would effectively work around the school districts. This finding was supported by the third major point of Peel’s research that “business leaders do not view the superintendent as a key figure in economic development” (Peel, 1988, p. 96).

Cheryl Kelly Thompson’s research built directly upon Henry Peel’s research foundations. Cheryl Kelly Thompson’s (2002) *The Role of the public school superintendent in local economic development* stated that “creating quality schools within a community is identified by panelists as the most significant task for school superintendents” (Thompson, 2002, p. 84), but the superintendents could not agree on the interpretation of the word “quality.” Each group of stakeholders had a different perspective and purpose regarding what defined a quality school. Thompson (2002) stated that superintendents must work to create schools that balance these different perspectives and purposes while meeting the preparation needs of the students. Also, Thompson also observed that the need for quality communication was a common thread throughout her research. The problem was that the same language and verbiage used by different segments of the community held different interpretations, and these varied interpretations

required superintendents to be aware of “their audience and act accordingly” (Thompson, 2002, p. 85). Thompson found that superintendents must understand the community’s vision, their role in supporting that vision, and education’s place in that vision. “Schools must be seen as a primary contributor to human capital development and not just as an expenditure” (p. 85). Thompson (2002) stressed the need for superintendents to be “on the cutting edge and not promote obsolete practices” (p. 86). In this way, Thompson’s conclusions supported the anecdotal evidence and opinions expressed by the businesses leaders researched earlier in this review.

Directly focused on the superintendent preparation programs, Thompson (2002) challenged the universities that prepare superintendents to “explore the superintendent’s role in local economic development to better prepare leaders for what is ahead” (p. 86). Thompson felt the national panel that responded to her research project outlined the need for further staff development by universities to better train superintendents to lead initiatives to create stronger business and education partnerships.

Thompson (2002) stated:

Economic development may not be a traditional role, but it is certainly an important one. Superintendents that embrace growth in this area will be better prepared to address business and community needs. School districts can actively participate in community development and not just reflect the current status. Business and school relationships are changing, and superintendents must take the lead in helping to develop strategies in this process or business and government will (p. 87).

Fundamentally, Thompson (2002) felt that the research showed a strong need for superintendents to actively communicate their desires and to pursue and establish a central role for the school district in the economic development of the community. Thompson editorialized that if superintendents were not proactive in developing strategies in this process, the decisions would be made by groups less likely to be considerate of the requirements of the school and its students. Thompson believed that superintendents needed to take responsibility for their district’s economic vitality and not be victimized by the other stakeholders in the local community and regional area.

While not building upon the research of Henry Peel, William H. Kerr’s research supported much of the same findings regarding educational providers needing to be responsive to the local businesses workforce needs. William Kerr (1994) focused primarily on the tax burden

equity, school responsiveness to the business community, quality schools in general, and tax pooling of regional resources to share the tax wealth with surrounding communities that support the workforce of those larger tax generating industries. While Kerr's research mainly addressed tax burden and equity, several key aspects of his research supported the research of Peel and Thompson. Kerr (1994) expressed that one of the primary responsibilities of the superintendent is to develop quality schools that respond to the needs of local businesses and support their growth and development. Kerr (1994) noted that in 1994 the schools were slow to respond to the needs of local businesses and lagged behind in the adoption of curriculum to improve the preparation of specialized-skilled labor. Kerr's (1994) stated that the "competition is very real for fewer, specialized jobs" (p. 78), and foreshadowed the economic realities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century global economy as outlined earlier by Thomas Freidman (2007).

Kerr's findings concurred with both Peel's research in 1988 and Thompson's research in 2002. All agreed that the need for better communication among superintendents, local businesses, and community leaders is crucial for development of business and education cooperation and partnerships. Also, Kerr (1994) observed that the lack of funds hampered schools in moving program development forward and further exacerbated the dichotomy between businesses' workforce needs and the school district's ability to meet them. Kerr exposed the true issue at hand. Businesses struggled to keep up in a changing economy. This struggle translated to higher unemployment, falling real estate values, and lower tax revenues. In turn, the lack of revenue presented a challenge for school districts to implement initiatives to provide the training and preparation to meet industry's changing needs (Kerr, 1994).

Peel (1988), Kerr (1994), and Thompson (2002) all called for more study into the relationships among business, education, and community that to enhance business and education partnerships focused on improving the quality of education. Thompson (2002) stated, "Replicating this study at a state, regional, or local level would provide additional data for comparison" (p. 83). Peel (1988) suggested that the next step would be to "determine a definitive list of expectations of the superintendent in local economic development by determining consensus among all three groups" (business leaders, superintendents, and school board chairmen) (p. 94). Also, other sources of literature regarding the superintendent's responsibilities supported these three research documents.

While education is still the primary goal of the school, development becomes the means to reaching that goal. Subject areas such as math, science, English, and the arts are integrated to support this education-through-development orientation. School-business partnerships, school-based businesses, and school-incubated businesses may form all or part of the curriculum. (Hinz, 2011)

Hinz's position called for similar communication and cooperation among businesses, education, and community. Hinz viewed these partnerships as the way to maximize the effectiveness of the instructional process and the positive impact of the school on the local economy. This report aligned with the research of Peel, Kerr, and Thompson. As seen in the previous sections, a number of sources exist from the commercial print media that support the creation of business, education, and community partnerships and attempt to document these partnerships' validity, but the amount of actual structured research is extremely limited. Also, while most of the print media wrote positively of the superintendent and school systems supporting economic development and working to build a sustainable tax base, not everyone agreed.

### **2.6.3 Workforce Development is Bad Vision**

Some opinions expressed opposition to creating schools that focus solely on workforce quality and job readiness as seen in this editorial by Philip Rossano. While not scholarly research, Rossano (2000) questioned the foresight of the West Virginia legislature for requiring career-focused courses for high school students. Rossano (2000) forecasted these courses as limiting the options of college-bound students because each required elective eliminated a chance for students to take college preparatory classes. Rossano felt this impeded students' opportunities to take the full sequence of arts electives and saw this legislation for workforce preparedness actually lowering students' chances to find high paying jobs. In an article for *Family Magazine*, Kerr (2010) actually supported this view in stating:

In addition to the emphasis on core competencies in reading, mathematics and science, we must not lose sight of an appreciation for history, writing and literature, as well as music, art education and the performing arts. In an international economy, world languages are essential and important to the educational process. (Kerr, 2010)

Many among educational professionals and the general public relate to Rossano's position that a balance and understanding of the whole student's growth is just as important as

academic quality. Kerr (1994), Peel (1988), and Thompson (2002) expressed the key to the superintendent making good decisions is based on strong communication and open dialogue with business leaders, but Rossano (2000) called for an approach focused on college preparedness and academic achievement. Clearly, Rossano favored Strategy #1, the Academic Achievement model, and Kerr, Peel, and Thompson favored Strategy #2, the Economic Gardening model. Regardless of position, limited research exists regarding the superintendent's responsibilities as they relate to economic development or ensuring tax base stability.

## **2.7 THE NEED FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

The limited amount of available research demonstrates the need for further study. While the three existing studies were completed in three different locations, the results appear to be similar. A time span of 16 years exists between the three studies, and many expectations for schools have changed over that time period. Because of the urgency of budgetary cuts currently occurring in Pennsylvania, understanding how superintendents and school districts facilitate and promote economic stability and development is crucial to many districts' economic survival. To be able to move forward with confidence, there is a need for a more comprehensive study of school districts and their superintendents' responsibilities in supporting economic development.

Examining the available research for all questions, a dichotomy of competing needs emerges. Community leaders control several elements that directly impact economic growth but do not always make decisions that support economic growth. Business leaders want cooperation from local and regional governments, but a fine line exists between incentives and handouts. School leaders find themselves in precarious financial situations and need to be pro-active to solve the problems ahead. Obviously, even though these three groups need one another's support, they do not necessarily work well together. To complicate the situation, research remains inconclusive regarding the effectiveness of the Economic Gardening model because of the inability to assess the success of the long-term commitment involved.

The existing research shows three separate entities making decisions, each impacting the other two entities with no real understanding of their needs. This climate actually promotes

conflict and miscommunication. With the current funding issues and political environment in the state government, school districts and the superintendents that lead them must find solutions quickly. Charter schools, vouchers, and depressed local economies in many rural school districts, coupled with state budget cuts and the Act 1 tax referendums put school finance at the forefront of every board agenda in western Pennsylvania. Today's realities call for bold and decisive decision making by school districts and the superintendents who lead them. These decisions cannot be made from a position of naiveté. At this time, a study focusing on strategies actually being implemented in school districts in the western Pennsylvania region is important. This research will assist public school superintendents in making critical decisions to keep their school districts strong and instructional programs intact.

### **3.0 CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

Due to the limited research available, the collective case study (Stake, 1994) focused on acquiring critical insights into the superintendent's responsibilities to develop, maintain, and ensure a sustainable tax base. This chapter explains the research process as it moved from the core research questions through the research methods and the questions asked of interview candidates. The chapter also outlines the system to process and interpret the data collected, the format to present the data, and the analysis of the data that lead to recommendations for possible action and future research. As discussed earlier, the conditions creating the revenue shortfalls were long-term and required solutions that generated renewable funding sources well into the future. To frame the purpose of the research study, an understanding of the issues driving the research was essential.

#### **3.2 THE STUDY**

This research study focused on understanding the needs of the local community and business leaders in regard to the impact of educational funding on workforce preparation and of the viability of the local economic climate on taxation capacities and school district sustainability. As discussed in the review of the literature, many sources believed that creating an environment that nurtured entrepreneurial activity and promoted economic development represented the most practical solution. Did the current stakeholders in the local economic community agree with this belief? What did these stakeholders recognize as integral activities that created effective

business, education, and community partnerships, and what were the superintendent's responsibilities to implement these activities? In examining the economic realities of the local municipalities and school districts being studied, the researcher used visual mapping techniques to represent the interaction patterns of the stakeholders. These representations were created through examining the interests, beliefs, and perspectives that shaped the stakeholders' decision making. In addition, the researcher analyzed the superintendents' fiscal and educational strategies as they related to the political and economic realities facing the school districts in 2012.

### 3.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the limited existing research regarding relationships of Business, Education, and Community in ensuring coordinated long-term economic development, a more in-depth study of the issue was appropriate. The following research questions focused on uncovering effective strategies for a superintendent to become a catalyst for economic development and a sustainable local school district tax base:

*Question #1:* How does the literature frame two possible long-term economic development strategies: "Academic Excellence" and "Economic Gardening"?

*Question #2:* How do local leaders, including superintendents, support education for local economic development?

*Question #3:* To what extent does professional and social networking provide support for education and local economic development?

*Question #4:* How are these local leaders responding to current education initiatives being promoted by Pennsylvania's legislative leaders?

As determined in the literature review, there are specific groups of people representing the three stakeholder groups in the case study: e.g. township or borough supervisors, presidents of chambers of commerce and community or regional development corporations, and school superintendents. The questions explore the actions of all the stakeholders in the economic

process as follows:

Question #1 looks directly at what the existing literature discusses about school districts' implementation of "Academic Excellence" and "Economic Gardening" and their perceived levels of success.

Question #2 investigates the efforts to use education to support and promote economic development on the local and regional level.

Questions #3 examines the effectiveness of networking efforts among the stakeholders in the business educational, and community partnership, model?

Question #4 investigates the leaders' opinions regarding the positive or negative impacts of current Pennsylvania legislative education initiatives on school quality and economic development?

By identifying the superintendent's responsibilities, the case study format assisted in guiding the decision-making process to maximize school leadership's impact on economic development and tax base sustainability.

### **3.4 THE CASE STUDY REASONING AND STRUCTURE**

Having established the need for further research, the researcher designed a collective instrumental case study to effectively gather, analyze, and draw conclusions from the research data to delineate the superintendent's responsibilities in promoting economic development and the creation of a sustainable tax base. The case study model was selected because of the exploratory nature of the research. With limited research available, "the case study inquiry copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result relies on multiple sources of evidence" (Yin, 1994, p. 13). The researcher designed the study to explore how school superintendents were grappling with revenue shortfalls and long-term funding issues. The case study model was designed specifically to deal with the real time solutions being implemented by these superintendents and their districts. Hancock and Algozzine (2006) stated "doing case study research means identifying a topic that lends itself to in-depth analysis in a natural context using multiple sources of

information” (p. 16). Being faced with strong economic challenges, how superintendents dealt with this financial crisis and collaborated with other stakeholders to find long-term solutions was well suited for a case study research design.

The actual study of each of the seven school districts and their local communities consisted of three separate elements:

- 1) A document research phase consisting of a study of available census data, enrollment data from the Open PA gov.org website, financial data from each district’s Annual Financial Report (AFR), and community values data from local municipalities’ Comprehensive Plan.
- 2) A short business manager survey to obtain current school year financial statistics not readily available on the PDE website.
- 3) An interview phase consisting of a three-tiered interview process of business, education, and community stakeholders (Soy, 2006; GTTP, 2011).

The first two research data sources were used to create a well-grounded contextual picture of each district’s economic situation and their supporting communities’ cultural values relating to economic development. This contextual picture served as the background for the superintendent’s interview data and the strategies superintendents were implementing to deal with the existing economic realities. In turn, the superintendent’s interview data then was triangulated against the perspectives and perceptions of local business and community leaders as to the school districts’ roles in promoting local and regional economic growth. The use of these multiple sources added validity to the findings and then was compared and contrasted with the research of Kerr (1994), Peel (1988), and Thompson (2002). Supporting this, Stake (1994) stated “triangulation has been generally considered a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation” (p. 241). Because the case studies were to be combined into one collective case study, the design of this study was to implement an instrumental case study model to facilitate the understanding of the superintendent’s responsibilities in promoting economic development and a sustainable tax base (Stake, 2006).

The basis of the instrumental case study model was to gather empirical data regarding the enacting of the two competing strategies of “Academic Excellence” and “Economic Gardening” or other revenue generating strategies (Bassey, 1999). The instrumental case study best suited the

study of these economic strategies because it was designed to take an in-depth look at the individual school districts (cases) and expand the researcher's understanding of the larger economic issues that affected many school districts throughout Pennsylvania (Stake, 1994).

Using the Olympus Mount Region of Pantheon County (see 3.5.1), the researcher used an instrumental case study model to examine how the seven school districts and their corresponding communities responded to the fiscal crisis of 2011-2012 and their long-term strategic economic development plans. The instrumental case study model was specifically designed to research how people dealt with a pre-determined set of issues and not the people themselves. The object of the instrumental study was to examine the strategies and solutions to an issue, which was why the instrumental case study model was ideal for this study (Stake, 1995). In investigating the seven school districts, the individual instrumental case studies merged into a collective case study of the competing strategies and the superintendents' immediate actions to remedy the current funding shortfalls. Corroborating this, Stake pointed out that the collective case study was "not the study of a collective but an instrumental study extended to include the data findings of several cases" (Stake, 1994, p. 237).

This collective case study format provided data representing the seven districts and their strategies to serve as an evidentiary base for the study and was used in the cross-case analysis process (Yin, 1994). This study was a collective case of cases study, which was designed to uncover what was actually being enacted and not to be a proponent for either the Academic or Economic Gardening strategies (Tananis, C., personal communication, 2012). The purpose of this study was not to portray any individual school district or superintendent but to synthesize the lessons learned from all of the case studies to provide insights into perceived best practices in promoting economic sustainability and growth. Yin (1994), Stake (2006; 1994), Bassey (1999), and Gerring (2007) all supported the individual case study as one of the strongest research methods to gain empirical-exploratory data and combining the cases into a collective case of cases study design to synthesize the research data into recommendations to guide the decision making. Because of this, the researcher viewed the collective case study format as the best research structure for this research project. Before discussing components of the actual study, an understanding of the rationale for selecting the Olympus Mount Region was needed.

### **3.4.1 Region to be Studied**

The extended Olympus Mount Region of Pantheon County consisted of seven school districts in a former steel-producing region. By using a small regional study, the researcher assessed a geographic area that contained a wide range of economic diversity and was representative of western Pennsylvania. John Gerring (2007) in *Case Study Research, Principals and Practice* stated that the diverse case selection strategy “has as its primary objective the achievement of maximum variance among relevant dimensions” (p. 97). As was seen in the analysis of the Olympus Mount census data, the Olympus Mount metropolitan area reflected three distinct economic growth rings generated from the life cycle of the steel industry and other related manufacturing industries (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2011). While none of these districts represented the most affluent areas in Pennsylvania, these communities and their school districts represented a diverse set of economic demographics, making them an excellent choice for further study. The statistical research phase of the collective case study used census data to examine the economic dichotomy of the region and illustrated the diverse economic realities of the communities that made up the Olympus Mount Region.

### **3.4.2 The Statistical and Cultural Research Phase**

The gathering of statistical and cultural research was designed to give context to the interview data and served to complete each case study by providing the necessary background information to base the researcher’s analysis (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). The data was gathered from five sources: 2000 and 2010 US censuses, Open PA gov.org, each district’s AFR, local municipalities’ Comprehensive Plans, and a short business manager survey. These sources created a financial and cultural picture of the local communities that made up their local school districts. The researcher gathered the information listed below from each of the sources named above.

The researcher used the 2000 and available 2010 census data to create an economic picture of each school district and its supporting communities.

This data consisted of:

- Population change from 2000 to 2010
- Median housing value
- Median income
- Percentage of population below the poverty level
- Employment statistics (e.g. unemployment, types of employment by percentage, and major industries.)

The researcher accessed the Open PA gov.org website to gather statistics on:

- District enrollment trends

The researcher requested a PDF file of the Annual Financial Report (AFR) from the business managers to access the following data:

- Revenue sources and amounts (section REV-1 and REV-2)
- Tuition and charter school expenses (section SCHED-3-TUIT)
- Healthcare and other benefits (section SCHED-10-HCBS)
- Revenues, expenditures, and changes to fund balance (section GOV-5, GOV-6, and REBAG)

The AFR was a report that was filed with the state of Pennsylvania by November 1, 2011. This report supplied a relatively complete financial picture of each district's prior year's financial situation (Buchanon & Swaney, 2012). The sections of the report used for the study were piloted via phone, email, and face-to-face discussions with three area business managers to ensure that these sections contained the appropriate data needed to compile each district's financial profile.

To obtain a cultural perspective on the local municipalities that made up the school districts in the study, the municipalities' Comprehensive Plan was accessed. The comprehensive plan provided insight into the predisposition of the local municipalities regarding infrastructure, residential and business growth, and willingness to partner with the school district to promote economic growth and sustainability of both the school district and community. The following information was gathered from the comprehensive plan:

- Key opportunities and challenges
- Community goals and objectives
- Plans for infrastructure development

- Long range plans for residential housing development
- Municipal philosophies behind promoting economic development
- Integration of school district needs and cooperative efforts

These data sources, combined with the Business Manager Survey, assisted in providing context to the interview data collected during that phase of the research.

### **3.4.3 Business Manager Survey**

Through surveying the business managers of the seven districts included in the study, the researcher accessed public records for the current school year that were not readily available to the general public.

This survey consisted of:

- Annual budget figures
  - Gross budgetary figure for 2011-2012 school year
  - Millage rates and amount of revenue generated per mil
  - Approximate projected 2011-2012 school year fund balance
  - Previous year's fund balance usage
  - Position eliminated through either furlough or attrition
  - Percentage of increase or decrease for:
    - Professional salaries
    - Non-professional salaries
    - Healthcare and other benefits package

(See Appendix E for the Business Manager Survey)

The business manager survey data compiled with the other community cultural and statistical data sources was used to define the financial and cultural parameters faced by the school districts in the case study. This data, in combination with the thematic concepts from the literature review, served as a frame of reference for the interview data collected during the second phase of the study.

### **3.4.4 Design and Structure of the Interview Phase**

The study applied a closed and open-ended interview instrument to investigate the actual strategies employed to foster economic development and create a sustainable tax base. This study researched the perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of the business, community, and educational leaders in facilitating the economic development process in the Olympus Mount Region. Using a structured interview process that blended elite, In-depth, and Personal interviewing techniques (see sections 3.5.6, 3.5.7, and 3.5.8 for more explanation), the researcher conducted a three-round interview process starting with the seven school district superintendents. Due to the financial focus of the interview, the superintendents had the option of asking their business managers to participate. The second round of interviews involved business leaders, and the third round involved local community and regional government officials. The interviews incorporated a 45-minute closed and open-ended blended questioning format. The open-ended design to the interview questions necessitated the inclusion of prompting techniques designed to elicit more in-depth conversations with the interviewees. The researcher used a snowball<sup>6</sup> technique of selecting business and community leaders after the first round. Using a combination of In-depth and elite interview techniques, the researcher designed ten (10) to twelve (12) open-ended questions and prompts to permit the participants to “teach him (the interviewer) what the problem, the question, (and) the situation, is” (Dexter, 2008, p. 19).

### **3.4.5 Question Design and Interview Techniques**

The instrumental cases used a structured interview format. In the structured interview, the interviewer created well-defined questions that were asked in a specific sequence. This type of question development required the researcher to have a strong knowledge of the subject prior to entering into the interview process (Crawford, 1997). The interviewer used the same open-ended

<sup>6</sup> The snowball technique is a method of eliciting the recommendations of current interviewees to ascertain names of strong candidates for the next round of interviews. “Although they violate the principles of sampling, the use of snowball strategies provides a means of accessing vulnerable and more impenetrable social groupings” (Atkinson & Flint, 2001). By using recommendations of interviewees from one round to build the list of interview candidates for the next round, the researcher is able to access interviewees that are considered to be key to the economic development process who may not be accessible through other sources.

questions with all interviewees. This approach both facilitated a faster interview, and created results that were simple to analyze and compare (Bailey, 2007). The researcher chose the structured interview format because it merged well with the expectations of the interviewees targeted with elite interview techniques.

In order to elicit frank and forthright responses, the researcher used the elite interview format. This format was suitable for politicians or other “elites” who possessed specific expertise about the research topic. In the process of studying the Olympus Mount economic development environment, the researcher needed to recognize the perspectives of key stakeholders (elites) and issues that they saw as important to improving the economic viability of the Olympus Mount Region. This understanding of the premise of interviewing expanded to include the development of Dexter’s (2008) structure for elite interviews.

It (an elite interview) is an interview with *any* interviewee-and stress should be placed on the word ‘any’- who in terms of the current purposes of the interviewer is given special non-standardized treatment. By special, non-standardized I mean:

1. Stressing the interviewee’s definition of the situation,
2. Encouraging the interviewee to structure the account of the situation,
3. Letting the interviewee introduce to a considerable extent his notions of what he regards as relevant (Dexter, 2008, p. 18).

Giving the interviewees the latitude to reframe the issue to match their perspectives provided insight into their specific situations and perspectives. Incorporating this understanding of context assisted in the development of recommendations for collaborations among the business, community, and educational leaders. In an elite interview “Interviewers need to gain the trust of their respondents in order to collect high quality data...and researchers should attempt to build a rapport with elite subjects from the moment they first contact them to the interview itself and beyond the interview” (Harvey, 2011, p. 433).

Since each stakeholder was interviewed only once, in-depth interview techniques were employed. The researcher encouraged the interviewee to share his opinions and perceptions through a menu of prompts. These prompts served to pull out contrasts, connections, categorizations, specifics, or specializations (Seigle, 2011). Kvale (2008) stated that the use of extending prompts gave clarity to the answers by letting the interviewee provide context to his answers. The incorporation of the prompts coupled with the succinct design of the open-ended questions promoted longer and more elaborate answers (Kvale, 2008). While the structured

questions were consistent among all interviews in each round, the small prompting phrases, which elicited more in-depth responses, varied among interviews.

Because of the single interview format, the interviewer worked to incorporate Personal interviewing techniques whenever possible. This technique allowed the researcher to make adjustments to the pace and style in the interview to bring out the best in the interviewee (Hannabuss, 1996). Personal interviewing promoted quality human interaction to elicit genuine responses from the interviewees. The purpose of using both personal and elite strategies helped to move past a formal interview process toward more frank and truthful dialogue. Schultz (1967) stated “During the interview, the interviewer will work diligently to develop rapport without implying personal opinions or judgment about the respondent’s answers” (Fowler & Mangione, 1990). With an established basis of interviewing techniques, the next step was the selection of participants and the design of the interview process.

### **3.5 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS**

Three different groups who were knowledgeable about the Olympus Mount Region and Pantheon County’s economic development issues and tax base limitations participated in the interviews: a) superintendents, b) executive level business leaders, and c) borough council members and township supervisors. The superintendents’ pool of interviewees was predetermined. Seven superintendents received invitations to participate. The superintendent selection was based solely on there being an acting superintendent in a school district in the expanded\*\* Olympus Mount Region. (The expanded Olympus Mount Region consists of the metropolitan area of a former steel region in Pantheon County, Pennsylvania.) The order of interviews for the superintendents started with the southern most school district and proceed based on the individual superintendent availability. All sitting superintendents participated in the complete interview and research process.

### 3.5.1 Snowball Selection of Elite Interviewees

In order to collect as much pertinent information and insight as possible, the interviewer used the elite and snowball interview selection techniques to identify additional business and community leaders. To start the business and community leader snowball selection technique, the first business interview was the President and CEO of the Penn-Northwest Development Corporation. The Penn-Northwest Development Corporation was “a 501(c)3 private, non-profit economic development organization focusing on attraction of new business and industrial investment to the Pantheon County, Western Pennsylvania area” (Seitz, 2000). As the President and CEO of the Penn-Northwest Development Corporation, Mr. Randy Seitz was hired for his skills as a community and economic development specialist who focuses on “attracting business investment that create real family-wage sustaining jobs” (Seitz, 2000). Mr. Seitz’s selection followed the concept of the elite interview selection process and was based on his position as a business and community development leader (Dexter, 2008). His perspectives and influence were integral to economical development in the Olympus Mount Region. At the end of his interview, Mr. Seitz was asked to recommend at least two business leaders and two community leaders that represented specific organizations or communities in the Olympus Mount Region. The snowball selection process continued from interview to interview with the researcher requesting specific recommendations for business and community leaders to be interviewed so that all school districts in the study’s geographic area were represented. When more than one business leader for a particular community existed, the researcher selected the business leader from the organization that had the largest influence over economic activity in the area represented (ex. a president of a chamber of commerce, etc.).

The snowball technique was a method of asking a person who had already participated in an interview to recommend another person that might have additional specific knowledge about a particular issue. “Although they violate the principles of sampling, the use of snowball strategies provides a means of accessing vulnerable and more impenetrable social groupings” (Atkinson & Flint, 2001). Combining the snowball and elite selection processes, the superintendents and business leaders were asked to recommend select community leaders, knowledgeable about economic, infrastructure, and taxation issues in the Olympus Mount Region, to participate in the study. Interviewing a pre-identified group of stakeholders uncovered

the issues and provided insights into the perspectives of those key leaders regarding those specific research questions (Kerr, 1994). Due to the study's constraints of size and scope, the interviewer met with twenty-two strategic people: seven superintendents, eight business leaders and seven community leaders. Because more interviews were not required, the researcher based his interview design on a single interview with each participant and one participant per each stakeholder group. The number of interviewees represented one superintendent, one business leader, and one community leader for each of the seven school districts represented and the President and CEO of the Penn-Northwest Development Corporation. Employing the elite and snowball interviewee selection techniques, the following interview process was implemented.

### **3.6 OUTLINING THE INTERVIEW PROCESS**

Data collection incorporated a combination of interviewing strategies that blended the Personal, In-depth, and elite interview techniques into a structured, open-ended interview design. The interview participants were key business, education, and community leaders who were best able to speak knowledgeably about the economic development environment in the Olympus Mount Region in Pantheon County.

Dr. William H. Kerr agreed to preview and assess the open-ended questions for the interview process. Dr. Kerr provided feedback and suggestions regarding the design and wording of the questions and the structure of the interviews. The incorporation of Dr. Kerr's recommendations served to finalize the questions into a deliverable format and sequence, which, along with the appropriate prompting techniques, elicited in-depth responses from the interviewees. Once completed, the interview questions were piloted using superintendents, business, and community leaders from outside the geographic research area.

The interviews occurred during the months of April and May in 2012. The development of an interview guide assisted in the delivery of the open-ended questions. All interviewees received a standard letter of permission prior to the interview (Appendix E.2). This letter included: identification of the researcher, purpose of the research, a guarantee of anonymity, data

used, and information security. Telephone calls, emails, and texts facilitated the finalization of interview dates and times (Kerr, 1994).

With the permission of the interviewees, a digital recording was made and transcribed of all interviews. All recordings were identified by interviewee number and secured by the researcher. The researcher retained all recordings until the dissertation was finalized and served as primary custodian of all of the digital recordings and other cataloging information. Once the dissertation was finalized, all recordings were destroyed. With the use of the snowball selection technique with both the superintendents and the business leaders, the first and second round interviews took place concurrently. Together, the first and second round interviewees built the pool of community leaders to be interviewed in the third round.

### **3.6.1 First Round Interviews**

For purposes of this study, superintendents of the following school districts were requested to participate through a letter requesting their participation and follow-up phone calls if applicable: Farrell, Greenville Area, Hermitage Area, Reynolds Area, Sharon City, Sharpsville Area, and West Middlesex Area. The superintendent interview focused on funding issues, implemented solutions, maintenance programs, business and community partnerships, and promotion of district competitiveness and economic viability. The final question for the superintendents asked them to recommend business and community leaders to be interviewed. (The superintendent interview questions can be accessed in Appendix B.1.)

### **3.6.2 Second Round Interviews**

The second round of interviews included economic development, regional, and local business leaders since the jobs needed to create a sustainable tax base came from these entities. Interviewee selection for the study's second round of interviews incorporated a Purposeful Sampling method and more specifically, the expert sampling method in that the process "involves(ed) the assembling of a sample of persons with known or demonstrable experience and expertise" (Trochim, 2006) The criteria for selection of these individuals focused on their

involvement with local and regional economic development and their interest in a highly trained-quality workforce. Their positions in the business community appropriately situated them to recommend key community leaders who could be critical to the quality of this study. As with the superintendents, the business leaders received a letter and follow-up phone call to request their participation in the study. The business leaders' interview questions focused on the impact of school funding cuts on workforce quality, economic impacts from the funding cuts, ways districts could support economic development, and ways to make school more economically competitive and viable. (The business leader interview questions can be accessed in Appendix B.2.)

### **3.6.3 Third Round Interviews**

Seven major community leaders, one from each of the seven school districts in the Olympus Mount Region, participated in the third round of interviews. The superintendents and business leaders interviewed recommend these participants. The only stipulation required that they were currently involved in the local community government as an elected official. As with the superintendents and business leaders, the community leaders received a letter and follow-up phone call to request their participation in the study. The community leaders' interview questions focused on ways to promote economic growth and stability, the role of the local public school in the economic growth process, the economic competitiveness and viability of the local public schools, and barriers to local economic growth and stability. (The community leader interview questions can be accessed in Appendix B.3.)

Upon completion of this process, the researcher transcribed the interviews, organized the data into categories, and analyzed it for trends, commonalities and conflicting views of economic and tax base issues faced by these schools districts, businesses, and communities. The interview responses were analyzed using the perspectives generated in the literature review, the census and Open PA gov.org data, and the business manager survey responses. (The complete set of interview questions can be accessed in Appendix B)

### **3.7 SEVEN CASES COLLECTED INTO ONE COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY**

The researcher compiled and referenced the data from each school district through the use of unique identifying numbers. The statistical and cultural data, the business manager survey, superintendent, business leaders, and community leader interview data helped to create a clear picture of each individual district's strategic economic development and tax base situation. The resulting seven pools of data formed the collective case study, which the researcher analyzed and cross-referenced for common themes and strategies and their effectiveness (Stake, 1994). Those themes were compared to important conceptual themes indicated by the literature. The following section describes the data analysis process.

#### **3.7.1 Data Collection and Transcription**

All the interviewees agreed to allow recording of their interviews. The interviewer catalogued and filed all participant information forms, consent forms, and labeled recordings to ensure that no secure information was compromised (Seidman, 2006). Upon completion of an interview, the researcher created a transcript using a cleansed transcript format (Boyd, 2006). By cleansed transcript, the researcher used a field notes style of transcription, which contained direct quotations or near direct quotations to provide an "insider" type perspective (Patton, 2002). Due to the quantity of interviews and the number of interview questions, those transcripts were not verbatim but retained all essential quotations and responses that related to the strategies being studied and the existing research literature. Using the recording, the researcher listened to the interview and annotated the written transcription to include pauses, emphasis in intonation, and emotional expressions, which gave the interview data dimensionality (Kvale, 2008). The researcher's personal perceptions and feelings were added to the annotated transcript to assist in the interpretation of the interview data and to reflect the dynamics of the interactions between the researcher and the interviewee (Bailey, 2007). Upon completion of all the interviews and transcriptions, the researcher used a three-tiered process to code and align the interview data.

### 3.7.2 Coding

The coding process served to filter the interview into usable chunks of data that could be further analyzed to generate the findings of the research (Patton, 2002). The first level of coding, or filtering the data, occurred prior to the interview when the researcher designed the actual interview questions. The next two levels of coding served to further sort and align the interview data. The initial coding of the interview data consisted of coding any data that was deemed potentially useful for analysis (Bailey, 2007). Once the initial coding was completed, a second level of focused coding occurred. The focused coding process “further reduce(d) the data by identifying and combining the initial coded data into larger categories” (Bailey, 2007, p. 129) that contain multiple codes. This type of filtering of the data served as the first stage of analysis. As the coding process was being carried out, the researcher made memos or tentative notes about the links between ideas and the existing research data. Memoing served to construct connections among the interview data to the strategies of Academic Excellence and Economic Gardening (Bailey, 2007). In his book *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Research*, Saldaña (2009) gave novice researchers common sense guidelines to follow in sorting through the relevant and irrelevant data.

Saldaña (2009) suggested the following focusing strategies for working with the data: 1) Create a “Top Ten” list of quotes from the interview data and proceed to arrange in an order of importance going “from the expository to the climatic, from mundane to insightful, from the smallest detail to big picture, etc.” (p. 187). Saldaña’s point was to set a parameter and workable limitations to organize and analyze the interview data. 2) Saldaña stated, if after the “Top Ten” approach, the researcher still didn’t have a handle on the key issues, the researcher should “select the three (and only three) major codes, themes, and/or concepts” (p. 187) from the data and find the dominant code or theme of the three and build from that point. Once the codes were selected and prioritized by importance to the topic, the researcher then analyzed the relationships and/or influences the dominant code or theme had on the other two thematic codes selected and built his analysis from that starting point (Saldaña, 2009). As a novice researcher, the researcher saw Saldaña’s suggestions as a starting point for the analysis of the interview data and a means of creating meaningful conclusions from the data. Once the interview coding process was complete, a deductive analysis of the data occurred to create a tendency rating for each of the interviewees.

### 3.7.3 Deductive Content Analysis

Using vocabulary found in the literature, the researcher created two separate lists of words that represented the strategies of Academic Excellence and Economic Gardening. The generated lists were piloted by the researcher via email to several educational and business leaders to assess and make suggestions for additional words to be added to each list. Upon collection of the piloted suggestions, the researcher condensed the list down to 10 words (word groups) that represent Academic Excellence and 10 words (word groups) that represent Economic Gardening. Using these lists as an analysis tool, the researcher tallied the number of times each word or word group was referred to in each interview (see Appendix D [p.262] for the word/concept tool). A numerical value of -1 was assigned to Academic Excellence and +1 to Economic Gardening. The numerical data was totaled for both the Academic Excellence and Economic Gardening. Once totaled, the smaller number was subtracted from the larger number and then divided by the total number of responses to generate a percentage preference score for each interviewee.

Ex.

25 responses in the Academic Excellence category vs. 46 responses for the Economic Gardening category would be used to calculate a percentage preference using the following formula:

$46 \text{ (Economic Gardening responses)} - 25 \text{ (Academic Excellence responses)} = 21$   
response difference.

The total number of responses then divided by the difference.

$$21 \div 71 = 0.296$$

The difference is used because it represents the imbalance in responses for either Academic Excellence or Economic Gardening.

(This score then would be placed into a table to compare the preferences of the interviewees.)

A score between negative one to zero represented a tendency toward Academic Excellence and a score between zero to a positive one a tendency toward Economic Gardening. These scores were used to create a tendency chart for all interviewees. This technique is called *Content Analysis* and was used to quantify how often specific themes were addressed in the

interview text (Kvale, 2008). This tendency chart then was combined with a visual representation of the interactions among stakeholders to assist in the analysis of the interview data.

#### **3.7.4 Charting Case Stakeholders Interrelations and Inter-case Relations**

“In an effort to analyze qualitative data, researchers sometimes organize their data visually to gain insight into the setting and its participants” (Bailey, 2007, p. 151). The concept of Economic Gardening and business, education, and community partnerships was based on interrelations or interactions among the stakeholders. Through analysis of the coded interview data, the researcher uncovered the linkage patterns among the stakeholders in each individual case study. To visualize these case-by-case relationships for further analysis, the researcher created a graphic depiction of the interactions and connectivity of the stakeholders interviewed. This visual graphic consisted of three circles representing the individual stakeholders interviewed and directional arrows that depicted the flow of communication among the interviewees. This visual reduced the interactive complexities down to a simple graphic that assisted in understanding the level of connectivity among stakeholders (Yamamoto & McClure, 2011). Upon completion of the flow charts, inductive analysis of the actual coded interview data occurred.

#### **3.7.5 Preparation of Matrices**

Once the focused coding and memoing was completed, the researcher built matrices of the coded phrases to facilitate cross-referencing of related material between the different stakeholder interviews. Using the research questions as a guide, the researcher combined similar or related data for analysis. Research question #3 was represented thoroughly in all three sets of interview questions and lent itself well to cross-analysis of the interview data.

To prepare the data for analysis, the researcher constructed a *response matrix* for each of the related interview questions and transferred the data to a larger *Process/Outcomes matrix* that included all the interviewees for each case study (Patton, 2002). The researcher created three types of comparison matrices: 1) district level superintendent, business leader, and community leader matrices, 2) all superintendent responses, all business leader responses, and all community

leader responses matrices, and 3) a global matrix design was created for the collective study analysis. With the creation of the global matrices, the individual case studies became a collective case study, which compared and contrasted interviewees' perceptions of the Academic Excellence and Economic Gardening strategies.

These charts displayed each respondent's number and the pattern of their responses. The district titles were assigned to each interviewee (e.g. Dionysus Superintendent) to assist in the analysis and interpretation of the responses as they related to the role of the respondent in the business, education, and community partnership (Kerr, 1994). This action divided the interviewing process into two distinct functions: discovery and measurement (Gorden, 1975). These matrices then were analyzed for congruency and contradiction of responses.

### **3.7.6 Inductive Analysis of Coded and Matrices Data**

In order to transition from organizing the data into matrices to actual interpretation of material, the process of "making and analyzing thematic connections" (Seidman, 2006, p. 125) needed to be completed. While the interview questions served to silo the data, the matrices grouped individual responses and from those groups' responses themes emerged. McCracken (1988) stated this about inductive analysis "As the investigator works through the data, certain avenues that appear to go right to the heart of the matter will emerge" (p. 45).

Once all the themes were identified, the researcher looked for redundancies, found the strongest formulation, and eliminated the others. The remaining themes were placed into a hierarchical order. The one or two dominant themes served as major categories into which the remaining themes are organized. Any residual themes were examined for contradictory statements that need to be considered. Themes that did not fit into any category and did not represent a contradictory finding were discarded (McCracken, 1988). Once the themes had been grouped, analyzed, and placed into a hierarchical structure, the actual interpretation of the data occurred.

### **3.7.7 Interpretation of Themes to Create Findings**

Through interpretation of the themes, the researcher attempted to glean meaning from data (Seidman, 2006). Using the understanding of the individuals generated through the background financial and cultural data, the visual representations of the stakeholders' relationships, and the degree they were aligned to either Academic Excellence or Economic Gardening, the researcher interpreted the thematic data and generated overall case study findings. Whenever possible, the researcher constructed visual diagrams to demonstrate the flow of information and the perceived effectiveness of the processes implemented.

### **3.7.8 Documentation**

The researcher created the following documentation presented in the research section of this study:

- A financial and cultural perspectives report for each school district and its communities included in this study
- A deductive analysis of interviewee vocabulary to create a quantified degree of alignment to either the Academic Excellence or Economic Gardening strategy
- A visual representation of each district's stakeholders' linkage patterns regarding information and partnership activities
- Three levels of matrices were developed to examine themes and stakeholders' interview responses based on the research and interview questions
- District level case reports that combined the financial and cultural perspectives report, the visual representation, and the district level interview matrices used to generating district level findings.
- A report of findings regarding the collective case study

The researcher used these documents as the basis for establishing the results, discussion, and conclusion section of this study.

### **3.8 CONCLUSIONS**

Using the documentation findings generated through the study, the researcher made interpretations that compared and related to the different stakeholders' perspectives and the constituents' needs across the three-interviewee pools and the seven local communities. He shared his conclusions and recommendations for the superintendents to consider as they move forward in their efforts to promote economic development and ensure a sustainable tax base for their school districts.

### **3.9 SUMMARY**

The collective case study represented the economic region and geographic area referred to as the Olympus Mount Region. The study's research focused on defining the superintendent's responsibilities in the area of economic development and ensuring a sustainable tax base. The research was executed in two phases: 1) a document review and business manager survey, and 2) three rounds of elite/in-depth interviews with 22 participants representing local school district superintendents, business, and community leaders. Understandings and perspectives uncovered through the literature review and the study's statistical research phase served to focus the interview process and subsequent interview data analysis. The interviewer secured the data and all supporting documents to ensure confidentiality. The researcher generated a visualization of each district's stakeholders' linkage patterns regarding information and partnership activities and generated deductive vocabulary analysis of alignment to either the Academic Excellence or Economic Gardening strategies. The researcher transcribed the content of the interviews into a cleansed transcript format and inserted them into response frequency matrices to facilitate analysis of the interview data. The matrices served to create and prioritize the collective data for the collective case study. Once the data was properly organized in the matrices, the researcher analyzed the data for patterns of responses and trends through the lens of understanding created during the literature review and statistical research phase. The final stage of the process interpreted response patterns of the data and developed conclusions that may assist

superintendents in making critical decisions impacting their school districts' responsibilities in economic development and ensuring a sustainable tax base.

## 4.0 CHAPTER IV: DATA DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

### 4.1 PREPARATION AND PRESENTATION OF DATA

To facilitate the readers understanding, the researcher designed Table 1 to provide an overview to the data preparation and presentation process.

**Table 1 Order of Presentation**

<b>Section 4.1.1: Research Questions</b>	p. 83
<b>Section 4.2: Data Profile</b>	p. 84
Sub-section 4.2.2: Flow Chart of Research Analysis Methods	p. 86
Sub-section 4.2.3: Gathering of Statistical Data and Generating the Deductive Content Analysis	p. 88
Sub-section 4.2.4: Creation of the Matrices and the Relationship Visualization Diagrams	p. 88
Sub-section 4.2.5: Presentation of the Data and Generation of Findings	p. 89
<b>Section 4.3: District Level Profile Data</b>	p. 91
Sub-section: 4.3.2: Census, Employment, and Enrollment Data	p. 91
Sub-section 4.3.2: Community Comprehensive Planning Data	p. 93
Sub-section 4.3.3: Annual Financial Report and Business Manager Data	p. 96
Sub-section 4.3.4: Summary of Statistical Data	p. 99
<b>Section 4.4: Deductive Content Analysis of Interviewee Vocabulary and Concepts</b>	p. 100
Sub-section 4.4.1: Deductive Content Analysis Score Chart	p. 100
Sub-section 4.4.2: Researcher Designed Method of Determining Tendency Score	p. 107
Sub-section 4.4.3: The Dionysus School District Deductive Content Analysis	p. 108
Sub-section 4.4.4: Cross Case Analysis of the Deductive Content Analysis Scores	p. 109
Sub-section 4.4.5: Summary of Deductive Content Analysis	p. 113
<b>Section 4.5: Visualization of Relationships</b>	p. 114
Sub-section 4.5.1: The Thickness of the Connectivity and Inter-connectivity Arrows	p. 116
Sub-sections 4.5.2: through 4.5.8: Individual Case Relationship Visualizations	p. 117
Sub-section 4.5.9: Cross Case Analysis of Relationship Diagrams	p. 124
Sub-section 4.5.10: Summary of Visualization of Relationships Data	p. 128
<b>Section 4.6: Analysis of the Seven Case Studies' Interview Data Responses</b>	p. 129
Sub-section 4.6.2: Background Data	p. 131
Sub-section 4.6.3: Theme 1: Promoting economic development and community vitality	p. 136
Sub-section 4.6.4: Theme 2: The quality of networking and collaboration among leaders	p. 148
Sub-section 4.6.5: Theme 3: Maintaining public schools' as the number one educational provider	p. 162
Sub-section 4.6.6 Analysis of the seven case studies' interview data responses	p. 180

By using table 1, the reader should be able to select and analyze the research methods used and processes designed to analyze data and generate the findings in chapters IV and V.

#### **4.1.1 Research Questions**

This study explores the role of superintendents as catalysts for economic development to ensure the fiscal stability of the local public schools. This chapter details the data gathered in the study and provides analysis of how the data answered the following research questions:

*Question #1:* How does the literature frame two possible long-term economic development strategies: “Academic Excellence” and “Economic Gardening”?

*Question #2:* How do local leaders, including superintendents, support education for local economic development?

*Question #3:* To what extent does professional and social networking provide support for education and local economic development?

*Question #5:* How are these local leaders responding to current education initiatives being promoted by Pennsylvania’s legislative leaders?

The researcher presented the data and analysis from the research processes outlined in Chapter III. These processes consisted of the following research elements:

1. Analysis of the statistical data gathered in the document research phase (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006).
2. Deductive content analysis of interviewee vocabulary and concept phrases to create a quantified degree of alignment to either Academic Excellence or Economic Gardening (Kvale, 2008).
3. Analysis of the visual representation of the relationships among the superintendents, business leaders, and community leaders (Bailey, 2007).
4. Inductive content analysis of the seven interview case studies’ data responses to questions with supporting quotations and documentation (Seidman, 2006). This analysis will be organized by interviewee category, e.g. superintendent, business

leader, and community leader and presented in three themes that emanate from the interview questions and relate directly to the research questions.

The study focused on how these school districts are dealing with the current revenue and budgetary issues brought on by the recession of 2008 and the current budgetary practices of the Commonwealth. Also, the study investigated various ways school superintendents, business leaders, and the local community leaders are working to improve the economic outlook of their local communities and the surrounding regional area. The geographic region of the study represented an area with close access to three major highways and the major metropolitan areas of Cleveland, Ohio, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The area has struggled to recover from the failure of the local steel industries in the 1970's and 1980's. To maintain the anonymity of the study, the actual locations and school districts were represented using the names of the Greek Gods: Apollo, Dionysus, Poseidon, Aphrodite, Hermes, Athena, and Zeus. The first step in the research process was to create a descriptive statistical profile for the districts being studied.

## **4.2 DATA PROFILE**

The study contains two types of gathered data. The first type was descriptive statistical data taken from:

1. Both the 2000 and 2010 United States censuses and several Internet-based statistical websites for employment and enrollment data
2. The school districts' Annual Financial Reports and the researcher-created business manager survey that was completed by the business manager of each school district participating in the study
3. Municipal comprehensive plans

The second type of data was interview data gathered through twenty-two interviews completed in the months of April and May 2012.

### *Finding community leader interview candidates*

As discussed in Chapter III, a snowball technique was incorporated into the interview selection process to designate appropriate elite interview candidates. An issue arose with the selection of community leaders because many of the superintendents and business leaders struggled to recommend any community leaders for the study. In two of the seven cases, the researcher had to ask business leaders with a regional contact pool (the CEO of the Penn Northwest Development Corporation and the CEO of the United Way) to find appropriate township supervisors to interview. The lack of recommendable community leaders was illustrated in the relationship visualizations in section 4.5 and the community leader interview responses in section 4.6.

#### **4.2.1 How the Research Methods Improved Upon Existing Research**

The researcher employed three related sets of interview questions to gather data from all three stakeholder groups of the business, education, and community partnership model proposed by the Economic Gardening strategy. To the best knowledge of the researcher, this was the first time that all three stakeholder groups were interviewed in the same study. Of the three previous research studies, Thompson (2002) and Peel (1988) employed the Delphi method of surveying participants to attain data. The pool of participants in these studies consisted of school district superintendents and business leaders. While each study gathered vast amounts of survey data, they failed to give actual triangulated relationship data. The Kerr (1994) research used 21 interviews to gather data but limited the interview pool to business and community leaders and then used triangulation with state tax policy, regional workforce quality, and education tax base stability. The other major difference to the Kerr study related to the reason for unemployment. The StrongLand Region had a saturation of highly skilled labor in 1994 but the Olympus Mount Region actually experienced a shortage of highly skilled labor during the research period.

By triangulating data from various stakeholders, the ability to study the range of perspectives gave the researcher insights into how these three groups interacted. Because business and economic development involve human capital in the form of skilled and unskilled labor, looking at the stakeholder groups that could directly impact the number and quality of available human capital made sense. By using interviews, the researcher could directly interact

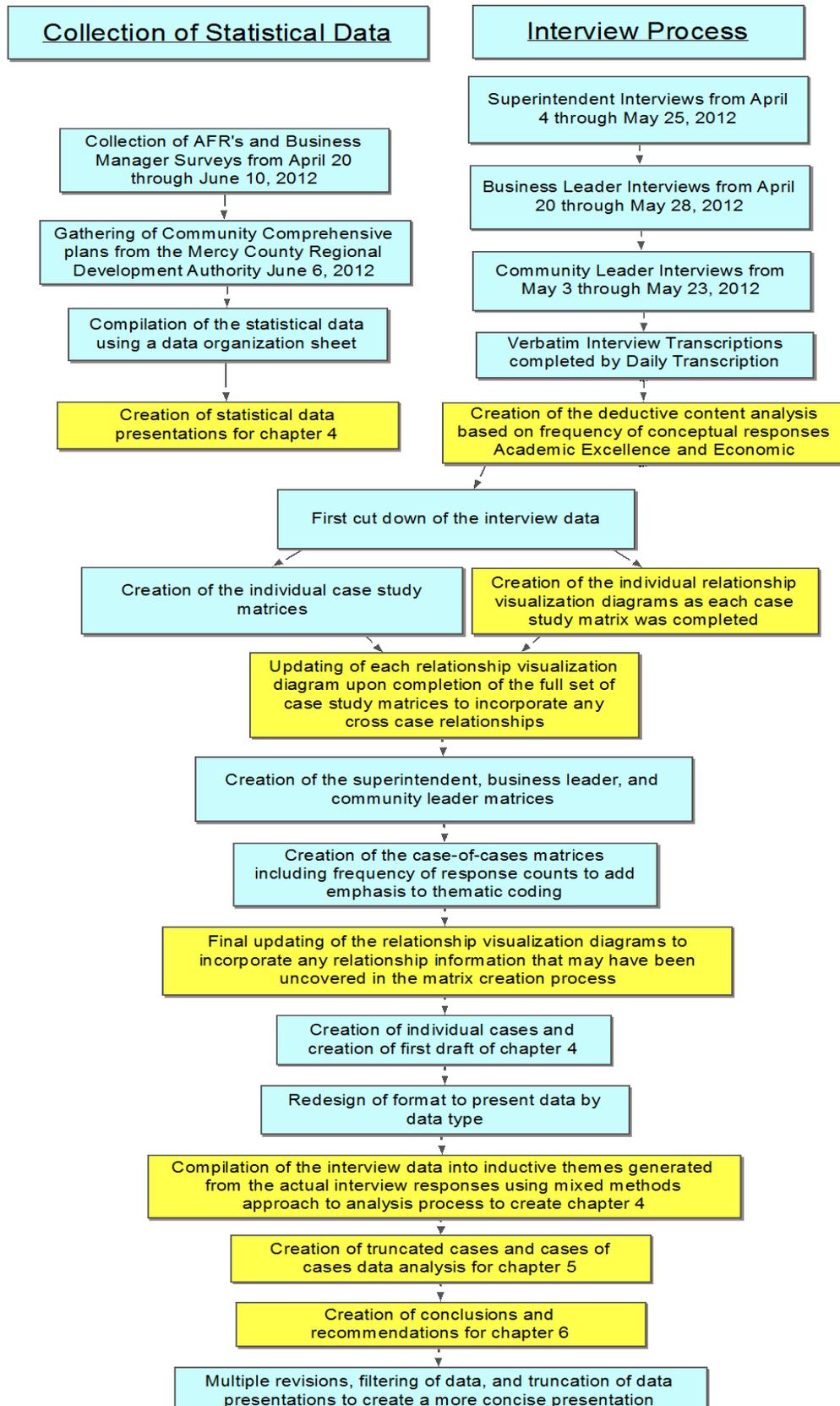
with the participants and the participants received the opportunity to relay information that may have been unforeseen by the researcher.

#### **4.2.2 Flow Chart of Research Analysis Methods**

The creation of the research documents and data analysis followed the order illustrated in the flow chart found in Figure 1. Figure 1: The flow chart of data preparation (see page 84) was designed to provide readers with the progression used to complete the research process. The process began with the statistical data and interviews of stakeholders occurring simultaneously. While the interview process was originally designed to progress in stages starting with the superintendents, then the business leaders, and finishing with the community leaders, the flow chart illustrates the significant overlap of the interview stages caused by issues in scheduling the interviewees.

Once the interviews were completed and the verbatim transcripts created, the researcher followed an analysis process that naturally evolved from the preparation of the data. The researcher started with the deductive content analysis using the verbatim interview transcripts. Once the deductive analysis was completed, the researcher reduced the transcripts into the matrices and generated the relationship visualization diagrams. The relationship diagrams were updated on several occasions during the creation of the matrices to reflect as closely as possible the true connectivity of the superintendents interviewed in the study. The interview data was organized and reorganized to improve the flow of the data presentation during the compilation of the matrices. Themes and findings emerged from the inductive analysis of the data.

**Figure 1 Flow chart of data preparation**



### **4.2.3 Gathering of Statistical Data and Generating the Deductive Content Analysis**

During the month of June 2012, the researcher assembled updated census data, Annual Financial Report Data, the business manager survey responses, and the township and borough Comprehensive Planning data. In the time between the completion of the overview and the end of the interviewing process, some portions of the U.S. 2010 census data became available and those statistics were updated. After each superintendent completed his interview, his district's business manager completed a short seven-question survey for specific information about the 2011-2012 school year and submitted it through Survey Monkey. Finally, the researcher collected the comprehensive plans for each district's townships and municipalities. These plans were readily available in PDF format from the Pantheon County Regional Planning Commission website (Pantheon County Regional Planning Commission, 2012). All of the collected data was placed into a district statistical profile form and then assessed for use in the statistical data profile portion of the data collection process. Upon completion of the district case study profiles, the researcher generated the deductive content analysis.

Once the researcher obtained all of the completed interview transcriptions, the first step in the analysis process consisted of completing the deductive content analysis. This process involved using a verbatim transcription and a word/phrase frequency chart and simply counting the number of times an interviewee stated a word, phrase, or concept that fit into one of the ten Academic Excellence or ten Economic Gardening categories (Mayring, 2000). The researcher created a tally sheet (see Appendix D), and applied the formula from Chapter III to the resulting numerical data. This process will be explained in greater detail in section 4.3 Deductive Content Analysis of Interviewee Vocabulary and Concepts.

### **4.2.4 Creation of the Matrices and the Relationship Visualization Diagrams**

Once all the interviews were transcribed and the deductive content analysis was completed (Kvale, 2008), the researcher moved to the coding process, which consisted mainly of creating the response matrices and reducing the interview data to a select number of dominant themes. Because of the large number of questions and prompts, three main themes were developed based on analysis of the interview questions and the interview response data. These themes served to

organize the data into three major topics and improve ability to categorize and generate findings from the interview data (Bailey, 2007). Prior to building the matrices, the researcher examined each interview and created a reduced or condensed version (Boyd, 2006). This reduction took each interview transcript from approximately 25 to 30 pages down to 10 to 15 pages. This reduction process made the transcripts much easier to manage and key information more transferable into the matrices. Multiple opinions and themes carried among interviewees depending on the pool, e.g. superintendents, business, or community leaders. Once the researcher created the three levels of matrices, the interview data had been combed through a total of four times including the initial reduction phase. Each phase of the reduction and matrices creation process further culled important information from the transcripts (Patton, 2002). Three types of matrices were created in the following order: 1) the individual case study matrices, 2) the superintendent, business leader and community leader matrices, 3) the case-of-cases matrix which reduced and compiled the results from all the cases into one main document. The case-of-cases matrix generated response frequency counts to note the level of agreement found regarding any one opinion or response. As each case study matrix was completed, the researcher created a first draft of that case's relationship visualization diagram. Upon completion of the seven case study matrices, the researcher reviewed the relationship diagrams and incorporated any relationship information uncovered by creation the other case study matrices. Once all three types of matrices were completed, the researcher made any final updates to the relationship visualization diagrams (Yamamoto & McClure, 2011). The relationship visualization diagrams and the inductive interview analysis processes are discussed in further detail in sections 4.4 and 4.5 respectively.

#### **4.2.5 The Presentation of the Data and Generation of Findings**

The research process generated four data elements: 1) statistical; 2) deductive content analysis; 3) visual representations of relationships among the stakeholder groups; and 4) the inductive analysis of actual interview data. The researcher organized the data into two different formats: 1) by individual cases and 2) by formats of data. Both formats presented significant issues to the reader. The development of individual cases fragmented the data formats and impeded the reader's ability to compare and contrast the findings. Presenting the data by type of data element

made the ability to make comparisons and analyze the findings much easier. Both formats presented the reader with a long arduous task of wading through large quantities of data to find meaning. The researcher chose to format the data by data element, which facilitated the reader's ability to make comparisons and generate findings while limiting repetitive explanations of the methods and analysis processes. The order in which the data elements were presented reflects the analysis process used by the researcher to generate each of the individual elements.

The data has been presented in the following order:

Section 4.2: District Level Statistical Profile Data

Section 4.3: Deductive Content Analysis

Section 4.4: Visualization of Relationship Data

Section 4.5: Analysis of the Seven Case Studies' Interview Data Responses

The interview data generated the largest pool of information, which needed to be broken into sections, based on the background information and three emergent themes being presented:

1. Background information
2. Theme 1: Promoting economic development and community vitality
3. Theme 2: The quality of networking and collaboration among leaders
4. Theme 3: Maintaining public schools' position as the number one educational provider in the community

To protect the anonymity of the interviewees, the districts have been renamed using the titles of the Greek Gods: Zeus, Athena, Hermes, Apollo, Poseidon, Aphrodite, and Dionysus. All interviewees will be referenced in relation to the district they represent e.g. Zeus business leader or Apollo community leader. The case of cases matrix is provided in Appendix F. Because of their overall length, the case matrices and the stakeholder group matrices be referenced in different places throughout the data presentation but are only available through contacting the researcher. The researcher integrated the separate analyses into case studies for each district in order to demonstrate the complexities facing unique districts. For consistency in the presentation of the data, the researcher presented each data type in the order of median housing values starting with the highest and progressing to the lowest value. This system generated the following case presentation order: Apollo, Dionysus, Poseidon, Aphrodite, Hermes, Athena, and Zeus.

While significant quantities of data were presented, placing the data into elemental pools offered the reader the ability to focus directly on the data element that interests him. The

presentation of the statistical data served to establish the economic and community environments that impacted the decision making of each district in the study.

### **4.3 DISTRICT LEVEL STATISTICAL PROFILE DATA**

Statistical data was presented for each district in the collective study to create a statistical profile to base further analysis of the district's responses. As mentioned in section 4.1, the statistical data gathered came from the following sources:

1. Both the 2000 and 2010 United States censuses and several Internet-based statistical websites for employment and enrollment data
2. Municipal comprehensive plans
3. The district Annual Financial Report (AFR) and Business Manager Survey

The researcher used the gathered data to build a demographic, economic, and financial profile of each district in the study. Because of the quantity, the data was presented in a table format with the narrative after each completed table. The researcher's only concerns with this portion of the research process focused on the quantity of the data and the data's actual usefulness in building background for the individual school districts in the study. In designing the study, the researcher looked to generate a solid basis for comparison with the statistical data. The similarities in the data and the situations facing the districts in the study made most of the data inconsequential to the study itself. The majority of the data generated is presented in the following tables even though it had limited impact on the body of the interview data collected. The main sources for data used in developing the actual cases came from the Census, Employment, and Enrollment table and the AFR and business manager survey table.

#### **4.3.1 Census, Employment, and Enrollment Data**

The data for all seven school districts were placed into three tables: 1) Census, Employment, and Enrollment data, 2) Comprehensive Planning data, 3) Annual Financial Report (AFR) and Business Manager Survey Data. Table 2 presented the census, employment, and enrollment data.

**Table 2 Census, Employment, and School Enrollment**

District:	Population Change:	Median Housing Value:	Median Family Income:	Poverty Level:	Unemployment statistics:	Types of Employment:	Major Industries (based on number of employees):	School Enrollment Trends:
State	+3.5%	\$164,700	\$62,158	12.5%	7.9%	Education and Health Services 20.2% Trades, Transportation, Utilities 19.3% Government 12.8% Professional & Management 12.6%	Steel Manufacturing Farming Mining Electronic Equip. Automotive	2000-2001 enrollment 1,799,691 2009-2010 enrollment 1,777,154 Decrease of 1.25%
Apollo	+4%	\$127,100	\$60,973	3.7%	8.2% (County wide statistic)	Education services 27% Manufacturing 18.4% Retail trade 13%, Professional scientific & management 9.3%	Commercial Banking Apartment Rentals Machine Tools and Metal Cutting	2000-2001 enrollment 2349 2009-2010 enrollment 2170 Loss of 179 students (-7.6%)
Dionysus	-0.85%	\$119,600	\$57,039	6.4%	8.2% (County wide statistic)	Education 24%, Manufacturing 19.6%, Retail Trade 13.1%, Arts/Entertainment/ Food/Hotels 8.2%	Public School Education Fabrication and Manufacturing Trucking	2000-2001 enrollment 1222 2009-2010 enrollment 1133 Loss of 89 students (-7.1%)
Poseidon	-2.95%	\$94,700	\$56,032	6.9%	8.2% (County wide statistic)	Education services 24.6% Manufacturing 22.4%, Retail trade 12.1% Professional scientific & management 7.4%	Fluid milk products Insurance Chemicals and allied products Medical & dental equipment	2000-2001 enrollment 1275 2009-2010 enrollment 1325 Gain of 50 students (+3.9%)
Aphrodite	-5.7%	\$93,100	\$52,222	8.6%	8.2% (County wide statistic)	Education services 33.6%, Retail trade 16.2%, Manufacturing 15.7% Arts/Entertainment/ Food/Hotels 9.3%	Higher Education Steel Foundries; Plastics products Motor vehicle parts & accessories	2000-2001 enrollment 1673 2009-2010 enrollment 1550 Loss of 123 students (-7.4%)
Hermes	-7.3%	\$91,800	\$52,295	9.3%	8.2% (County wide statistic)	Manufacturing 25.6% Education services 18.7% Retail trade 13.2%, Construction 8.7%	Higher Education Steel Foundries; Plastics products Motor vehicle parts & accessories	2000-2001 enrollment 1672 2009-2010 enrollment 1254 Loss of 422 students (-25%)
Athena	-14%	\$65,400	\$39,874	12.8%	8.2% (County wide statistic)	Education 27.2%, Manufacturing 17.9%, Retail trade 11.5%, Arts/Entertainment/ Food/Hotels 8.6%	Steel pipe and tube Regional Health System Service industry machinery	2000-2001 enrollment 2501 2009-2010 enrollment 2200 Loss of 301 students (-12%)
Zeus	-15.5%	\$58,000	\$36,875	22.2%	8.2% (County wide statistic)	Service Occupations 25.3%, Management/Professional 22.7%, Sales & Office occup. 22.1%, Production/Transportation 21.7%	Regional Hospital Rolled Steel Manufacturing Candy Manufacturer Steel Fabricator	2000-2001 enrollment 1219 2009-2010 enrollment 906 Loss of 313 students (-25.7%)

Data collected from the following sources: 2010 Census and employment data from Proximityone.com (Proximity, 2012) and Manta Media (Manta Media Inc. , 2012) and enrollment data from OpenPagov.org (Commonwealth Foundation for Public Policy Alternatives, 2011).

The census, employment, and enrollment data revealed many similarities among the districts and several disparities. The Apollo district, the most affluent district, still was well below the state average for median housing values and median family income. The chart illuminates the financial disparity among the top five school districts and the bottom two districts in the study. Only the Poseidon school district experienced an increase in enrollment from 2000 to 2010 and the Hermes and Zeus school districts lost 25% of their student populations over the same period. The chart reflects the income level disparity among the districts in the study with the two districts with major regional employers being the districts with the lowest median family income. The largest percentage of employment for most residents of the districts in the study was in the field of education and health services with five districts having that field as the leading employment type. The major employers in the region were divided among healthcare, steel makers, and various fabricators and related manufacturing companies. The comprehensive plan refers to the revitalization of many brown field sites in the region that were left over from the closing of the steel manufacturers in the 1980's (Cici, 2012)

#### **4.3.2 Community Comprehensive Planning Data**

The comprehensive plans for the districts in the study served to present a generic set of long range planning goals for the communities, which make up those districts. In most cases, the comprehensive plan represented several communities. In the case of the Apollo, Athena, and Zeus districts, one comprehensive plan served all three districts and their composite communities. The comprehensive plans were extensive and gave some insight into the personalities of the communities in the study region. Because the plans represented multiple communities and in one case three districts, the ability to derive specifics about the communities and their school districts proved to be difficult and unproductive. The Hermes district and its communities did not have their own comprehensive plan and used the Pantheon County plan as a basis for long range planning. In tables 3 and 4, the researcher presented an overview of the comprehensive planning data to assist in familiarizing the reader with the communities that make up the districts of the study.

**Table 3 Comprehensive Planning Data**

District:	Key Opportunities and Challenges:	Plans for Infrastructure Development:	Long Range Plans for Residential Housing Development:	Municipal Philosophies Promoting Economic Development	Integration of School District Needs and Cooperative Efforts:
Apollo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Excellent location between Pittsburgh and Cleveland</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Challenges: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Improve economic stability</li> <li>○ Infrastructure upgrades</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make access improvements to sewer and water as the development of residential and commercial areas requires the improvements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In rural areas accommodate limited low density residential</li> <li>• Plan to accommodate continued suburban-density residential development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will use the Penn-Northwest operating goals as a guide to promote local economic development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate with the local school districts</li> <li>• Provide safe routes to schools</li> <li>• Consider consolidation with declining enrollments</li> </ul>
Dionysus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities: Location between Pittsburgh and Cleveland, Hometown Pride</li> <li>• Challenges:</li> <li>• Need Sewer and Water Development</li> <li>• Find ways to keep children in area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain existing sewer and water system</li> <li>• Planned infrastructure development in areas designated for growth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain community character</li> <li>• Sound affordable and diverse housing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use existing corridor</li> <li>• Promote light manufacturing, office space, limited warehousing</li> <li>• Prohibit extensive warehousing or heavy industrial uses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain a dialogue regarding development activities, school facility needs, and school bus routes.</li> </ul>
Poseidon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunity: Excellent location between Pittsburgh and Cleveland</li> <li>• Challenge: Falling population with limited employment opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are plans for water and sewage infrastructure expansion for portions of the district</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One district township has plans for housing growth</li> <li>• One district borough is targeted for minor housing growth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revitalization of the store front facades in Poseidon Borough is the only mention of any attempt at promoting economic development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The only reference to the word school is in reference to athletic/recreational facilities and the loss of young people from the area</li> </ul>
Aphrodite	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not mentioned in the comprehensive plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Future sewer and water improvements will be done in a multi-municipal planning partnership</li> <li>• Maintain the “College Town” atmosphere</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide safe, affordable and attractive housing</li> <li>• Coordinate new housing development to support local and regional economic development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote economic management, physical enhancement, promotion and strong public participation to increase the vitality of downtown</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The quality of the schools, graduation rates and other statistics are noted in the plan</li> </ul>

**Table 4 Comprehensive Planning Data (cont.)**

District:	Key Opportunities and Challenges:	Plans for Infrastructure Development:	Plans for Infrastructure Development:	Long Range Plans for Residential Housing Development:	Municipal Philosophies Promoting Economic Development
Hermes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pantheon County maintains a diverse array of urban, suburban, and rural community types</li> <li>• Pantheon County embraces the concept of “smart growth”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet existing community needs as a first priority</li> <li>• Encourage cooperation and shared facilities use</li> <li>• Develop facilities in a cost effective manner</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to support development of new owner occupied housing</li> <li>• Develop or support development of housing options for seniors</li> <li>• Promote construction or renovation of rental units</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide support for new agriculturally related activities</li> <li>• Promote opportunities for sustainable forestry</li> <li>• Promote Tourism</li> <li>• Support brown field revitalization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School districts and their facilities are only mentioned in reference to other County goals and objectives</li> </ul>
Athena	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Excellent location between Pittsburgh and Cleveland</li> <li>○ Strong sense of community history</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Challenges:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Improve economic stability</li> <li>○ Encourage redevelopment of brown field sites</li> <li>○ Infrastructure upgrades</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make access improvements to sewer and water as the development of residential and commercial areas requires the improvements</li> <li>• Work to connect neighborhoods to the Shenango River</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan to accommodate continued suburban-density residential development</li> <li>• Medium density housing promoting wide range of housing options</li> <li>• High density housing is permitted in designated areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will use the Penn-Northwest operating goals as a guide to promote local economic development</li> <li>• Improve the business climate by cutting cost of locating, expanding and operating a business in Pantheon County.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate with the local school districts</li> <li>• Provide safe routes to schools</li> <li>• Consider school consolidation with declining enrollments</li> <li>• Encourage school districts to enhance educational opportunities for students in the region</li> </ul>
Zeus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Excellent location between Pittsburgh and Cleveland</li> <li>○ Strong sense of community history</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Challenges:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Improve economic stability</li> <li>○ Encourage redevelopment of existing brown field sites</li> <li>○ Infrastructure upgrades</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make access improvements to sewer and water as the development of residential and commercial areas requires the improvements</li> <li>• Work to connect neighborhoods to the Shenango River</li> <li>• Improve access via entrance and exit ramps to routes 18 and 80</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan to accommodate continued suburban-density residential development</li> <li>• Medium density housing promoting wide range of housing options</li> <li>• High density housing is permitted in designated areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will use the Penn-Northwest operating goals as a guide to promote local economic development</li> <li>• Improve the business climate by cutting cost of locating, expanding and operating a business in Pantheon County.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate with the local school districts</li> <li>• Provide safe routes to schools</li> <li>• Consider consolidation with declining enrollments</li> <li>• Encourage school districts to enhance educational opportunities for students in the region</li> </ul>

The comprehensive plan data revealed that the majority of the districts in the study either had established infrastructure being maintained or planned for growth to be driven by the developers at the time of construction. None of the communities in the study planned to develop infrastructure past their current needs and the suburban and rural districts actively pursued ways to maintain the historical flavor of their communities. Only the Poseidon district's comprehensive plans referred to building additional housing units and promoting growth in the community outside of existing developments. Apollo, Zeus, Athena, Hermes, and Aphrodite actively promoted improving economic climate and revitalization of brown field sites. These districts were actively pursuing economic development to revitalize an industrial base that had collapsed with the fall of the local steel industries in the 1980's (Cici, 2012). The comprehensive plans only referred to the local school districts and district leaders when discussing the development of school bus routes and the building of new school facilities. While promoting economic development was discussed in most of the communities' comprehensive plans, none of the plans discussed developing partnerships with the local schools to promote economic development or community growth.

### **4.3.3 Annual Financial Report and Business Manager Data**

All districts that participated in the study provided their Annual Financial Report to the researcher and their business managers participated in the online survey. The tables 5 and 6 provide the background data extracted from these financial documents.

**Table 5 Annual Financial Report Data**

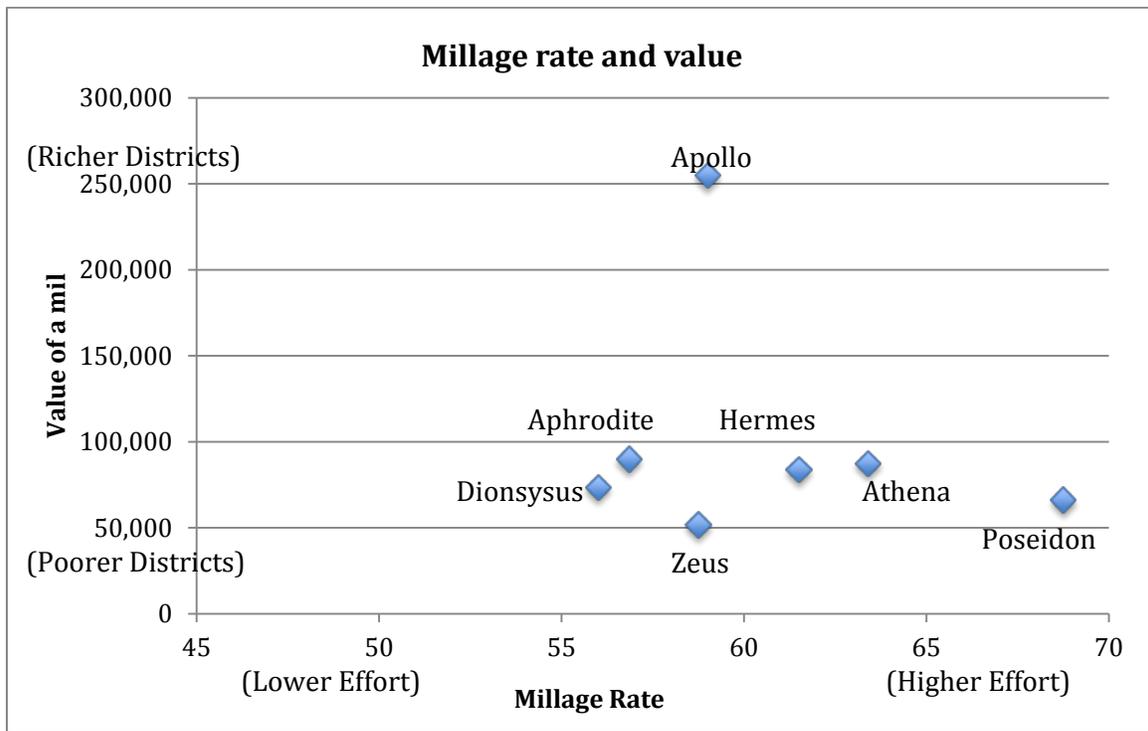
District:	Local Revenues:	State and Federal Revenues:	Tuition paid to Charter and Other School Entities:	Health Care and other Benefits Costs:	Gross Revenues:	Gross Expenditures:	Gross Salaries:	Fund Balance:
Apollo	\$16,087,594	\$10,846,860	\$842,323	\$2,893,954	\$27,605,717	\$24,123,565	\$13,236,770	\$6,291,401
Dionysus	\$4,726,320	\$8,409,410	\$213,965	\$2,487,689	\$14,192,284	\$11,551,491	\$6,625,466	\$3,061,315
Poseidon	\$4,711,738	\$8,101,538	\$265,648	\$1,990,316	\$14,525,376	\$13,322,269	\$7,131,834	\$1,707,372
Aphrodite	\$5,770,209	\$11,565,687	\$946,181	\$1,598,087	\$17,914,040	\$17,722,836	\$8,618,298	\$3,709,488
Hermes	\$5,355,126	\$12,331,730	\$684,157	\$2,199,609	\$18,385,101	\$18,061,804	\$8,114,883	\$4,099,334
Athena	\$6,380,619	\$21,164,058	\$1,492,307	\$3,354,482	\$29,806,019	\$24,816,996	\$13,735,891	\$9,833,589
Zeus	\$2,752,876	\$11,728,850	\$482,532	\$1,793,271	\$16,024,591	\$17,008,527	\$8,724,761	\$2,181,736
Totals:	\$45,784,482	\$84,148,133	\$4,927,113	\$16,317,408	\$138,453,128	\$126,607,488	\$66,187,903	\$30,884,235

**Table 6 Business Manager Survey Data**

District:	Gross Budgetary Figures:	Millage Rates:	Revenue Generated by a Mill:	Approximate 2011-2012 Fund Balance:	2010-2011 Fund Balance Used to balance 2011-2012 budget	2010-2011 Rollover to Capital Fund:	2011-2012 Positions Eliminated by Furlough and Attrition	Percentage Increase for Professional Salaries:	Percentage Increase for Non-Professional Salaries:	Percentage Increase for Healthcare and Other Benefits:
Apollo	\$27,019,100	59	\$255,000	\$5,380,000	\$908,760	\$0.00	Furlough: 8 Attrition: 12	0%	0%	3%
Dionysus	\$14,104,470	56	\$73,500	\$1,860,343	\$1,200,971	\$0.00	Furlough: 0 Attrition: 3	0%	2.25%	3%
Poseidon	\$14,520,770	68.75	\$66,187	\$1,644,000	\$905,751	\$0.00	Furlough: 1 Attrition: 5	3.0%	3.1%	5.5%
Aphrodite	\$16,668,264	56.85	\$90,000	\$3,700,000	\$0.00	\$0.00	Furlough: 5 Attrition: 10	3.25%	3.0%	11.5%
Hermes	\$17,692,896	61.5	\$83,883	\$1,500,000	\$0.00	\$0.00	Furlough: 0 Attrition: 10.5	3.4%	2.9%	5%
Athena	\$27,826,040	63.4	\$87,500	\$10,000,000	\$966,810	\$0.00	Attrition: 8.5	0%	0%	0%
Zeus	\$15,247,761	58.75	\$51,827	\$2,100,000	\$0.00	\$0.00	Furlough: 6 Attrition: 5	(9.0%)	(9.0%)	(11%)

The Annual Financial Reports (AFRs) revealed that only the Apollo school district received the majority of its revenue, 60%, from local sources. In contrast, the Zeus district received only 19% of its revenue from local sources. The Dionysus district paid the largest percentage of its expenditures for salaries and benefits at 79% and the Poseidon district spent the lowest percentage of expenditures on salaries and benefits at 55.6%. Apollo, Dionysus, Poseidon, and Aphrodite used their fund balance rollover to balance the 2011-2012 budget. All of the districts in the study eliminated staff through either attrition or furlough. The biggest disparity revealed through the business manager survey was the number of mils versus the amount of revenue generated by a mil. Table 7 illustrates the fact that the Apollo district generates five times the revenue per mil as Zeus, Poseidon residents represent the highest level of effort at 68.75 mils, and Dionysus maintained the lowest level of local efforts at 56 mils.

**Table 7 Millage Rate and Value**



#### 4.3.4 Summary of Statistical Data

In gathering various pieces of statistical data to build the background for the districts in the study, the researcher found several similarities:

- All of the districts experienced a substantial financial impact from the cuts in state funding.
- Districts with higher percentages of state and federal funding received the highest impact because they were least able to absorb the cuts (cuts represented the larger part of overall budget and received more ARRA funding).
- All districts in the study used existing fund balance to balance their budgets in some way.
- All districts made budget cuts and eliminated positions either through direct furlough or attrition.
- The wealthier districts with stronger local tax bases were poised to recover faster when the economy improves.
- School district populations either held approximately the same or fell drastically with only the Apollo school district showing marginal growth at .4%.

The background data served to level the evaluation by verifying that all the districts in the study experienced a similar type of fiscal distress caused by the state funding cuts. Without a previous study model upon which to build, the researcher chose to collect a large variety of census and financial data and eliminate the excess information to meet the needs of the study. With several districts creating joint comprehensive plans, the generic nature of the planning data limited its usefulness in giving any type of district defining data. Several of the communities in the study used the Pantheon County Comprehensive Plan, which gave very little insight into community planning. The Annual Financial Report (AFR), combined with the business manager report, became the most useful data collected.

The only issue stemming from these two documents occurred with the business manager survey. The business managers interpreted and responded in different ways to the questions regarding increases in salaries and healthcare costs. Some business managers' responses reflected the percentage increase in salary and healthcare benefit rates. Other business managers' responses reflected the actual budgetary amount spent without taking eliminated positions into account. Because of these discrepancies, the salary and healthcare benefit data could not be used to establish an outlier in the data. Having established the background data for each district in the

study, the researcher used a deductive analysis tool with the unedited interview transcriptions to reveal the tendencies of the leaders toward either Academic Excellence or Economic Gardening.

#### **4.4 DEDUCTIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWEE VOCABULARY AND CONCEPTS**

Deductive content analysis is a technique of content analysis the researcher used to quantify how often specific themes were addressed in the interview (Kvale, 2008). Content analysis is an objective approach that allows the researcher to obtain a quantitative description of the tendencies of the stakeholders (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Deductive content analysis “allows inferences to be made which can then be corroborated using other methods of data collection” (Stemler, 2001). The content analysis of the stakeholder interviews gave the researcher insight into the individual Academic Excellence or Economic Gardening tendencies of each interviewee.

##### **4.4.1 Deductive Content Analysis Score Chart**

In the creation of this analysis tool, the researcher implemented Kvale’s *Content Analysis* techniques, which made “it possible to quantify how often specific themes were (are) addressed in a text, and the frequency of themes could (can) then be compared and correlated with other measures” (Kvale, 2008, p. 203). At the time when the researcher designed the Academic Excellence versus Economic Gardening vocabulary/concept analysis tool, to the knowledge of the researcher, no other similar tool existed. The lack of a suitable analysis instrument required the researcher to design an instrument to generate the tendency analysis. Unlike using NVIVO to inductively generate from the interview data, this deductive analysis tool was created prior to the interviews. To limit researcher bias, the researcher polled several sitting superintendents, business leaders, teachers, and community leaders to select words or concepts to use in creation of the analysis instrument. Each leader was asked to provide three words or phrases that represented Academic Excellence and Economic Gardening. The researcher used these lists, along with other vocabulary taken from the literature, to create ten concept categories for Academic Excellence and Economic Gardening respectively. Designing the research instrument

in this manner implemented priori coding in that the professionals were polled and a tool designed from their input and the researcher’s interpretation of the literature (Stemler, 2001). The resulting analysis structure reflected a simplistic design created to determine the tendency of the interviewees either toward Academic Excellence or Economic Gardening.

The researcher used the chart in table 8 to generate the tendency scores for each participant:

**Table 8 Deductive Content Analysis Tool**

<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Academic Excellence:</u>	<u>Economic Gardening:</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
	1. Rigor, Challenging, Stimulating, Rewarding, College Ready	1. Collaboration, Working Together, Partnerships, Cooperation, Teamwork, Networking, Sharing, Connections	
	2. Critical Thinking, Problem Solutions, Problem Solving, Diagnostic Skills	2. Job Skills, Training, Workplace Apprenticeships, Trades, Craftsmen, CTC, Job Shadowing, Technician, Vo-Tec, Vo-Ag, Robotics, STEM	
	3. Academic Excellence, Scholarship, Perseverance, Outstanding, Superior	3. Drug Free, Safe Environment, Positive Workplace	
	4. Creativity, Talented, Skillful, Abilities	4. Citizenship, Character Education, Service Learning, Relationships	
	5. Intellectual, Curiosity, Scientific, Complexity	5. Work Ethic, Integrity, High Standards, Quality	
	6. High Achieving, Meeting the Challenge, Raising the Bar, AP, Dual Enrollment	6. Technical Institute, High Tech Jobs, Career Ready, Work Ready, Advancement	
	7. Leadership, Quality, Disciplinary	7. Dependability, Reliability, Work Ethic, Responsibility	
	8. Academic Standards, Eligible Content, SAS, Common Core, Literacy	8. Practical Application, Applied Skills, Applied Academics, Relevance, Adaptability, Foundation, Fundamentals, Real time education, Real world, Comprehensive	
	9. AYP, NCLB, PSSA, Graduation Rate, SAT, ACT	9. Infrastructure, Industry, Building, TIFs, LERTAs, Entrepreneurship, Grants	
	10. Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, STEAM, STREAM, STEM-M	10. Unemployment rate, Average Family Income, Home Ownership	

(Note: Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics and or STEM are on both sides of the list. This overlap reflects the overlap of concepts between the two strategies. A simple verbal response using STEM or a related concept could be scored in both categories. Contextual usage determined actual category placement. If a lack of a clear-cut meaning existed, the response was scored in both categories.)

To review, Academic Excellence is the strategy of focusing solely on instructional quality and students’ academic achievement. The Academic Excellence strategy not only develops high numbers of college enrollments but also generates strong local returns on investments (Doms, Lewis, & Robb, 2010). The National Commission on Excellence in

Education promoted Academic Excellence as an economic strategy in their report *A Nation At Risk* (1983). The Economic Gardening strategy emerged as a method for superintendents to help “grow” local economies through the creation of business, education, and community partnerships that focused on meeting local economic development needs (Roth, 2009).

### ***Discrepancies between the literature and the interview responses***

A comparison of the pilot generated concept categories and the literature showed consensus regarding the leadership category and STEM categories. The interviewees’ responses placed the STEM category first followed by the leadership, rigor, and high achieving categories. The literature strongly emphasized leadership while STEM fell behind the intellectual and creativity categories in occurrence in the literature. The rigor, high achieving, and intellectual categories could be viewed as similar responses but the lack of emphasis on creativity in the interview responses showed a small dichotomy between the literature and the interviewed leaders current views. A unique aspect of the literature related to the emphasis that the educational research placed on all the categories of Academic Excellence. In economically focused research, the leadership, intellectual, and creativity categories received the strongest emphasis.

In examining the Economic Gardening categories, only Kerr’s (1994, 2010) research touched on all the categories. Roth (2009) and Desplaces, Wergeles, and McGuigan (2009) hit all of the categories but one, the drug free, safe environment, and positive workplace category. Even though drugs received minimal mention in the literature, three of the interviewed business leaders viewed recreational and/or illicit drug and alcohol use as a major concern. The literature emphasized Economic Gardening as a way to combat unemployment. The leaders interviewed approached unemployment through emphasis development of job skills, practical application, and the need for better collaboration among the stakeholders. The interview data presented in section 4.6 demonstrated the business and community leaders concerns that workforce candidates lacked entry-level training and job skills. This lack of applicable skills translated into a very limited number of quality workforce candidates. Simply put, unemployment was high in the region because of a education/training mismatch between workforce candidates and the available positions. (Tables 9 and 10 illustrate the literature’s emphasis of the piloted concepts. Table 13 displays the interview responses of the three leadership groups.)

Table 9 Links to Academic Excellence

Links to the Literature	Academic Excellence Content/Concept Categories									
	Rigor	Critical Thinking	Academic Excellence	Creativity	Intellectual	High Achieving	Leadership	Academic Standards	AYP	STEM
107 <sup>th</sup> Congress (2002) NCLB	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Allen (2007)				X			X			
Armstrong & Yazdi (2004)				X	X		X			X
Birch (1987)		X		X			X			
Bush, (2006)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X
Dahl, G.B. (2002) & Dahl, M. (2010)			X	X	X	X				
Desplaces, Wergeles, & McGuigan (2009)		X	X		X		X	X		
Doms, Lewis, & Robb (2010)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X
Dooley (1994)										
Friedman (2007)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X
Fritsch & Mueller (2005)				X	X					X
Gibbons (2006)			X	X	X		X			
Glaser, Rosenthal, & Strange (2010)		X	X	X	X		X	X		
Greenwood & Hunt (1984)				X	X	X	X			
Gunderson (2010)										
Hamilton-Pennell (2010 & 2011)				X	X					
Hinz (2011)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X
Johnston & Singh (2003)			X	X	X		X			X
Kerr (1994 & 2010)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Knopp (2009)										
Morgan (2009)		X		X	X		X			X
Morgan, Lambe, & Freyer (2009)				X	X		X			X
National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Northway (2009)	X				X	X	X			X
Peel (1988)				X	X	X	X			
Peters (2001)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X
Powell (2005)		X					X			
Rodrigue (2009)										
Rossano (2000)	X					X		X		
Roth (2009)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X
Roxas, Lindsay, Ashill, Vitorio (2008)							X			
Stangler (2010)							X			
Stangler & Litan (2009)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X
Staples (2007)				X	X		X			
Thompson (2002)	X		X	X	X	X	X			X

Table 10 Links to Economic Gardening

Links to the Literature	Economic Gardening Content/Concept Categories									
	Collaboration	Job Skills	Drug Free	Citizenship	Work Ethic	Technical Training	Dependability	Practical Application	Infrastructure	Unemployment rate
107 <sup>th</sup> Congress (2002) NCLB		X				X		X		X
Allen (2007)	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X
Armstrong & Yazdi (2004)	X	X		X		X		X	X	X
Birch (1987)	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X
Bush (2006)	X	X		X		X		X	X	X
Dahl, G.B. (2002) & Dahl, M. (2010)		X							X	X
Desplaces, Wergeles, & McGuigan (2009)	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Doms, Lewis, & Robb (2010)	X	X				X		X		X
Dooley (1994)		X			X	X	X	X	X	
Friedman (2007)	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Fritsch & Mueller (2005)	X	X				X		X	X	X
Gibbons (2006)	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Glaser, Rosenthal, & Strange (2010)		X		X	X	X	X		X	X
Greenwood & Hunt (1984)		X								X
Gunderson (2010)		X				X		X		X
Hamilton-Pennell (2010 & 2011)	X	X		X		X		X	X	X
Hinz (2011)	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X
Johnston & Singh (2003)	X	X				X		X	X	X
Kerr (1994 & 2010)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Knopp (2009)	X					X			X	X
Morgan (2009)	X	X		X		X		X	X	X
Morgan, Lambe, & Freyer (2009)	X	X		X		X		X	X	X
National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983)		X		X		X		X		X
Northway (2009)		X				X		X		X
Peel (1988)	X	X				X		X		X
Peters (2001)		X				X		X		X
Powell (2005)	X	X		X		X		X	X	X
Rodrigue (2009)									X	X
Rossano (2000)										
Roth (2009)	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Roxas, Lindsay, Ashill, Vitorio (2008)	X					X			X	
Stangler (2010)	X	X		X		X		X	X	X
Stangler & Litan (2009)	X	X		X		X		X		X
Staples (2007)	X	X		X		X		X	X	X
Thompson (2002)	X	X		X	X	X		X		X

Table 11 illustrates the distribution of concept responses of the different stakeholder groups. While the majority of responses fell into the Economic Gardening side of the concept chart, the interviewees emphasized the Academic Excellence categories of high achievement, rigor, leadership, and STEM. The superintendents focused more on STEM related concepts. The business leaders preferred to discuss rigor and high achievement, and the community leaders placed a slight emphasis on leadership. This weighting received further emphasis in the interview analysis in section 4.6. The business leaders presented significant concerns over the lack of achievement and preparedness of their workforce candidates and their need for stronger basic mathematics, reading, and problem solving skills. Both the business leaders and the superintendents discussed AYP, NCLB, PSSA, and other state and national achievement requirements. The business leaders expressed dire concerns about how these achievement standards did not translate to employable job skills.

Examining the Economic Gardening side of table 11, all of the leaders interviewed placed emphasis on collaboration with other stakeholders, development of job skills and infrastructure, and the business leaders emphasized the need for practical application of academic skills. The business leaders placed a significant emphasis on training and recruiting of workforce candidates and developing strong collaborative partnerships with educational leaders to build a pool of quality workforce candidates. One anomaly in the Economic Gardening responses reflected a lack of concern with unemployment. All the leaders expressed awareness that development of appropriate training and workplace skills far outweighed unemployment concerns. In the interviews, business and community leaders decried the exodus of quality job candidates to other geographic areas because their training focused on careers not readily available in the region.

The primary purpose of the deductive concept analysis was to generate a tendency score for each of the leaders interviewed. A by-product of that process generated the following tendency scores for leadership groups:

- Superintendents: +.407 toward Economic Gardening
- Business leaders: +.728 toward Economic Gardening
- Community Leaders: +.862 toward Economic Gardening

Section 4.4.2 explains the mathematical equation used to generate the tendency scores and provides analysis of the individual leaders and the tendency concentrations of the leadership groups.

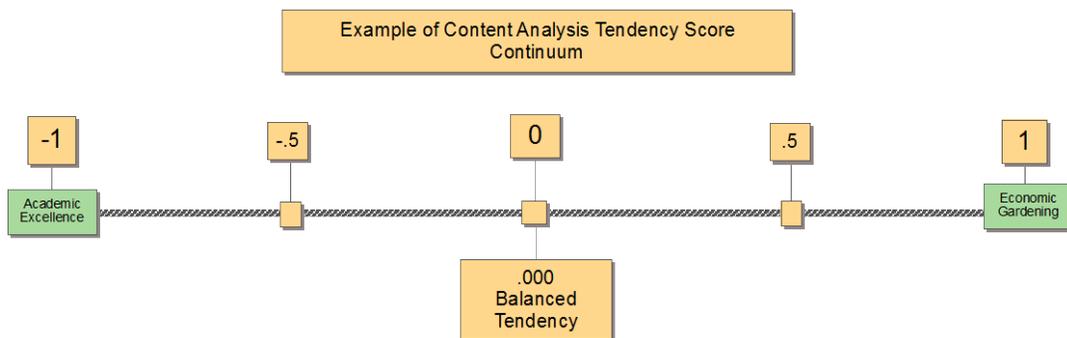
**Table 11 Composite tendency scores by stakeholder group**

<u>Academic Excellence:</u>	<u>Superintendent</u>	<u>Business Leaders</u>	<u>Community Leaders</u>	<u>Economic Gardening:</u>	<u>Superintendent</u>	<u>Business Leaders</u>	<u>Community Leaders</u>
11. Rigor, Challenging, Stimulating, Rewarding, College Ready	8	7	1	1. Collaboration, Working Together, Partnerships, Cooperation, Teamwork, Networking, Sharing, Connections	29	50	63
12. Critical Thinking, Problem Solutions, Problem Solving, Diagnostic Skills	0	3	0	2. Job Skills, Training, Workplace Apprenticeships, Trades, Craftsmen, CTC, Job Shadowing, Technician, Vo-Tec, Vo-Ag, Robotics, STEM	36	89	40
13. Academic Excellence, Scholarship, Perseverance, Outstanding, Superior	0	3	0	3. Drug Free, Safe Environment, Positive Workplace	1	9	6
14. Creativity, Talented, Skillful, Abilities	0	0	0	4. Citizenship, Character Education, Service Learning, Relationships	1	6	1
15. Intellectual, Curiosity, Scientific, Complexity	0	0	0	5. Work Ethic, Integrity, High Standards, Quality	3	7	5
16. High Achieving, Meeting the Challenge, Raising the Bar, AP, Dual Enrollment	4	10	1	6. Technical Institute, High Tech Jobs, Career Ready, Work Ready, Advancement	3	26	11
17. Leadership, Quality, Disciplined	6	3	7	7. Dependability, Reliability, Work Ethic, Responsibility	0	2	1
18. Academic Standards, Eligible Content, SAS, Common Core, Literacy	1	3	0	8. Practical Application, Applied Skills, Applied Academics, Relevance, Adaptability, Foundation, Fundamentals, Real time education, Real world, Comprehensive	9	35	6
19. AYP, NCLB, PSSA, Graduation Rate, SAT, ACT	5	6	0	9. Infrastructure, Industry, Building, TIFs, LERTAs, Entrepreneurship, Grants	19	24	55
20. Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, STEAM, STREAM, STEM-M	19	4	5	10. Unemployment rate, Average Family Income, Home Ownership	1	0	1
Totals	43	39	14	Totals	102	248	189
Superintendent Tendency Score: +.407; Business Tendency Score: +.728; Community Tendency Score: +.862							

#### 4.4.2 Researcher Designed Method of Determining Tendency Score

The researcher designed a simple mathematical formula to generate the tendency score. Each interview transcript was tallied for the number of times the interviewee stated words or concepts that fell into either an Academic Excellence or Economic Gardening category. (See the deductive concept analysis tool in table 8) The word/concept tallies for Academic Excellence were given a negative value and the Economic Gardening word/concept tallies were given a positive number. The category with the smaller word/concept count was subtracted from the larger category. The resulting difference then was divided into the total number of times the interviewee used any word/concept from the two lists. The final calculation generated a number between negative one and positive one. An interview that with coding that was perfectly balanced to both Academic Excellence and Economic Gardening would generate a score of zero (0) as illustrated in figure 2.

**Figure 2 Example of Tendency Score Continuum**



#### *The Dichotomy of Academic Excellence and Economic Gardening*

In the literature review, the researcher discussed the possibility of another option or strategy emerging from the research process. Whether caused through how the interview questions were created or the economic strategies themselves, a linear continuum of responses appeared to be the best representative method to illustrate how the tendencies of Academic Excellence and Economic Gardening blended from one to the other. The linear representation illustrates a degree of balance in the interviewees' responses between the two strategies.

### ***Ex. The Dionysus Superintendent***

The following example illustrates the application of the deductive content analysis tool, placing the results in a table, and the graphic representation.

The Dionysus superintendent's 6 responses in the Academic Excellence category vs. 11 responses for the Economic Gardening category would be used to calculate a percentage preference using the following formula:

11 (Economic Gardening responses) – 6 (Academic Excellence responses) = 5 response difference.

The total number of responses then was divided by the difference.

$$5 \div 17 = 0.294$$

(This score then was placed into a table to compare the preferences of the interviewees.)

The resulting percentage created a tendency score, which demonstrated the interviewee's predisposition for either Academic Excellence or Economic Gardening. The example below shows the Dionysus district leader's scores. (See Chapter III, page 80 for a complete explanation of how the scores were generated.)

#### **4.4.3 The Dionysus School District Deductive Content Analysis**

**Table 12 Dionysus Deductive Content Analysis Scores**

School District:	Superintendent	Business Leader	Community Leader
Dionysus	+.294	+.826	+.733

The deductive content analysis in the Dionysus case study (table 11) showed a score order that contrasted with the superintendent's relatively low Economic Gardening score and the business and community leaders with tendency scores at the high end of the Economic Gardening portion of the scale. The business leader demonstrated the highest tendency toward Economic Gardening with a score of +.826, but his interview still discussed the need for basic skills in reading, writing, and arithmetic. The community leader's score of +.733 was more moderate than the business leader but still showed a strong focus on economic development. The superintendent's score of +.294 placed him in the lower third of the Economic Gardening range. The superintendent's score indicated a leaning toward being more economically focused, which correlated to his business and community relationship diagram. As illustrated in the complete

analysis chart, the Dionysus district case study exhibited a spread of .602 between the business leader and the superintendent, which represented the median spread of the cases in the study. A wider tendency spread may indicate the potential for communications problems. The tendency spreads among the leaders went from the widest spread of 1.40 to the narrowest spread of .118. The next section provides the complete set of tendency scores.

#### 4.4.4 Cross-case Analysis of the Deductive Content Analysis Scores

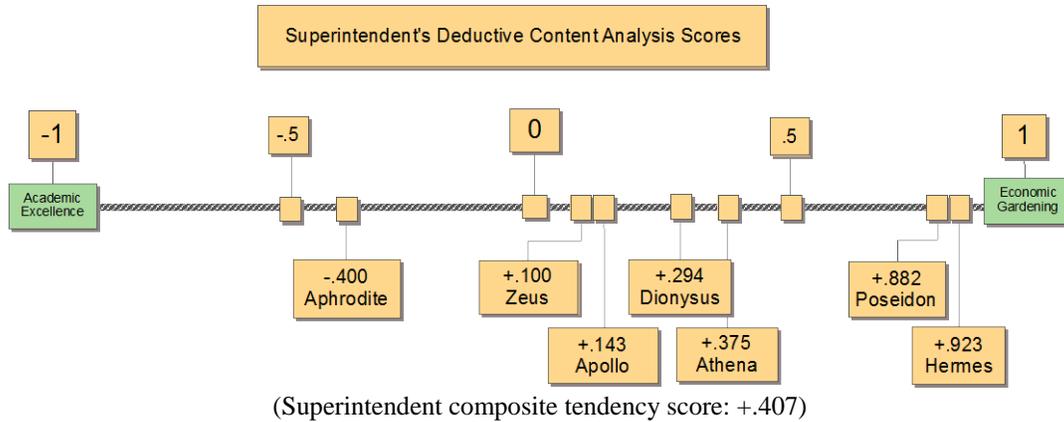
Each interview transcript was tallied for the number of times the interviewee stated words that fell into either an Academic Excellence or Economic Gardening category. The content tallies for Academic Excellence received a negative value and the Economic Gardening content tallies received a positive number. The category with the smaller content count was subtracted from the larger category. The researcher then divided the resulting difference into the total number of times the interviewee used any content phrases from the two lists. The resulting percentage created a tendency score, which demonstrated the interviewee’s predisposition for either Academic Excellence or Economic Gardening. Table 12 gives the results of the word analysis process.

**Table 13 Complete Deductive Content Analysis Scores**

School District:	Superintendent:	Business Leader:	Community Leader:
Apollo	+ .143	+ .643	+ .905
Dionysus	+ .294	+ .826	+ .733
Poseidon	+ .882	+ 1.00	+ .905
Aphrodite	- .400	+ .654	+ 1.00
Hermes	+ .923	+ .765	+ .913
Athena	+ .375	+ .737	+ .833
Zeus	+ .100	+ .707	+ .814
Penn-Northwest CEO	N/A	+ .666	N/A

The figure 3 illustrates the superintendents' preferences regarding Academic Excellence and Economic Gardening:

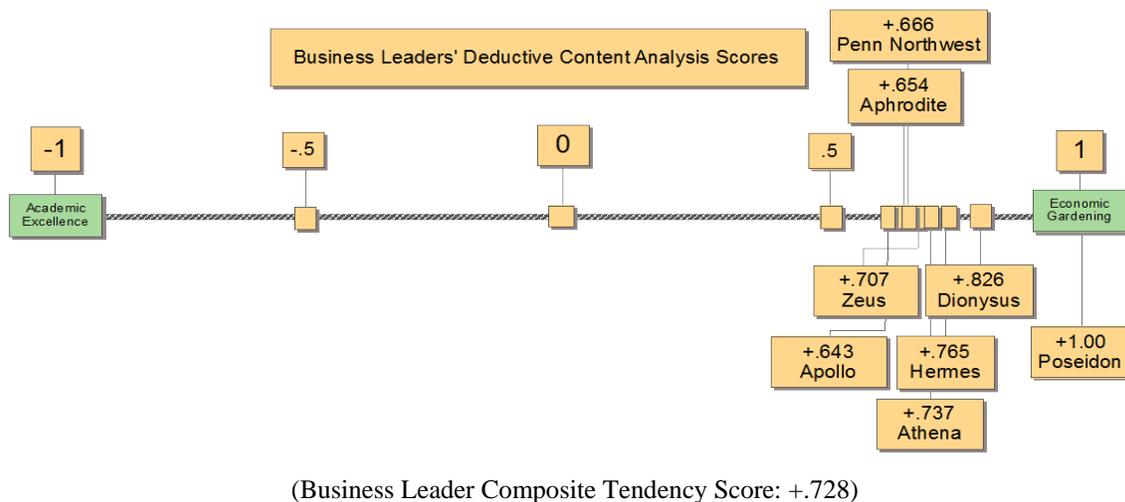
**Figure 3 Superintendents' tendency continuum**



The diagram shows how the superintendents lined up as related to the concepts of Academic Excellence and Economic Gardening. The superintendents exhibited the widest spread of the three stakeholder groups. While four of the superintendents were centrally grouped, the two extremes illustrated the tendencies of the two industrial arts teachers in the Economic Gardening end of the scale and the physics teacher at the Academic Excellence end of the scale. When assessing the relationships, the tendencies found at the extremes of the stakeholder pool were reflected in the quality of relationships the superintendents had with the business and community leaders.

The figure 4 illustrates the much narrower spread in the business leaders' preferences regarding Academic Excellence and Economic Gardening:

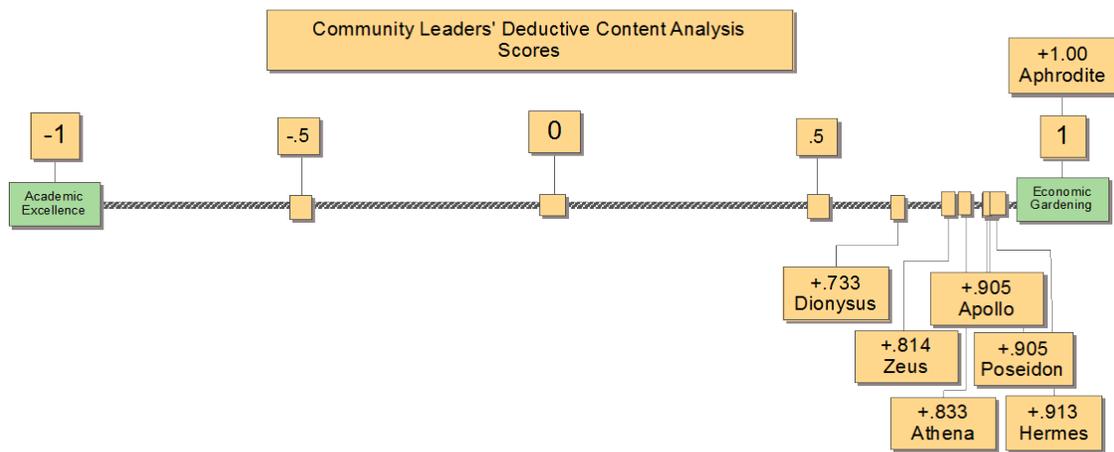
**Figure 4 Business leaders' tendency continuum**



As would be expected, the business leaders' word analysis scores placed solidly in the upper half of the Economic Gardening tendency range. Clearly, the Poseidon and Hermes superintendents would be able to relate strongly to the needs of the business leaders interviewed. The outlier in comparison was the Dionysus superintendent who developed very strong connections to the business leaders while maintaining a centrist tendency toward Economic Gardening and Academic Excellence.

The figure 5 visualizes the narrow spread of the community leaders' preferences regarding Academic Excellence and Economic Gardening:

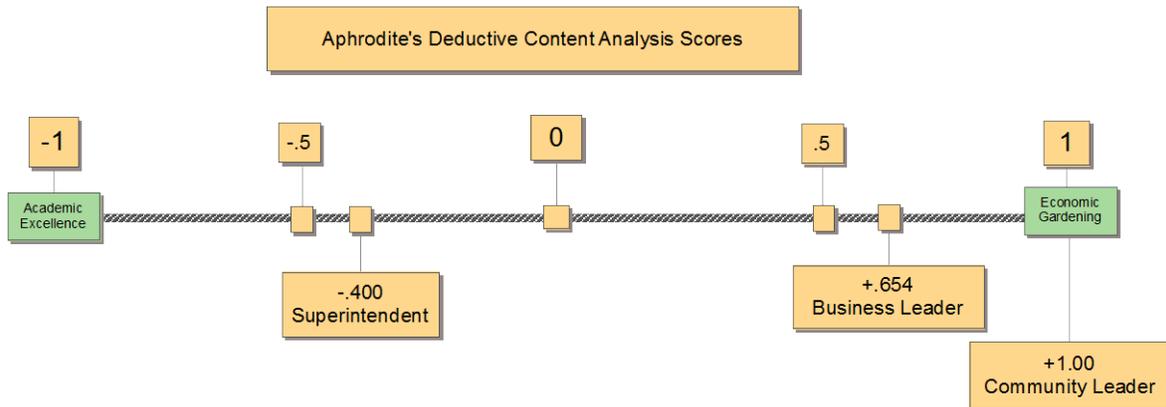
**Figure 5 Community leaders' tendency continuum**



(Community Leader Composite Tendency Score: +.862)

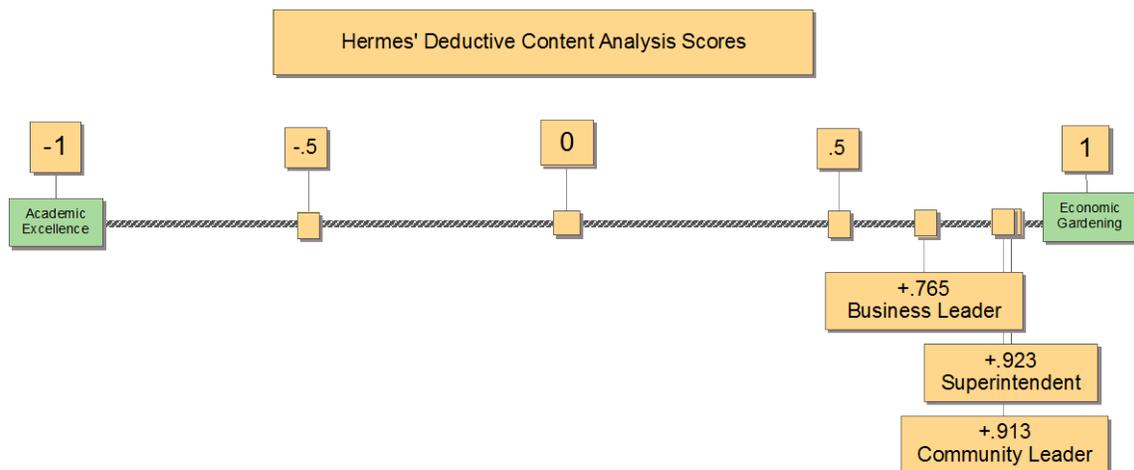
The chart shows that the community leaders interviewed actually displayed a stronger tendency toward Economic Gardening than the business leaders. In comparing the three tendency charts, the researcher noted that the spread of the superintendents across the tendencies would present challenges for some of the superintendents to relate to the needs and issues of the business and community leaders. The potential for relationship issues is very evident in the Aphrodite leaders tendency scores. (Note the Aphrodite community leader's placement on the tendency line.)

**Figure 6 Aphrodite's tendency continuum**



The figure 6 presentation of the tendency scores of the Aphrodite case study's superintendent, business leader, and community leader uncovers a strong indication that the superintendent will need to make special efforts to engage the community leader in economic development discussions. Based on his interview responses, the community leader would need significant time with both the business leader and the superintendent to raise his level of understanding and develop his willingness to assist in the process of moving the community forward. This is not the case for the Hermes superintendent (figure 7). The Hermes case demonstrated the second tightest tendency spread of the study and when combined with the relationship diagram presented in the next section, gives a clear picture of why he developed such strong relationships with the local business leaders.

**Figure 7 Hermes' Tendency Continuum**



The Hermes superintendent, by way of his area of expertise as an Industrial Arts teacher, maintained a strong connection to the business and community leaders in his district. This

common ground, combined with the superintendent's desire to promote work-study and internship programs for his students, fits directly in line with the needs expressed by his business and community partners. Being able to visualize the tendency spreads gave the researcher strong insights into how the stakeholders would interact and collaborate to promote educational programs and economic development.

#### **4.4.5 Summary Deductive Content Analysis of Interviewee Vocabulary and Concepts**

The deductive vocabulary analysis quantified the tendencies of the interviewees toward either the concept of Academic Excellence or Economic Gardening. The quantification of interviewees gave the researcher the ability to rate the interviewees, generate a linear relationship chart for each stakeholder group, and visualize the perspectives of each of the interviewees. Creating a table of the tendency scores, the researcher could easily compare the tendencies for common philosophical positions, and in the case of the Aphrodite superintendent, the potential for conflict because of the opposition of the philosophical positions. Examining the wide spread of the tendencies toward either the Academic Excellence or Economic Gardening strategies in the Aphrodite case study, the resulting representation demonstrated likelihood for conflict in this case. By itself, the quantification demonstrated the concentration of business and community leaders toward a strong tendency for Economic Gardening. The tendencies of the business and community leaders directly contrasted with the range of superintendent tendencies from strong Academic Excellence to very strong Economic Gardening preferences.

#### ***Questions skewing the results***

Rogelberg (2007) in his paper *Encyclopedia of Industrial and Organizational Psychology* stated, "Common themes in open-ended data depend on the questions being asked." With this in mind, the interview questions serve to focus the conversation on specific topics and create their own thematic tendencies. When examining the tendency table and related charting of responses, the reader must take into account the fact that the interviewees responded to specific questions related to economic development and interactions with business and community leaders. The researcher recommends that the reader use the median response of the superintendents as a more accurate transition point from a tendency of Academic Excellence to Economic Gardening.

### *Limited independent use*

Alone, the tendencies revealed only the perspective preferences of the interviewees. When coupled with either the visualization or interviewee data, the tendency scores served to clarify the underlying basis for the current relationships between stakeholders. The three superintendents with the strongest (lowest numerical scores) Academic Excellence tendencies, Aphrodite -.400, Zeus +.100, and Apollo +.143, exhibited the weakest relationship strength with the other stakeholder groups. The Poseidon and Hermes superintendents exhibited the strongest (highest numerical scores) Economic Gardening tendencies, which related directly to very strong relationship diagrams. The only outlier in this analysis was the Dionysus superintendent who scored +.294 that gave him a moderate to low Economic Gardening tendency. The Dionysus superintendent's pursuit of personal interactions and connections with the other stakeholders reflected a strong understanding of economic and community development, which directly contrasted with his more balanced tendency between Academic Excellence and Economic Gardening. Combining the deductive content analysis with the relationship diagrams of the interview content in section 4.5, provided a clear picture of how these stakeholders interacted and worked to promote economic development.

## **4.5 VISUALIZATION OF RELATIONSHIPS**

The visualization diagrams and the corresponding analysis were designed to demonstrate the quality of informational flow and interaction levels among the stakeholders. Creating a diagram or visualization of the relationships reduced the complexity of stakeholder interrelations to a simple graphic illustrating the interaction and connectivity among stakeholders (Yamamoto & McClure, 2011). The reasoning for this type of analysis was that if people could not or would not interact and communicate, how could they constructively work toward common goals (Peel, 1988; Thompson, 2002)?

Using a visualization diagram to depict the complexities of the relationships among the stakeholders made these relationships understandable at a glance. These relationship diagrams allowed the researcher to present qualitative relationship analysis in a format more readily

accessible to the reader (Kvale, 2008). The diagrams in the following sections were created using Inspiration 9 Software version 9.0.3. Originally, the software was designed to create graphic organizers and other classroom materials, and it worked well to create the visualization diagrams.

### *Creation of the Visualization Diagrams*

The researcher used the interview data to determine the quality and frequency of interactions among the leaders interviewed. Through cross checking the responses among interviewees, the researcher confirmed the frequency and quality of the connectivity. Each of the three interviewed stakeholders is represented with a large circle that includes their leadership role and a short description of their positions (e.g. CEO, Vice President, etc.). The smaller circles represent non-interviewed stakeholders that were either mentioned by the actual person being interviewed or interviewees from the other cases. All of the superintendents had a strong connection to the United Way through its annual fund raising campaign, the Success-by-Six kindergarten preparation program, and the Early Childhood Educational Summit. Because of this relationship, each superintendent has a smaller sized circle that represents United Way contact and opportunity for networking. The United Way circle and other similar non-interviewed relationship circles are placed to the left and beneath the superintendent circle. Any inter-connectivity among the social, business, or educational organizations represented was noted with connectivity (one-way relationship) and inter-connectivity (two-way relationship) arrows. In order to receive an inter-connectivity arrow, another interviewee had to directly discuss the cross relationship among the stakeholders. In the Dionysus case, there was a high level of inter-connectivity discussed by both the major stakeholders interviewed and other case interviewees. This inter-connectivity created a web of interaction with people connecting across several cases to create programs such as the summer welding camp, which involved multiple stakeholders across the region (nine school districts and over 25 businesses). The key aspect of the visualization diagrams was the thickness of the relationship arrows.

#### 4.5.1 The Thickness of the Connectivity and Inter-connectivity Arrows

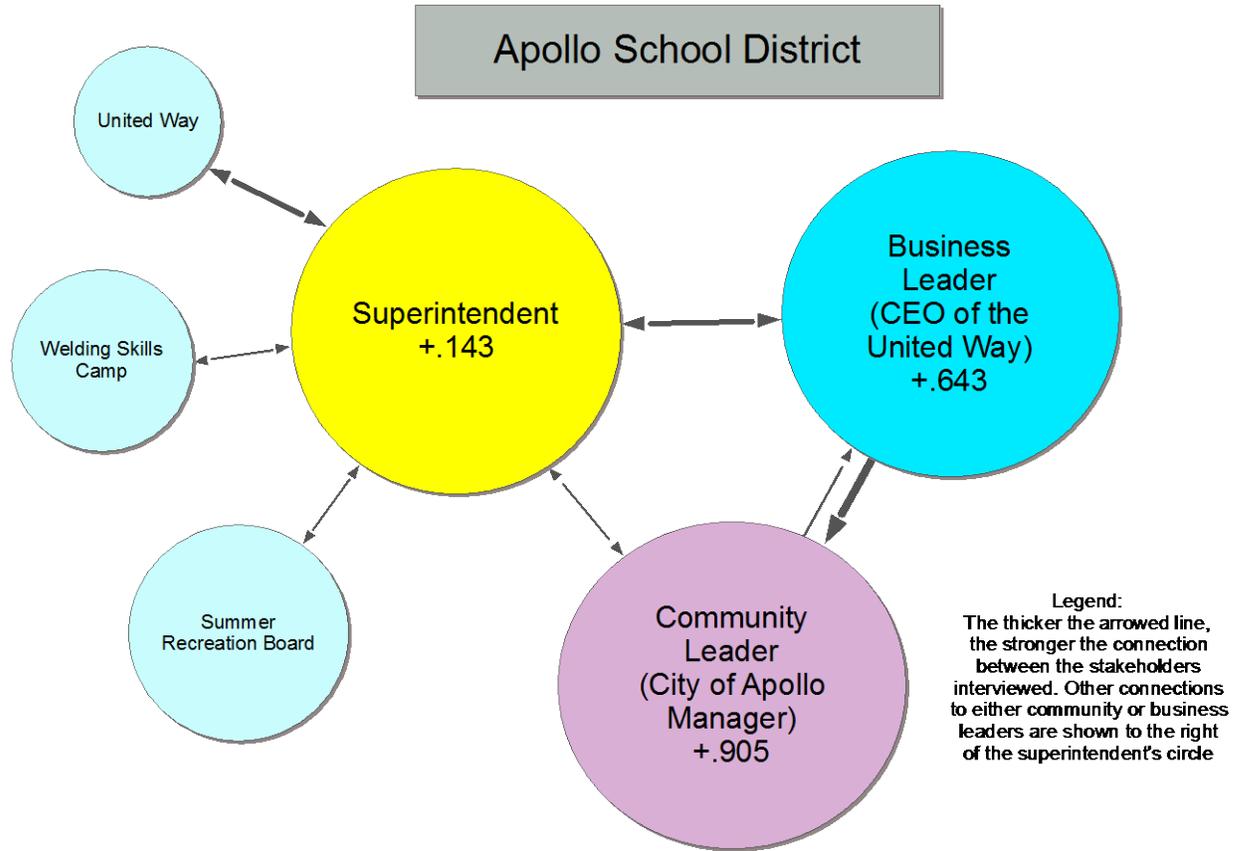
The thickness of the arrows' shaft and head represents the level of connectivity expressed by the interviewees. The arrow thicknesses were assigned as follows:

- If a superintendent recommended a person to be interviewed, but had never actually met that person or networked with that person, a thin-line shaft with only one arrowhead was used.
- If the superintendent and the other stakeholder had met only on a limited basis, the arrow would have an arrowhead on both ends but the shaft would be relatively thin.
- If the superintendent and the stakeholder had only a strong business relationship, a medium thickness arrow shaft and heads would be used.
- If the superintendent and the stakeholder had developed a strong personal and professional relationship, the thickest of the shaft and heads of the arrow would be used to represent the quality of the relationship. (In the Dionysus case, the personal bond between the superintendent and business leader was so strong that it required a double set of arrows to illustrate the depth and quality of this relationship.)
- If an imbalance of connectivity existed, the researcher represented the disparity with separate connectivity arrows for each leader in the case. Again, the thickness of individual arrows denoted the strength of the relationship between the individual leaders.

The section presents each superintendent's relationship visualization and corresponding relationship findings for each case. The section concludes with a cross case analysis of relationship depth versus the relationship quantity. The resulting data tables provide insight into each superintendent's ability to promote either Academic Excellence or Economic Gardening through partnering with the other stakeholders.

## 4.5.2 The Apollo School District Relationship Diagram

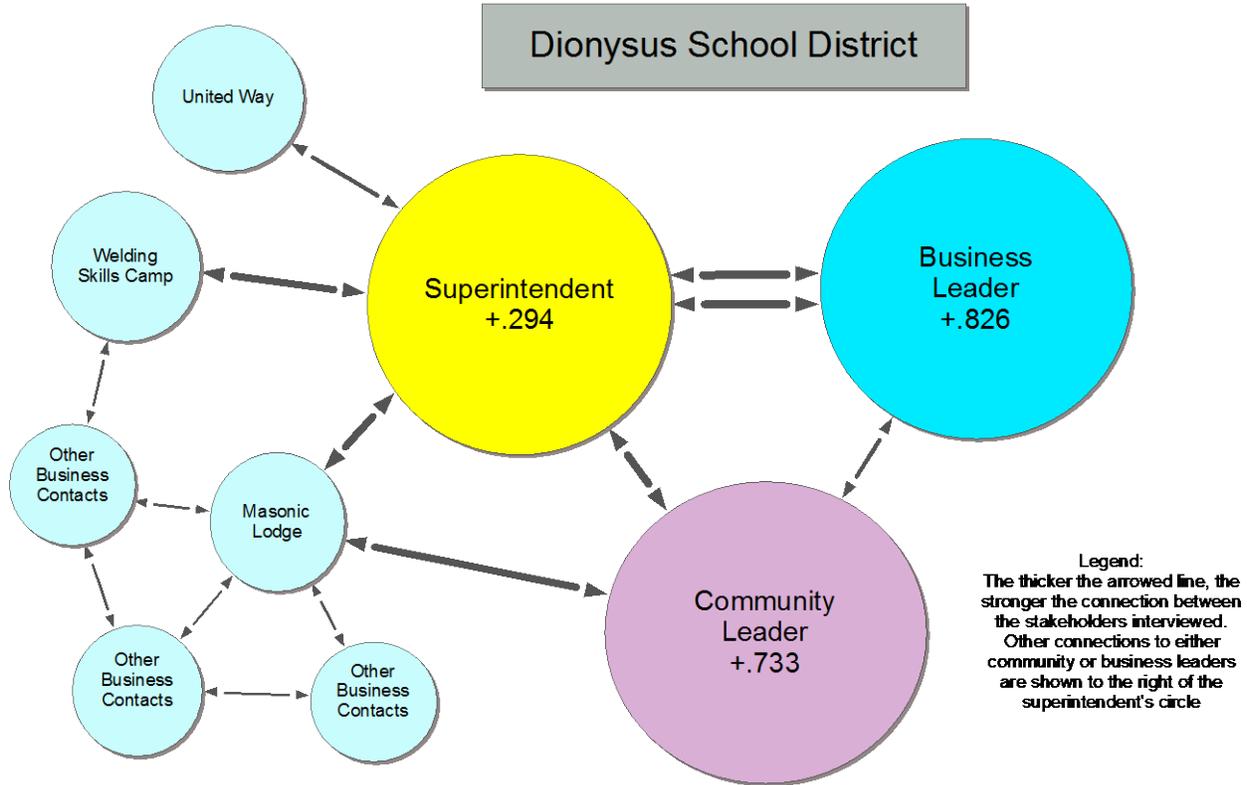
Figure 8 Apollo's relationship diagram



This diagram demonstrates the linkage of inter-relationships between the Apollo superintendent and the CEO of the United Way and the Apollo city manager (figure 8). While the superintendent developed a strong relationship with the United Way CEO, it was driven through his superintendent's network. The interview data related that the past three years, 2009, 2010, and 2011 were the years for the superintendents to serve as sponsoring leaders of the United Way fundraising campaign. This relationship was strong because the CEO of the United Way worked hard to foster these relationships among the superintendents. Also, several other superintendents recommended the United Way's CEO to be interviewed. The Apollo superintendent experienced some contact with the other leaders but at the time, these relationships were still being formed. Only time will tell if the relationships will continue to grow or diminish in the quality. (The number below the interviewee's title represents his vocabulary tendency score. The tendency scores are from section 4.4)

### 4.5.3 The Dionysus School District Relationship Diagram

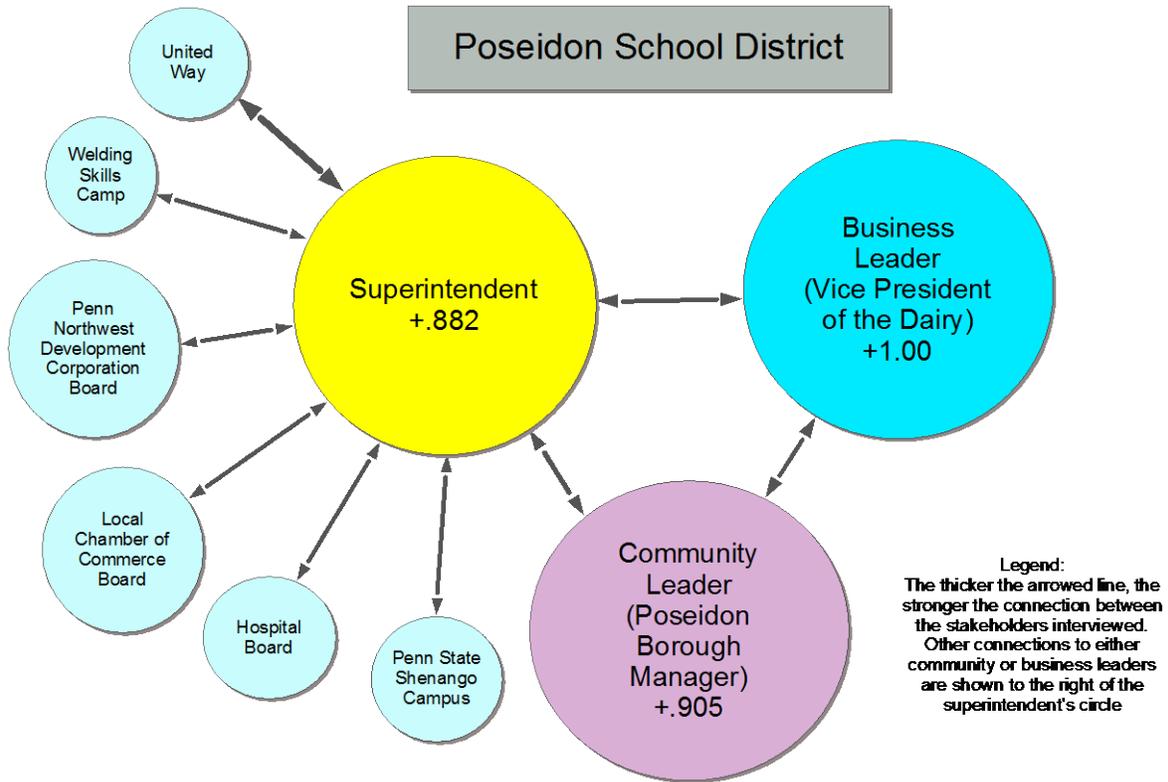
Figure 9 Dionysus relationship diagram



The Dionysus superintendent (figure 9) displayed the strongest relationship network of all participants in the study. Because of his business and entrepreneurial activities, the superintendent developed relationships that went well beyond the level of business acquaintances. He was on a first name basis with both the Dionysus fabricator and Dionysus mayor and knew them through the local Masonic Lodge as well as on a professional basis. The Dionysus fabricator stated, “His father raised him right and he knows how to show respect.” The community leader related a story of how the lodge brothers came together and fought a previous school board president to keep the superintendent in his position. In turn, this superintendent used his strong connections to tap into local resources, networking to promote a countywide summer skills welding camp, and used his influence with his lodge brothers to gain the necessary sponsors to make the program a success. These types of connections took time to build and may have been related to his being one of the most senior superintendents interviewed.

#### 4.5.4 The Poseidon School District Relationship Diagram

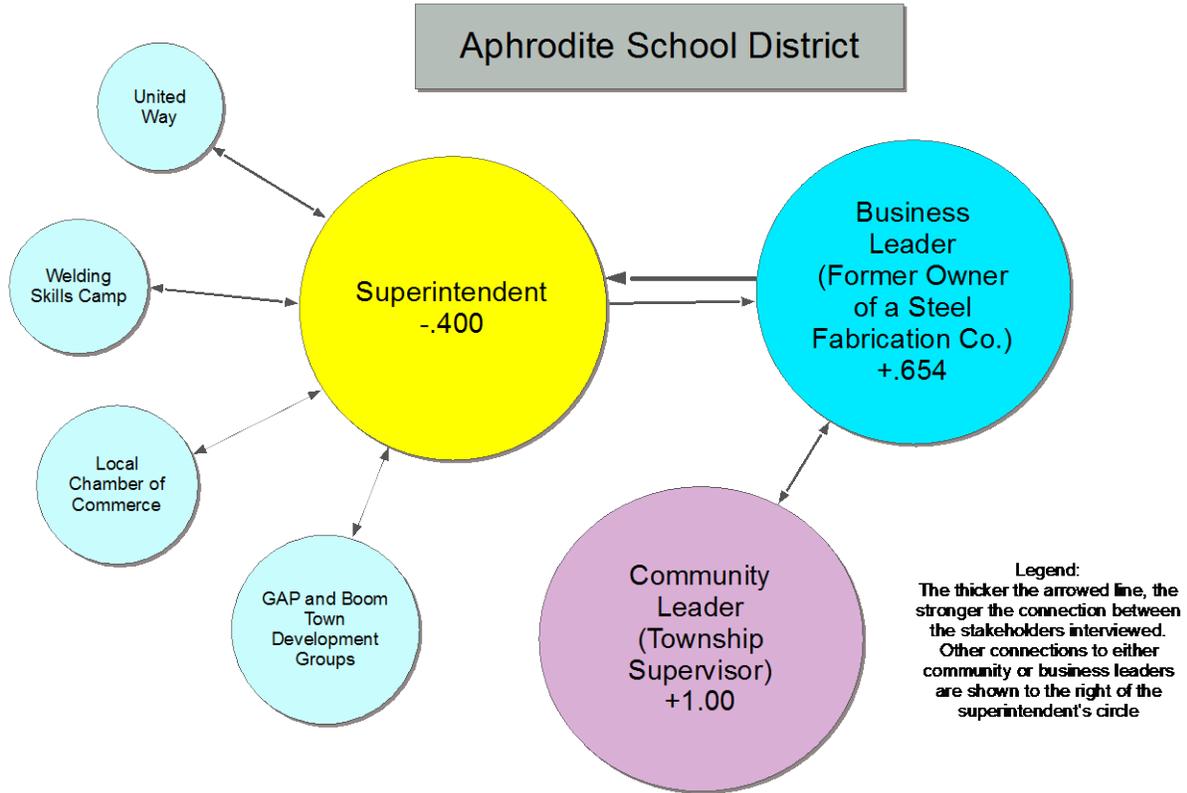
Figure 10 Poseidon relationship diagram



The Poseidon superintendent (figure 10) developed good connections with the business leader, the vice president of the dairy, and the community leader, the Poseidon borough manager. The relationship with the vice president of the dairy was still in its developing stages but a strong level of interaction and support existed between the superintendent and the dairy as a business in the district. The superintendent was the campaign chair for the annual United Way campaign and built the strongest connection of all the superintendents with the United Way organization. Serving on many executive boards, the superintendent of the Poseidon School District developed many contacts and networking opportunities. While the connections among the boards and community groups were not well defined in the interviews, a level of interaction and connectivity could be expected simply because of the similarity of services provided among the groups such as Penn-Northwest Development Corporation and the Chamber of Commerce. The Poseidon superintendent developed a strong network of contacts, which directly contrasted with the Aphrodite superintendent.

#### 4.5.5 The Aphrodite School District Relationship Diagram

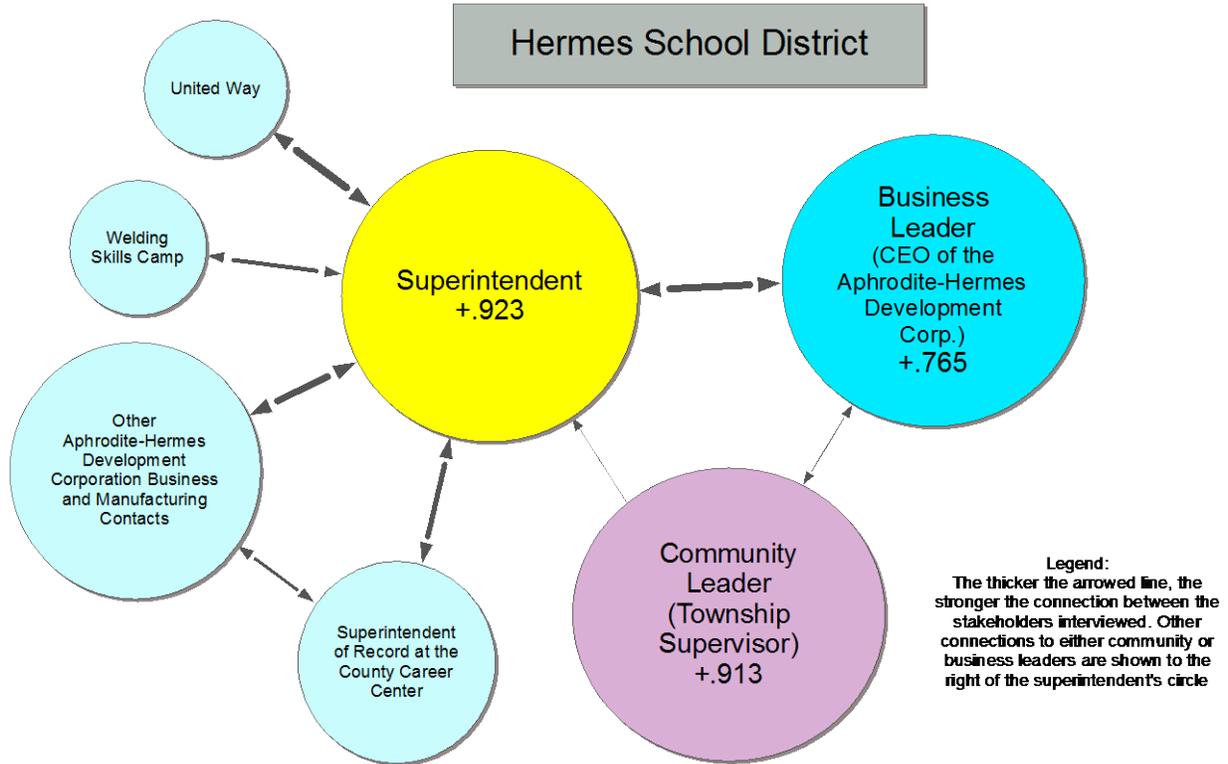
Figure 11 Aphrodite relationship diagram



Only in his second year at the school district, the Aphrodite superintendent (figure 11) had limited contact with economic development groups. The superintendent expressed a high level of frustration with these groups because they required many meetings, which produced very limited results. The business leader, a former owner of a steel fabrication company, tried to make a stronger connection with the superintendent, but the superintendent mainly focused on raising student achievement not promoting economic development. Several times, the Aphrodite fabricator complained about the lack of support for economic and workforce development by the area superintendents. Adding to lack of relationships, the superintendent did not feel the area could grow economically because its limited access to major highways and metropolitan areas. The community leader, a township supervisor, experienced limited contact with the business leader while serving as a township supervisor and had never met or talked with the superintendent. In contrast, the Hermes superintendent built a strong network of contacts.

#### 4.5.6 The Hermes School District Relationship Diagram

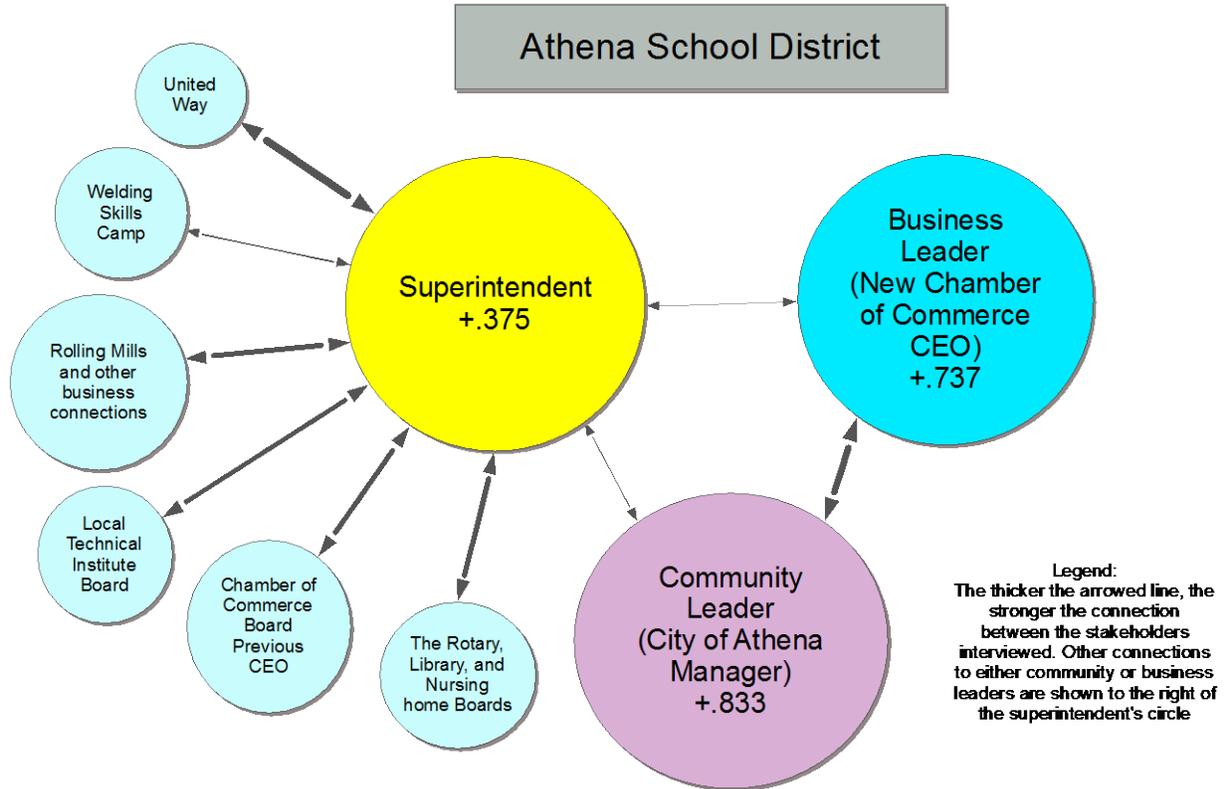
Figure 12 Hermes relationship diagram



The Hermes superintendent (figure 12) developed very strong ties to the CEO of the Aphrodite-Hermes Development Corporation. Using his contacts with the CEO of the United Way and the Development Corporation, the superintendent developed relationships with many of the businesses in the local industrial park to build an extensive network that promoted collaboration and, in turn, economic development. The key was that the superintendent did not see his actions as promoting economic development but simply doing what was in the best interest of his students. Due to his limited time in the position, the community leader, a township supervisor, had yet to have discussions with either the superintendent or the business leader. In their interviews, neither the superintendent nor the business leader could recommend a good community leader to interview. The inability to favorably recommend community leaders went across several of the cases and presented a barrier to developing quality business, education, and community partnerships. While the Hermes superintendent had strong personal connections to business leaders, the Athena superintendent developed more formal professional relationships.

#### 4.5.7 The Athena School District Relationship Diagram

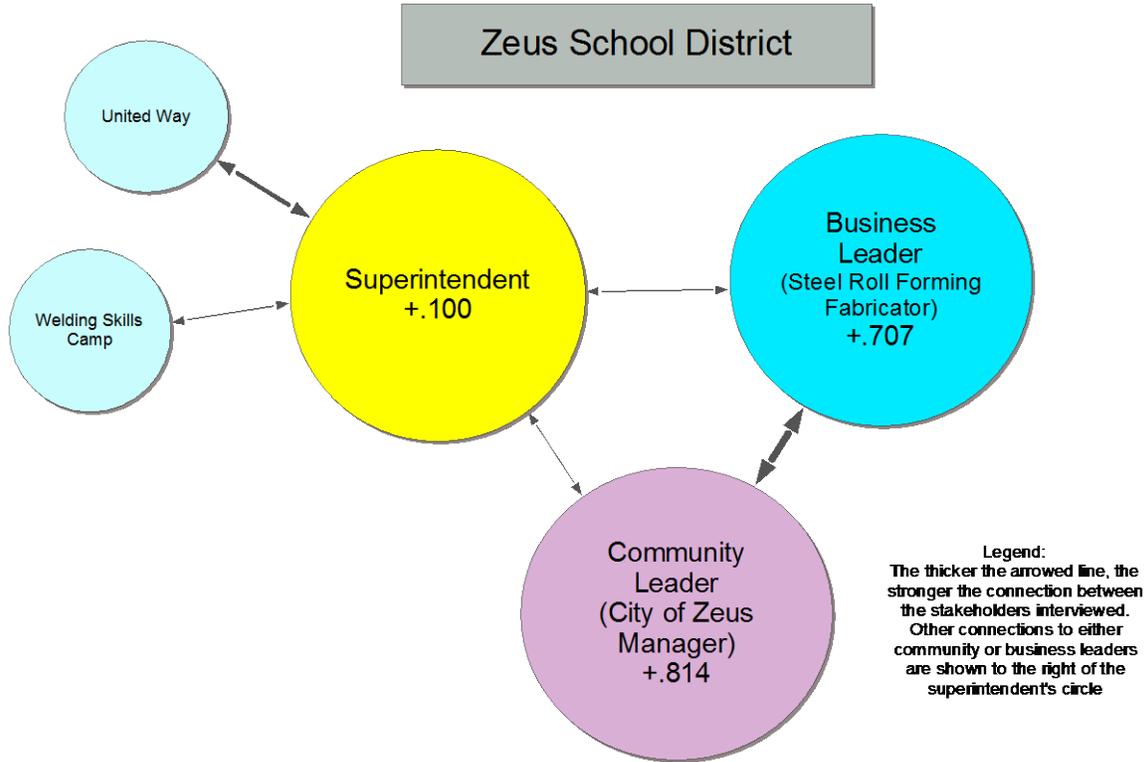
Figure 13 Athena relationship diagram



The superintendent for the Athena School District (figure 13) was not as well connected to the current CEO of the Chamber of Commerce or city manager because both were new to their positions, but the superintendent sat on several business and community organization boards. In addition to having a strong tie to the United Way, the superintendent sat on the Rotary, library, and nursing home boards, held meetings with local business leaders, and sent teachers to learn about the workforce needs of these manufacturers. A longer tenured superintendent, the Athena superintendent did not have the intense relationships of the Dionysus superintendent but still developed many connections to the local community and regional business leaders. One distinct characteristic was that the Athena superintendent used his contacts to make changes to his curriculum and promote STEM through the Engineering is Elementary program in his district. The Athena superintendent's several board memberships and connectivity differed significantly with the quantity and depth of the relationships developed by the Zeus superintendent.

#### 4.5.8 The Zeus School District Relationship Diagram

Figure 14 Zeus relationship diagram



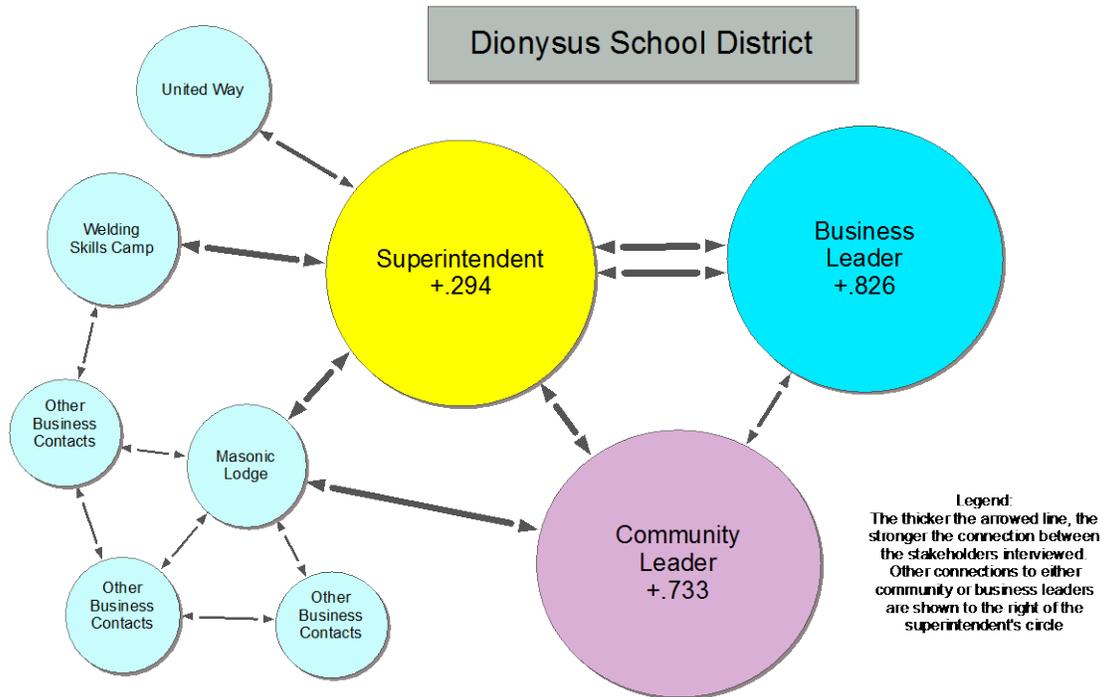
The Zeus district superintendent (figure 14) started to promote the linkage to the business and community leaders through the Chamber of Commerce Sunrise Round Tables, but the relationships were still in their beginning stages. The business leader from his community talked more about his connections to a neighboring district than his home district. The community leader, the Zeus city manager, knew the superintendent, who was a member of the City of Zeus council. At the time of the interview, the community leader was attempting to make contact with the superintendent to offer sponsorship of three district students to attend the countywide summer skills welding camp. (Each student who participated needed a one thousand dollar sponsorship by a local business or other organization.) The business leader and the community leader were already working very diligently to promote workforce development and the recruitment of local talent into the job market. In contrast, the superintendent's major focus was raising student achievement and PSSA scores. The seven cases illustrated a diversity of

relationship quality and quantity, which related directly to the effectiveness of their collaborative efforts.

#### 4.5.9 Cross-case Analysis of the Relationship Diagrams

In analyzing the collective relationship diagrams to the actual quality of the relationship, specifically among the superintendents and the other stakeholder groups, a specific pattern emerged. The strength or depth of the relationships directly impacted the perceptions of the people involved. If the superintendent promoted conversations and actively engaged business and community leaders, the perception of those leaders was that the superintendent understood their needs and worked to promote economic development in the school district. If the superintendent was inaccessible, distant, or concerned with other issues, business leaders and community leaders made sure to mention or imply these issues. Upon comparing the following two relationship diagrams, the researcher recognized a significant difference in the collaborative nature of the two superintendents. (Note that the Dionysus superintendent lacked a large number of board positions [Figure 15] but developed a few key contacts that gave him access to a much larger pool of business and community leaders.)

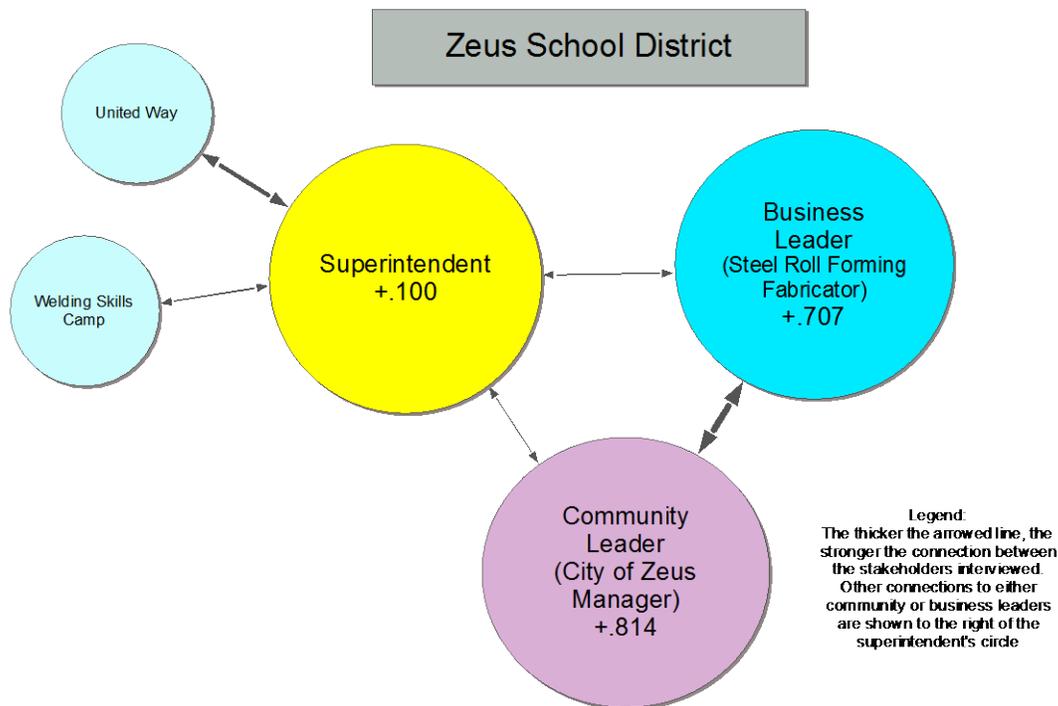
Figure 15 Dionysus relationship diagram



Because of the quality of the relationship the superintendent developed with the business leader, the researcher doubled the connecting arrows between them to emphasize the strength of this relationship. The other connection that dramatically impacted the superintendent’s effectiveness in promoting a summer skills welding camp was the connection to the Masonic Lodge and that network of business and industry leaders. The summer skills camp was designed to give 30 students the opportunity to be trained and certified in basic welding skills for ¼”, ½”, and 1” welds. This type of certification made these students prime recruits for the local fabricating shops and the Marcellus Shale natural gas producers. The Dionysus superintendent used his contacts through the lodge to secure a \$1,000 sponsorship for every student involved and all the necessary metal stock and welding materials (Baldarelli, Personal interview, 2012). If one examines the diagram closely, the position of the superintendent as the hub of interactions becomes very clear.

In examining the Zeus relationship diagram (figure 16), the separation of the superintendent and other key economic leaders in the community became clear. The inaccessibility of the superintendent made scheduling an interview for this study difficult, and both the business and community leaders reiterated similar issues in contacting the superintendent.

**Figure 16 Zeus relationship diagram**



The superintendent's interview made clear that he focused a large part of his efforts on student achievement, whether that factored into his inaccessibility was not obvious. The community leader vocally expressed his frustration over unsuccessfully trying to contact the superintendent to sponsor the Zeus school district's summer welding camp participants. In examining the diagram, the limited connections between the superintendent and the business and community leader demonstrated the other interviewees' concerns about contacting and maintaining a quality relationship with the superintendent. This type of relationship quality was found with two other superintendents that were newer superintendents in the region.

The quality of the relationships made a difference in the business leader's perceptions of the superintendent. The Hermes (figure 17) and Dionysus superintendents developed direct contacts with business and industry leaders. The Hermes superintendent's efforts to develop work-study or internship programs were viewed positively by the several of the business leaders interviewed. This interaction gave the superintendent direct access to and strong connections with individual manufacturers and industry representatives. By the superintendent being proactive, the CEO of the United Way, the CEO of Aphrodite-Hermes Development Corporation, and the former owner of the roll-off dumpster fabrication company perceived the him as being pro-economic development.

**Figure 17 Hermes relationship diagram**

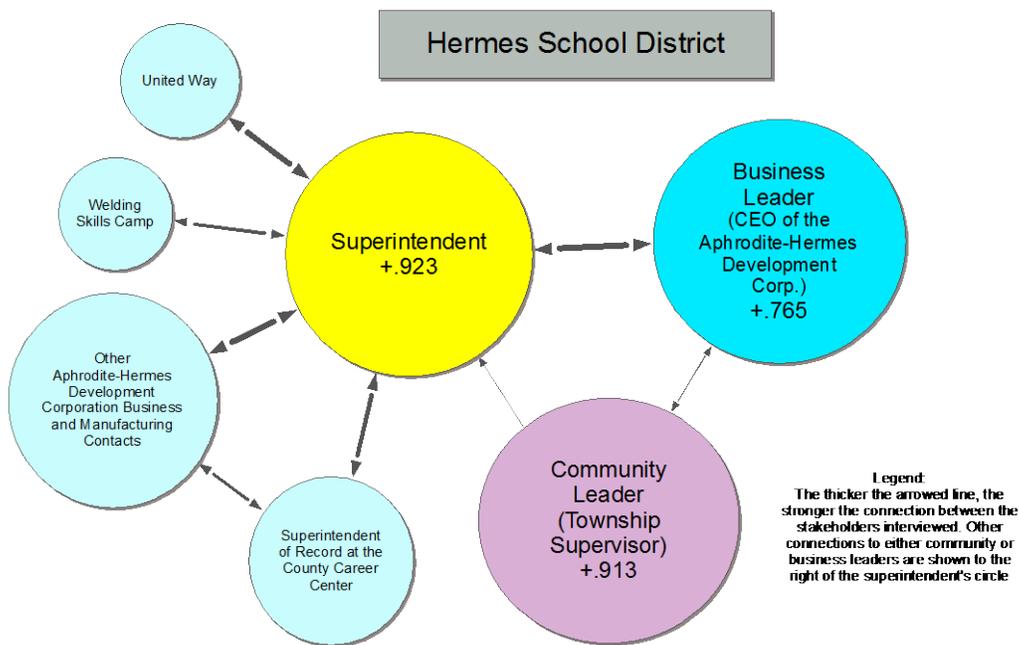


Table 14 shows the order of superintendents based specifically on their relationship diagrams. The left column ranked the superintendents based on the observed depth of the relationships and the right column based the rank on the quantity of relationships. The relationships among the leaders were measured through the analysis of the interview data and the level of interviewee-to-interviewee corroboration.

**Table 14 Relationship rankings**

Depth of relationships <sup>8</sup> : (pg. 115)	Quantity of relationships <sup>9</sup> : (pg. 115)
1) Dionysus	1) Poseidon
2) Hermes	2) Athena
3) Poseidon	3) Dionysus
4) Athena	4) Hermes
5) Apollo	6) Apollo
6) Zeus	6) Aphrodite
7) Aphrodite	7) Zeus

<sup>8</sup> Depth relates to the quality of the relationships; e.g. from only meeting professionally to Saturday dinner guests to drinking buddies.

<sup>9</sup> Quantity relates to the number of relationships regardless of the depth or quality of the relationships.

As the researcher examined the backgrounds of the superintendents, he found that the top three superintendents on the depth of relationship side of the chart displayed characteristics that made them more likely to have strong relationships with business and community leaders. These characteristics were: 1) a network of related personal or social connections; 2) business contacts outside of the superintendent's role; and 3) a level of business intuition or business sense. The Dionysus superintendent held active memberships in Masonic Lodge and Kiwanis, operated several businesses in the region in partnership with various members of his family, and developed many business connections through those business activities. The Hermes superintendent and the Poseidon superintendent were industrial arts teachers when in the classroom and maintained a natural connection to the trades through their chosen field of study.

The Poseidon superintendent held an advantage over the Athena superintendent in the quantity of relationships because of the working relationship he created with his primary business and community leaders. At the time of the interviews, the Athena superintendent had not met the current CEO of the Chamber of Commerce even though he had developed a strong relationship with the previous CEO.

The three superintendents at the bottom of both lists were among the newest superintendents in the region and also displayed the strongest tendency towards Academic Excellence with a score of +.143 for the Apollo superintendent,+.100 for the Zeus superintendent, and -.400 for the Aphrodite superintendent. Only on the job for two years, the Hermes superintendent's industrial arts background and strong Economic Gardening tendency effectively moved him to second on the depth of relationships chart while being only fourth on the quantity of relationships chart.

#### **4.5.10 Summary Visualization of Relationships Data**

The visualization data served to demonstrate the difference between the depth and quantity of the relationships. The Dionysus and Hermes superintendents who pursued more in-depth quality relationships with their business partners created much stronger connections to the business leaders in the study. The Poseidon and Athena superintendents developed a larger number of formal professional relationships but lacked the relationship depth and quality that the Dionysus and Hermes superintendents established. The Poseidon and Athena superintendents used their networking relationships to benefit their districts financially, but the personal level of relationships made by the Dionysus and Hermes superintendents appeared to create stronger connections with the business leaders and in the Dionysus superintendent's case, the borough mayor as well.

The Dionysus superintendent became the exemplar in this study for maximizing his business and community contacts through networking with his Masonic Lodge brothers and Kiwanis membership to generate support for his district and to promote financial support for a summer welding skills camp at the Pantheon County Career Center. Motivated by the Dionysus superintendent, several interviewees discussed the excitement over the summer welding skills camp and the opportunities created for many of the county's students. Involving the CEO of the Penn-Northwest Development Corporation, the Aphrodite business leader, and several other local fabrication company leaders, the skills camp was the only successful business, education, and community partnership discussed by any of the interviewees during the study. To ensure the success of the project, the Dionysus superintendent accessed his extensive personal and business connections to garner the necessary funding and support.

In the Apollo and Aphrodite cases the number of years in their positions as superintendent may have been an issue regarding the development of quality and quantity of relationships with other stakeholders. In contrast, the Hermes superintendent was only in his second year with the district and had developed very strong contacts with local business leaders to promote his work-release and job-shadowing programs.

The visualization displayed the fact that the connections to community leaders were the weaker of the two types of stakeholder relationships, and in some cases, were non-existent. The visualization diagram demonstrated that the personal pursuit of relationships with business and community leaders created a much stronger connection level than those who only met through formal or structured events, e.g. Chamber of Commerce scheduled meetings and events. Coupling the visualization diagrams with the deductive content analysis of interviewee vocabulary the researcher developed a clearer picture of the quality of relationships and potential situations for conflict and disagreements. These relationship diagrams in combination with the tendency scores assisted the researcher in interpreting the interview reviewed in the next section.

## **4.6 ANALYSIS OF THE SEVEN CASE STUDIES' INTERVIEW DATA RESPONSES**

### **4.6.1 Interpretation of the Interview Data**

The researcher gathered the following interview data through separate interviews of district superintendents, business leaders, and community leaders for each of the seven districts that participated in the study. In Robert Stake's book, *Multiple Case Study Analysis* (2006), Stake creates a structure for multiple case study analysis, which derives themes from the actual interview questions to assist in the grouping and analysis of interview data. Using Stake's model, the researcher examined the whole of the interview questions and responses and observed three overarching themes emerging from the interview data. The three themes emanating from the interview data tied directly to the research questions from Chapter III:

*Question #1:* How does the literature frame two possible long-term economic development strategies: "Academic Excellence" and "Economic Gardening"?

*Question #2:* How do local leaders, including superintendents, support education for local economic development?

*Question #3:* To what extent does professional and social networking provide support for education and local economic development?

*Question #4:* How are these local leaders responding to current education initiatives being promoted by Pennsylvania's legislative leaders?

### ***Using a mixed method approach to data analysis***

The researcher used an “inductive, iterative process of reading and rereading the transcriptions to produce subcategories (themes) for information analysis (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006).” In developing the response matrices, the researcher provided frequencies of responses to help the reader understand the level of consensus in the interviewee responses (Bailey, 2007). Using response frequency in this way allowed quantity to interact with quality. The repetition of similar concepts or themes among interviewees provided weight and emphasis to individual concepts or themes (Seidman, 2006). The quantification of the responses helped the researcher to establish patterns of concern and connections among interviewees and stakeholder groups (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Due to the economic/business nature of the study, using this type of mixed methods approach clarified the differences among the stakeholder groups and assisted in the analysis of the interview data.

### ***Generation of themes***

Using the response matrices and the interview transcripts, the following themes were generated through an inductive analysis of the interview responses and were used to examine the interviewees' opinions and perspectives regarding the actions required from public school superintendents to support and promote economic development:

- Background information
- Theme 1: Promoting economic development and community vitality
- Theme 2: The quality of networking and collaboration among leaders
- Theme 3: Maintaining public schools' position as the number one educational provider

The researcher formatted the data into stakeholder groups to facilitate the creation of comparisons and to define outliers in the data. Interview quotes were used to support the information presented. The researcher summarized his analysis of the stakeholder responses at the end of each theme. The summary of each category will look directly at how the responses relate to the strategies of Academic Excellence and Economic Gardening, which are the core focus of the research questions. (The case of cases matrices is in Appendix F).

## **4.6.2 Background Data**

The researcher opened each interview with several stakeholder group specific questions. The responses to the questions provided a situational perspective for the actual issues faced by the education, business, and community leaders.

### **4.6.2.1 Superintendents' Background Data**

The superintendents responded to the following series of background questions:

1. Has your district experienced funding gaps in the budget over the past three years?
2. Do you think that these revenue issues will negatively impact the district in the next five years? ten years?
3. Has the district implemented cost-cutting measures?
4. If you are making cuts in staffing or programs, how do you see these cuts impacting the district students' college and career readiness in the current school year? In five years? In ten years?
5. Has your district had discussions about the long-term impacts of the current state fiscal policies?
6. Is the school board discussing how to maintain quality of instructional programs despite funding deficits?

The researcher compiled the truncated responses into the Superintendent's Responses Matrix. Using this response matrix along with the actual interview transcripts, the researcher generated the following two common findings:

- Every school district in the study experienced cuts in state funding for the 2011-2012 school year ranging from \$750,000 to \$2.2 million, representing 5% or more of their total budgets.

- Every superintendent categorized these cuts as substantial with four of the seven districts using their fund balance reserves to balance the 2011-2012 budget (see the business manager survey responses pg. 94).

The Dionysus superintendent's response reflected the general tenor of the superintendents:

“Yes, substantial (cuts caused by the) Governor...We've always used a portion of the fund balance to balance the next year's budget. Last year...with the \$750,000 loss funds from the state, that's when we notice(d) that...the rollover money (fund balance) will be drying up...We're looking at increasing taxes this year for the first time in six years.”

To balance their budgets, districts took several cost cutting measures including:

- All districts cut operating budgets
- Four districts froze salaries at the 2010-2011 levels
  - The Hermes district negotiated using the salary increase to cover healthcare costs
- Four districts furloughed faculty and support staff
- All districts reduced staff through attrition
- Several school districts refinanced long-term debt and re-negotiating utilities contracts
- Four districts returned outsourced special education programs to the district

When asked about the long-range impacts and prioritization, the superintendents' responses varied based on the level of local revenues compared to state and federal funding and the economic vitality of the district. These responses start with the poorest, go to the richest, and finally settle on the middle districts.

Both the Zeus and Athena districts received a large portion of their revenues from state and federal sources at 81% and 77% respectively. Both superintendents stated that funding needed to come from the state. The Athena superintendent added:

“We're the 11th poorest (district) in the state...We don't have the strong tax base so we rely very heavily on state funding, and when the state cuts back what they give you, the poor school districts are going to feel it the most.”

The superintendent of the Apollo school district, which is the richest district in the study and the only district that received more local revenue than state and federal revenues at 60% local funding, presented an if-then scenario:

“If what's happened over the past five years has been like hitting the pause button and everything freezes, we'll just go from there...but if there's a rubber band effect where we have pent up or bottled up (economic energy), we'll go into a boom phase.”

These two variations reflected the extremes of the study. The Poseidon, Dionysus, Aphrodite, and Hermes districts, representing the middle of the study's economic range, discussed the need to raise taxes but had school boards who were adverse to any kind of large increase. The Aphrodite superintendent stated:

“We (the district) were looking at that (a tax increase), but the board members were adamant about not doing that... They didn't want their taxes raised. They said no to any increases.”

To minimize long-term impacts to college and career readiness, all the superintendents laid out plans that made cuts in the same order: 1<sup>st</sup>: supplies and non-instructional support, 2<sup>nd</sup>: non-core or elective programs and instructional supports, and 3<sup>rd</sup>: core instructional programs. The most frequent action was to raise class sizes, which the superintendents in every district but the Athena district saw as instructionally neutral. The Aphrodite superintendent stated:

“When we looked at the enrollment, the enrollment was greatly reduced, but they never balanced the number of employees. (With teachers retiring,) I brought those into alignment, where the class sizes are now a healthy class size.”

The superintendents expressed that same long-term issue. If they had to cut further, the instructional programs would be impacted. The Aphrodite superintendent continued:

“If we have to make any more cuts, that will be the hardest part, because I've taken everything down to the bare minimum.”

### ***Summary***

The researcher found that:

- All districts experienced cuts in state funding
- All districts made cuts and prioritized the cuts starting with non-instructional expenses, then non-core instructional expenses, and finally core instruction
- With the exception of the Athena District, class sizes rose at the elementary from under capacity to reasonable capacity (21 students)
- Core instructional programs will be impacted if further cuts are needed

#### **4.6.2.2 Business leaders background data**

The business leaders were asked the following background questions:

1. Could you briefly describe your business or organization and what it does?
2. Could you also please identify your current position and its responsibilities with your business, firm, or organization?

3. As the region recovers from the current recession, have you implemented any strategies or programs to promote local or regional economic development?

(The researcher discussed the business leaders interviewed and their organizations in section 4.2: Data profile.)

In discussing strategies implemented to promote economic development, question #3, the business leaders' responses varied with seven out of eight leaders discussing their efforts to improve the workforce pool. The Athena business leader, the CEO of the local Chamber of Commerce stated:

“The Chamber is beginning to be very active in the workforce pipeline. We're going to have a huge number of skilled people retiring in the next 10 to 15 years. And if we don't build a pipeline of human capital to start replacing these people...we're in serious trouble here.”

The Zeus business leader, the vice president and plant manager of a steel roll forming plant, did the following to promote economic development:

“I've been communicating and working with the City of Zeus Manager...and the Pantheon County Career Center. I'm trying to get them to teach to the work skills that we need... We've provided them with job descriptions... and we've had the head of the math department for Athena City Schools come on a tour because he was interested in seeing what he could do to change his curriculum to teach to the job.”

The Aphrodite and Hermes business leaders were actively promoting a local economic development program based on the book *Boom Town*. The Hermes business leader who was the CEO of a local development corporation, stated:

“We brought together economic development players like myself, other local entrepreneurs, the two local colleges, and the municipalities. We said let's bring this group together, we'll meet periodically, tell each other what we're doing, but let's try to work better together... We developed better communication, between the school district's municipalities and the major businesses in the school district.”

Combining these strategies at the regional level, the Penn-Northwest CEO stated the following:

“We're branding Pantheon County as a place that is a low-cost alternative for corporate expansion anywhere in the United States. As an agency, we've got access to our own revolving loan funds. We've got very low-interest money that we can put towards any project. Because we're the lead economic development agency, we have access to State programs and State grants. We want to aggressively go after those companies we think are in expansion mode and convince them to locate here.”

## *Summary*

The business leaders generated two main themes: 1) promoting economic development and local entrepreneurship through quality workforce development and 2) working with local communities to draw businesses into the area to take advantage of the lower labor and facilities costs.

### **4.6.2.3 Community leaders background data**

The researcher asked the community leaders the following background questions:

1. What is your position in the local community government?
2. As the region recovers from the current recession, what has the community done to promote economic development?

(Issues with the selection of community leaders were discussed in section 4.2 Data Profile.)

When asked about promoting economic development, the community leaders in the more urban settings such as the City of Zeus stated that the biggest concern centered on finding quality labor. The City of Zeus manager stated:

“One of biggest things we’re finding is that these employers are fearful of expansion because they don’t know where the workers are going to come from... A lot of these guys (businessmen) say that they’ll even take them untrained and train them themselves. ‘Just give me a guy with the right work ethic, that’s going to show up on time, and not have his girlfriend calling him all day long.’”

The City of Zeus manager sees workforce preparedness and a strong understanding of the soft skills as crucial for graduates entering the local job market. While the manager expressed strong alignment with the business leaders consensus among the community leaders was an issue. The community leaders lacked the commonality and focus of the business leaders but shared same concern about economic growth and regional vitality. The community leaders suggested a much more diverse list of actions, which ranged from going after grant money and working as liaison to businesses, to promoting economic growth, and having done nothing to promote economic growth. The lack of a common theme or strategy among the community leaders may have presented an issue in developing common local and regional economic development strategies.

## *Summary*

Community leaders expressed that workforce development was crucial to local stability and growth but lacked a unified consensus on how to facilitate quality workforce development. While school districts were primarily dealing with the budget crisis brought on by state and federal funding issues, businesses in the region focused on workforce development and financial assistance and community leaders lacked solidarity as to what actions to take.

### **4.6.3 Theme 1: Promoting economic development and community vitality**

Theme 1 groups the interview responses from several of the interview questions into pools of findings related to research questions #1 and #2. Research questions #1 and #2 examine economic development strategies being implemented by business, education and community leaders. Research question #1 specifically investigates the implementation of the Academic Excellence and Economic Gardening strategies as methods to promote economic development. The premise of the superintendent being a catalyst for economic development tied directly to the concept of Economic Gardening. In the literature review, Gigerich (2011), Dooley (1994), Labs (2008), Peters (2001), and Freidman (2007) stated that local economic vitality and individual long-term employability are critically dependent on a strong educational system. On this issue, Academic Excellence and Economic Gardening appeared to be in alignment. The purpose of this theme served to uncover whether or not these two strategies were perceived to provide the same level of economic development support.

#### **4.6.3.1 Superintendents**

The superintendents were asked several questions that touched on the district's involvement in economic development and the creation of alternative funding sources for their districts. The two main questions on this topic were:

1. Has your school district been involved in supporting local economic development?
2. Have you looked into how your district could generate its own revenues?

In responding to the question about supporting economic development, the superintendents discussed several types of involvement to generate economic development: 1)

tax abatement and tax forgiveness, 2) 'buy local' initiatives, and 3) work release or job-shadowing programs.

Four of the seven districts participated in tax abatement programs through Tax Increment Financing (TIFs) or tax forgiveness. The Athena superintendent stated:

“Recently, we just voted for a number of properties to be given relief from taxes or because we're going to be developing the properties (using tax increment financing). (We use) forgiveness of past taxes owed on properties that are delinquent if they're going to develop those properties into something else.”

The Athena school district would rather see a property back on the tax rolls than sitting vacant because of back taxes. The Dionysus superintendent expressed a certain level of caution in implementing TIFs:

“We've been taught that in terms of doing some type of tax abatement can help encourage growth, but you have to be careful not to give away so much that you don't get anything from that growth.”

The Zeus school district adopted a buy local policy to support the local and regional businesses. The superintendent stated:

“When we do business, we try to use Zeus businesses and then we certainly stay within the Olympus Mount. Our first priority is to support local businesses here.”

The Hermes superintendent held a meeting with local business leaders to promote work release, internships, and job shadowing opportunities for the district's students. The NCLB requirement that a “Highly Qualified” teacher run the program impeded the program's implementation.

The superintendent stated:

“We're still in the process, and it has been difficult. Because (with)... an internship program...you have to have people on staff that were certified with a Vo-Tech certification, and we can't hire anybody to do that when we're considering furloughs every year.”

In this case, the superintendent worked to set up a training opportunity only to have NCLB regulations become an issue (107th Congress, 2002). Because of the highly certified teacher requirement, the district could not afford to fully implement the program due to the state budget cuts. While the superintendents discussed networking with business leaders, limited promotion of local economic development activity existed at the time of the interviews.

In researching district entrepreneurial activities, the researcher found several activities occurring in the districts: the development of rental properties, sales of information services to support local child care providers, creation of revenue generating tuition programs, and partnerships with local entrepreneurs to provide education services to Asian students.

The Aphrodite and Poseidon school districts worked with a local entrepreneur to provide an education for tuition-paying Asian students at a rate of \$10,000 a student. The Poseidon superintendent explained the program:

“An entrepreneur from the Aphrodite district has an arrangement where he brings foreign (Asian) students, not foreign exchange but foreign students (into the country). He’s been doing this for five plus years ...working with two local Christian schools and the bureau of private schools. Our target is to bring ten foreign students (not foreign exchange) to Poseidon receiving \$9,000 to \$10,000 tuition (for each student).”

If this program reaches capacity, it would generate approximately \$100,000 for each district involved. Similar to the Asian student program, another revenue generator focused on local tuition-students. The Dionysus and Poseidon districts each service 25 to 40 tuition-paying students. The Dionysus district charges a revenue-generating tuition of \$2,200 for elementary and \$2,500 for secondary students. The Poseidon superintendent discussed their similar program:

“We do have tuition students now in the elementary, middle and high school and that generates anywhere from \$41,250-\$42,400. For elementary it’s \$1,200.00 and for middle/high school it’s \$2,400.00...I’d say the total numbers are about 20 to 25.”

In addition, the Athena district owned several rental properties that generated revenue. Athena and Hermes districts had their properties evaluated for natural gas and oil deposits. Zeus constituted the only school district that created a revenue source that could support a significant portion of their budget.

The Zeus superintendent discussed the district being the county center for the United Way Head Start program and Child Care Information Services. In addition to those programs, the district operates its own early intervention program called the Family Center. The Zeus superintendent described the revenue generating abilities of these programs as follows:

“I won’t say significant, but certainly a portion. I would say at least five percent now because closing a building, and cutting those employee costs, and overhead.”

Five percent of the Zeus district’s \$15 million budget represents a revenue stream of approximately \$750,000 per school year.

## *Summary*

In examining the data gathered under this theme, the districts in the study were just beginning to promote local and regional economic development. The researcher generated the following findings:

- All districts in the study were actively pursuing cost saving measures
- None of the superintendents interviewed discussed academic programming to promote workforce readiness
- The Dionysus and Poseidon districts each developed limited revenue generating tuition programs by instituting affordable tuition rates to attract students.
- Only the Hermes district started the process of implementing a work release or job-shadowing program.
  - NCLB certification requirements have interfered with full program implementation
- Only the Zeus district created a revenue generating program that covered a approximately 5% of the school district's budget.

These district programs presented a sharp contrast to the types of programs the business leaders would like to see implemented.

### **4.6.3.2 Business leaders**

The researcher asked the business leaders the following questions regarding economic development:

1. What course of action do you see as most important to ensure local and regional fiscal stability and economic growth?
2. From your perspective, what direct impact, if any, do the local public school districts have on: 1) workforce quality, 2) economic development, 3) local tax revenues?

When discussing the most important point to ensure local and regional fiscal stability and economic growth, the business leaders were unified on the following points:

- Providing a quality product (8 out of 8)
- Developing and expanding workforce (8 out of 8)
- Working with schools to improve the caliber of students going into the skilled labor workforce (8 out of 8)
- Educating parents that their children can make a family-supporting wage in local industry as skilled labor (8 out of 8)

Three of the four points that the business leaders made related directly to expanding and improving the quality of the workforce. The Zeus business leader, the vice president and plant

manager at a roll forming plant, saw people's lack of basic skills as the biggest barrier to building a quality workforce stating:

“One of the biggest things we test for is math. We're trying to test for a third grade math-level pass or fail...(We have a pass rate of) probably 25 percent (that would be addition, subtraction, probably up to two digit, and limited multiplication). And concept story problems that use those math skills. They can't conceptualize. It may be a reading problem as well...some people have no idea how to deal with fractions.”

The Hermes CEO of the Development Corporation stated:

“We need technically trained people. We have an exodus...of population right now and if you look at our region we have how many college institutions? We attract them, educate them, and then ship them all over the country. We're losing them because the people think there aren't (good) jobs here. We need to see a paradigm shift. We do have good jobs, family-sustaining jobs for technically trained kids and that message has to get out. I think the biggest challenge is we need to educate the population.”

When asked what impact school districts have on promoting workforce development, the business leaders were mostly unified in their following responses:

- Promote career awareness through factory tours, job shadowing, guest speakers, and work release programs (8 out of 8)
- Teach and require the student to learn stronger basic skills and develop stronger problem solving skills (8 out of 8)

The Athena CEO reflected these issues:

“I just was at a summit on last Thursday in Youngstown State University of employers, educators, and job trainers, trying to have education understand that there's a huge number of jobs available, and you're (education) not giving us any product that we can use. You give us kids, and we've got to send them to remedial school to get them into an apprentice program. Ellwood Quality Steel opened a plant up in Warren County (Ohio). They had to open their own school to go with it. The number one problem is they cannot find qualified employees to make steel. These aren't the jobs our grandfathers had. These guys sit in a-in a booth with a computer screen and make steel today. You've got to have math skills to do that.”

The CEO added the following:

“I've had this discussion with lots of educators. Who's the customer? Is it the student, the parents, or the employer? If you ask most educators, they'll tell you it's a combination of the student and the parent. If they're happy, my life's happy...But in the end, it's really the employer who is the end customer.”

The business leaders remained unanimous about the fact that schools needed to generate a stronger and larger workforce. Businesses wanted awareness programs, factory tours, job

shadowing programs and work release programs. A theme that kept surfacing was that not all kids are college material.

The Aphrodite business leader, a former owner of a steel dumpster fabricating plant, called for guidance counselors, our governor, and state representatives to be educated to understand:

“We need college jobs but only 25% of the careers are in college (trained fields) and these schools are sending 80% of their kids to college, of which, only a fourth of those are graduating. Practically all of them come out with college loans and then only the ones that graduate have...a degree to try to find a job...Who's going to build the houses? Who's going to fix the car? Who's going to weld? Who's going to do the plumbing? Who's going to be the web site designer or the CAD operator.”

The issue of educating parents that manufacturing was not a “dirty business” served as a common theme among the business leaders and the steel fabricator, added:

“Well, they (parents) think that manufacturing plants and facilities are like the 30’s and the 40’s when you saw dark pictures of dirty...people falling into steel vats and dying because they're not safe. That's not the way it is any more. They're very safe, modern facilities.”

The researcher inquired about the impact of the state cuts to education and the impact on local businesses. The business leaders stated they felt no impact because they could not find good labor before the cuts to education. The response from the Zeus plant manager echoed the sentiments of the other business leaders:

“We cannot find skilled labor. Athena used to have a very large shop wing...It’s gone now...I think their mindset is that they try to push everybody towards college. But not everybody wants to go to college, is driven to go to college, or can afford to go to college. Students need to come out with a set of skills. I believe if schools could teach those job skills, e.g. mechanical drafting, how to run a milling machine or a lathe turning center, or learn how to weld, a few kids could walk out and (find a job right away).”

In discussing the school district’s role in economic development, all of the business leaders responded that schools needed to focus on the development of reading, writing, and mathematics skills. Seven out of eight business leaders saw character training and work ethic development as major ways schools could impact economic development.

Supporting the business leaders, the instructor at summer skills welding camp, Al Hough stated:

“Kids don’t understand the difference between school level work and workplace level work requirements.”

His response fell directly in line with the business leaders workforce development responses. Also, five out of eight business leaders expressed that quality schools bring people to the area and that means a larger workforce pool. The Athena CEO stated:

“I don't talk to anyone we're trying to recruit that schools don't become the issue. You know, you're not recruiting sixty-five year olds whose kids are all grown and moved on. When you're recruiting people, you're recruiting people who have school-aged children.”

When asked about school districts' impact on taxes, the business leaders responded:

- Limited taxation (school taxes can act as a lure or a deterrent) and don't waste our tax dollars (7 out of 8)
- Promote tax abatement and other tax incentives to make area more conducive to industry and manufacturing (7 out of 8)

The Dionysus fabricator added this:

“Everybody likes to pay less taxes but as long as they don't waste it, I guess it's all right. The biggest problem is the things that the state and federal governments demand the local school districts to do and...don't fund it.”

In general, the business leaders saw taxation as a potential deterrent to economic development, but none of the leaders expressed any concern that the current school tax levels were repressive or out of control.

### ***Outliers:***

Two outlier statements need to be discussed. The first was a comment from the Athena CEO about the PSSA. The Athena CEO stated,

“I've got to be real honest. Schools don't get it. They get PSSA testing, but when you talk to them about workforce development, workforce development issues, it's a total disconnect.”

The second outlier expressed by every business owner and the Athena CEO was a drug and alcohol abuse problem and workforce candidates able to pass a drug test. The Dionysus fabricator stated:

“I only get about 1 out of about 30 because ... (of) drugs. It's got to...where if they want to take a drug test, they...pay for it and we reimburse them if they pass it.”

The Zeus steel roll form manufacturer does not do random drug testing but stated:

“We do require a post-offer physical with drug testing, and if they are involved in any type of accident with material handling equipment, then they get tested again.”

## *Summary*

The economic development interview questions generated the following findings:

- The employer is the end customer of the school district’s product
- Schools do not “get it,” PSSA’s do not prepare students for the workforce
- Workforce candidates cannot pass a minimal third grade skills test
  - Employers and technical schools need to remediate entry level employees just to be able to train them
- Plenty of family-supporting careers are available for high school graduates without going to college
  - School districts need to help educate parents about the local options in manufacturing
  - Not all students need to or should go to college
- Drug use and the ability to pass a drug and alcohol screening represent one of the biggest barriers to finding quality, highly skilled labor candidates
- Local tax levels are not an issue with promoting local and regional economic development

The business leaders viewed finding quality workers as the biggest barrier to economic development in the Olympus Mount Region. While the business leaders expressed a high level of consensus, the community leaders presented a more diverse set of understandings and needs.

### **4.6.3.3 Community leaders**

The community leaders responded to the following interview questions:

1. What course of action do you see as most important to ensure local fiscal stability and to promote local economic growth?
2. Do you feel your community would support the types of infrastructure improvements that would promote economic growth?
3. What do you see as the primary role of public education in strengthening the local community?

In promoting economic development and community needs, the community leaders appeared aware of the issues expressed by the business leaders but they did not have as strong an understanding of the possible solutions. The solutions offered by the community leaders covered a wide variety of ideas: consolidating of municipalities, working with businesses, workforce development, promoting residency, attracting more manufacturers, keeping infrastructure in good repair, and finding ways to keep the children in the community. This diversity of responses

demonstrated that the majority of the community (municipal) leaders wanted economic growth but did not have a regional focus to create consensus on specific solutions.

With most interview responses representing only one community, there was one unique situation, the Apollo city manager. When asked what he saw as most important to promote economic development and local fiscal stability, the city manager stated:

“It’s regional success...We truly believe in this regional approach...the city of Apollo is a community that fiscally runs on wage tax revenues. Our municipal taxes are five mils and we haven’t raised them for 22 years. But our wage tax is one and three-quarter percent. So as the economy grows, we stay attractive as a residential community and it really doesn’t matter where the commercial success might be.”

Because of Apollo’s tax structure being based on income taxes instead of real estate taxes, the city manager felt the Apollo community grew stronger as the region grew. When wages fell, the community felt the impact, but Apollo also represented the only community in the study that maintained a stable population from 2000 to 2010. The concept of promoting regional economic development to create a stronger local community constituted a core concept of Economic Gardening (Hamilton-Pennell, 2011; Gibbons, 2006; Morgan, 2009).

While only two community leaders discussed promoting residency and finding ways to keep our children here, many related responses arose that would produce the same result. The Poseidon borough manager stated:

“I would love to have that manufacturing business with 100 jobs, or 50 jobs locate in Poseidon, but I think it's important that we support what we have and...support what is our best strength. Right now, I see our best strength as residential and the supporting commercial retail.”

The Athena city manager responded:

“The only way that we really can maintain fiscal stability is to have two things happen. 1) We have to encourage people to grow the economy and we have to invite in businesses. 2) We have to encourage residents to come in and take hold.”

The Zeus city manager stated:

“Getting involved in having a trained workforce available to assist in that expansion of our local community. If the folks that live here can get that training, they’ll be able to... get these jobs and stay here. They stay here, the tax base grows, local economy grows, and it stabilizes the community.”

These community leaders saw growing the local economy and community as directly tied to having a trained workforce and having jobs for that workforce. The community leaders’

strongest common theme focused on promoting economic development to keep their children in the area. The Hermes township supervisor and the Dionysus mayor added their concerns about developing infrastructure to promote local community growth.

### *Infrastructure*

The literature suggested that limitations in infrastructure would have a direct impact on the ability to promote economic development (Taylor, 2003; Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, 2009; Rodrigue, 2009). The interview data revealed that only the Hermes and Dionysus community leaders saw sewer and water infrastructure as an issue. The Hermes township supervisor stated:

“I don’t think the taxpayers are ready to build that infrastructure in hopes that something will come. Now, if there was a developer ready to move in and...immediately, or soon after, begin to pay taxes for that infrastructure, the taxpayers may be more receptive.”

The Dionysus mayor saw the issue of sewer expansion differently in his community:

“We have to change the (leadership)... out there. I have a good guy on top at the township; I got some board members the h--- off, and new ones on. Now they’re looking at it differently, but there’s still problems...they have to have the sewers.”

For the Hermes township supervisor, the problem consisted of people not being able to afford the infrastructure improvements. For the Dionysus mayor, the problem focused on people fighting the changes necessary to improve the borough and the surrounding township in spite of the actual costs. The borough turned down state matching funds that would have paid for a large portion of the sewer construction project ten years ago.

When asked about the role of public schools in promoting economic development and helping the community grow, the community leaders found more common ground responding in the following manner:

- Provide a quality education and train the skilled labor workforce (6 out of 7)
- Make sure kids know that college isn’t the only avenue to a well paying job (6 out of 7)
- Promote staying in the area (4 out of 7)
- Offer tax abatements and exonerations (1 out of 7)

These responses fell in line with the business leader responses. The Poseidon borough manager responded:

“Poseidon is a good place for someone to live, raise a family, and without a good school system, it makes it harder to market the community as that kind of a place.”

The Zeus city manager stated districts need to:

“Diversify the curriculum to be accommodating those things that we were referring to. Let’s face it; the manufacturing base is coming back. How do we adjust the curriculum and how do we adjust the mindset? If we don’t do that, we’ll see all of the kids leaving town to go to college, and then who’s left to strengthen the communities in these manufacturing jobs?”

### ***Outlier***

The one outlier in the community responses came from the Athena city manager. The city manager saw tax abatement as a major way that the school district could assist in promoting economic development but he did not mention any developers asking for tax abatements. His position was understandable because of the high poverty rate and low housing values in the Athena district.

### ***Summary***

Each community leader saw economic growth through the personality of his community and its needs. Certain themes or findings arose from the interview data:

- The community needs to grow to stay vibrant and healthy
- The community and school leaders need to promote economic development to keep our children in the area
- As the region experiences economic growth, the local boroughs and municipalities will benefit

The data failed to represent the sense of frustration on the part of two of the community leaders. The two community leaders found common ground on the role of education in promoting community growth and stability; provide a quality education and train a skilled labor force. Both the Dionysus mayor and the Aphrodite township supervisor expressed intense passion for their communities, but the researcher felt that the passion was hindered by not being knowledgeable about how to make the desired changes occur.

#### **4.6.3.4 Summary**

Examining the three stakeholder groups shows the dichotomy of their perspectives regarding what the groups view as important. The superintendents and their districts were just beginning to connect the academic aspects of economic development with only one district implementing a school-to-work or work release type program. At the time of the interviews, only one district developed a significant revenue-generating venture. When discussing the promotion of economic development, the superintendents did not mention workforce development and preparation, but workforce development remained the main focus of every business leader interviewed. Business leaders saw a clear relationship between the development of basic skills in mathematics and reading, character training, and work ethic development and success in the workplace. The community leaders had one main theme; the community needed to grow to stay vibrant and healthy. While the community leaders agreed with the business leaders regarding what public education needed to support economic development and the community, they lacked unity in how to make that support occur.

#### **4.6.3.5 Analysis**

##### ***Economic Gardening***

The superintendents were only beginning to focus on concepts of Economic Gardening as a means of developing a stronger local economic base. Businesses developed the Economic Gardening concept to the point of needing the Academic Excellence of their workforce candidates to improve to a level that they could be productive in their manufacturing workplace. The community leaders wanted economic growth but exhibited uncertainty as to how.

##### ***Academic Excellence***

The superintendents did not express a strong connection between the strategy of Academic Excellence and economic development. The business leaders expressed adamancy about basic skills development and job candidates being able to do the math and reading required. Business leaders were very clear in that not all children are college material and many could make an excellent living in manufacturing. Community leaders and business leaders expressed the need for strong quality public schools to draw in residents and businesses.

## *Outliers*

The two outliers presented by business leaders; 1) the need for student awareness of the implications of drug and alcohol usage in respect to attaining gainful employment and 2) that schools understand the PSSA and Academic preparedness but do not understand workforce preparedness. These outliers represented troubling concerns that need addressed by local school district superintendents.

### **4.6.4 Theme 2: The quality of networking and collaboration among leaders**

Theme 2 relates directly to research question #1 regarding using Academic Excellence or Economic Gardening to promote economic development. Networking and collaboration is a key element of the Economic Gardening strategy and the level and quality of the relationships between stakeholders impacts the effectiveness of business, education, and community partnerships.

An integral part of maximizing a local community or region's assets was knowing what assets were available and who can help access those assets. Powell stated:

“One of the key aspects to ‘Economic Gardening’ is the creation of inter-related supports among the three stakeholders to ensure the developmental health of all three. This form of networking builds capacity and magnifies effectiveness of the regional and local resources (2005).”

Economic Gardening made the premise that schools were a natural social hub for the community that brought people together to network with one another. In developing an effective networking system, superintendents should be able to coordinate programs, design and align curriculum, and access other networked assets to strengthen their schools. All the interviewees were asked three similar sets of questions about their discussions with the other business, education, and community stakeholders:

1. As a superintendent, do you stay current with the workforce needs of local businesses and the community?
  - a. As a business or community leader, have you ever had discussions with the local public schools about the region's economic and workforce development needs?
2. Have you ever attended a business roundtable or similar discussion of local and regional workforce and economic development?

3. Have you been involved with other community government or business organizations?

#### 4.6.4.1 Superintendents

Table 15 shows if the superintendents’ had discussions or meetings with various economic development leaders in the community.

**Table 15 Discussions with local business and community leaders**

Discussions with local business and community leaders							
Superintendents	Apollo	Dionysus	Poseidon	Aphrodite	Hermes	Athena	Zeus
Had discussions	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Beneficial to the school	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Formal Meetings and Summits:							
Superintendents	Apollo	Dionysus	Poseidon	Aphrodite	Hermes	Athena	Zeus
United Way	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chamber of Commerce	Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Other entities	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Meeting useful	Sometimes	Educational at best	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes, but has to lead to action
Beneficial to the school	Yes	Yes	No response	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

The bottom two rows of table 15 illustrate the mixed superintendent responses as to the usefulness and benefit of the school district. All the superintendents were a part of the Pantheon County United Way and attended the roundtable discussions hosted by the United Way. The Poseidon superintendent was the districts’ representative to the United Way and shared his opinion on the effectiveness of this type of activity:

“I know it doesn’t always generate dollars but it leads to the possibility of program changes and sharing ideas. Like the senior experience we’re piloting...We’re going to find that it has to lead to more...We need to do more together.”

The Poseidon superintendent saw these types of activities as a good starting point that leads to more local collaboration. The Apollo superintendent discussed how making these connections lead to accessing other resources such as the donation of computers:

“It’s the relationships you build, and I’ll give you an example...I went to the Rotary yesterday, was telling them about the project at LindenPointe<sup>7</sup> with our five seniors and

<sup>7</sup> LindenPointe was the Olympus Mount business incubator, which is centrally located in the main corridor.

they said we'll buy the five seniors their laptops. And we'll go to the other rotaries in the neighboring school districts and get them to do that for their kids, too."

The Athena superintendent served on the board of the Local Technical Institute, a member of the Chamber of Commerce, and the United Way Co-chair. The superintendent saw the benefits this way:

"I feel like you need to be involved in those things. All of those things give you a perspective as to what is needed in the community. Especially when business leaders tell us specifically 'we need more welders or we need more engineers' ...It's the relationships that you form with the companies. Interstate gave us \$20,000 for musical instruments. The businesses get more informed and can buy into what the school's doing and then we become more informed as to what they need moving forward in order to fulfill the human capital needs that they have. Those relationships bring great benefits to kids because they're always looking to do more."

Several superintendents expressed a concern that the meetings must lead to a plan and from a plan to action. The Zeus superintendent pointed to taking the next step and creating a action plan:

"We've got to get past the discussion point to actually putting something together and saying, 'This is the plan,' you need that and we're going to do this. So, I would say that's where we are right now."

The Aphrodite superintendent was a member of the local Chamber of Commerce, a community development group, and a local economic development group. The superintendent voiced some frustration in working with these groups because he saw other areas being more attractive to business:

"There are other areas that if businesses are going to go someplace, they're going to go to that area. So far for two years, it's just been a lot of meetings...(At this time,) I am so focused on what's happening in the school district...it's hard for me to have that luxury of pulling out and looking at the community as a whole."

The opinions of the superintendents appeared to be directly related to the population levels of community where their districts resided. The larger districts' superintendents in the metropolitan center of the region expressed the greatest appreciation for the networking opportunities. The other superintendents, who experienced strong interactions with their business leaders, were the ones who developed personal friendships or experienced strong family connections to the business leaders.

## *Outliers*

The Dionysus superintendent developed a strong relationship with his local business leader but that grew from a family tie to this business leader. The Dionysus fabricator discussed his relationship with the superintendent:

“I worked for his dad up in the mills years ago...Interviewer: So there’s a family relationship? ...Business leader: Whatever his old man taught him, he really taught him to respect me, I tell ya [LAUGH]. We always work together and stuff.”

As discussed in section 4.5, the Dionysus superintendent developed interconnectivity with business leaders through his contacts in social organizations. He was a member of the Masonic Lodge (a craftsmen and businessmen’s’ organization), the Kiwanis (an international children’s outreach group), and the United Way. He used these connections to network for political and monetary support for the school.

The Hermes superintendent fostered this type of connection with the Hermes Development Corporation CEO, a former board member in his school district. When the superintendent wanted to start his work-study program, he used the United Way CEO and the Hermes CEO to assist him in making business contacts and putting together a business luncheon to discuss his work-study plans:

“I brought them into our board room, fed them lunch, talked about the issues, talked about what they needed, how we could get kids involved, and how we could help kids to really understand what it’s like to be out in the workplace.”

## *Academic changes*

All seven of the superintendents stated that the networking information either confirmed curriculum already in place or assisted in guiding the process to make improvements to existing programs or develop new programs. The Dionysus superintendent discussed sharing of needs for better math and reading skills and other curricular needs, but didn’t discuss changes in programs to meet those needs. Only the Athena superintendent discussed curricular changes driven by conversations with local business leaders. When asked about how his relationships with the business community impacted the academic programs in his school district, he stated:

“It’s one of the reasons why we’re looking at the engineering program...It’s one of the reasons why we have a business week for our 11th graders here.”

Most of the superintendents saw small adjustments to practices already in place. Two superintendents saw the process as a signal that they had the right academic programs already in place. The Aphrodite superintendent stated:

“It confirmed what we were already doing. We have the robotics programs and a lot of those other things. So it confirmed that what we were doing is the right thing for kids.”

The one significant program discussed by the superintendents related to the development of the Senior Experience Entrepreneurship Program being developed through a partnership with a local college and the intermediate unit. The program was to take place at the business incubator in the Apollo district and would be a five-day-a-week 2 1/2 hour program for the entire school year. The Senior Experience program would teach entrepreneurial and business development curriculum to 25 students. Also, the Athena, Apollo, and Poseidon districts developed a Business Week program for their eleventh graders to promote entrepreneurship education.

### *Summary*

The interview data generated the following findings:

- All the superintendents participated in some form of business or economic development roundtable.
- The majority of superintendents found the meetings informational and assisted in guiding programmatic changes. Only the Athena school district had taken significant action based on the discussions.
  - Several superintendents saw the discussions reaffirming what they were already doing, but if that is the case, why are the business leaders complaining about students not being ready to enter the workforce?
  - Many district superintendents viewed business leader connections as an opportunity to gain monies for the district programs.
- Several superintendents expressed the need for more action and less talk.
  - The Dionysus and Hermes superintendents took action and followed through to create programs and garnered strong business and community support for their efforts.
- Development of personal relationships and personal networking had a greater impact than formal board memberships on the quality of the networking opportunities.
- Only the Dionysus superintendent mentioned the business leaders concerns about basic mathematics, reading skills, and work ethic related skill development.

These findings generate the question, are some superintendents so focused on academic achievement, that concerns about the school’s impact on the local community are being ignored? Several of the superintendents appeared to be waiting for someone else to take the lead in program development. The two proactive superintendents were out making contacts and promoting programs as the others waited for opportunities.

**4.6.4.2 Business leaders**

The business leaders were asked the same series of questions asked as the superintendents, but from the business leaders’ perspective. Four of the business leaders participated in discussions with the superintendent or other district leaders. Five business leaders attended a formal business roundtable or workforce summit. See table 16 for a complete breakdown of the networking activities undertaken by the business leaders in the study.

**Table 16 Discussions with local school district superintendents**

Discussions with school district leaders							
Business Leaders	Apollo	Dionysus	Poseidon	Aphrodite	Hermes	Athena	Zeus
Conversations with local school leaders	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Were the school leaders responsive?	Yes	Yes	No	1/3 of the meetings schools were responsive	Yes	No	No
If no, would you consider a meeting?			Yes			Yes	Yes
Formal Meetings and Summits:							
Business Leaders	Apollo	Dionysus	Poseidon	Aphrodite	Hermes	Athena	Zeus
Round table discussions	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Meeting useful?	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	We got the same information as before
Beneficial to your business?	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Sometimes
If had not attended, would you consider it?		Yes	Yes				

Of the business leaders who met with their district superintendent, three saw all the meetings as beneficial and one saw some of the meetings as being beneficial. As quoted in the superintendent section, the Dionysus fabricator maintains a strong personal connection with the district superintendent and responded:

“I don’t know if they’re effective but I always tell them what I think and we always worked together and stuff.”

The Dionysus fabricator’s response reflected the good rapport between the superintendent and the business leader. The Dionysus fabricator and Hermes CEO were the only business leaders who developed a personal relationship with their district’s superintendent. In contrast, the Zeus plant manager had never talked with the Zeus superintendent but had toured the County Career Center and stated:

“I went out and toured the Pantheon County Career Center. Hopefully next year I’ll be able to attract some of their students to come in as a work study-type program...and I had the head of the math department for Athena here.”

The plant manager made quality connections with local educational providers in spite of not having met his home district’s superintendent.

The other business leaders who met with their superintendents developed only professional relationships with the superintendents. The Apollo CEO and the Aphrodite fabricator worked with the schools through their specific programs. The Aphrodite fabricator shared:

“It’s about the kids. You can look at this a couple of different ways. One way...is to say we’re looking for bodies to run our factories. But I think it’s really about, helping that child find out how he or she can use their talents and if those talents match some of the needs in this area. Then they don’t have to move to Winchester, Virginia or wherever to find a career. I think it’s a win/win for everybody.”

Three business leaders never met the superintendents of their home districts. The Athena CEO and the Poseidon milk producer had never met with their district’s superintendent because of the limited amount of time they had been in their positions (less than two and six months respectively).

When asked about the usefulness of the discussions, the business leaders responded unanimously:

- To network and communicate needs and share resources (8 out of 8)
- To work together to promote business and economic development (8 out of 8)

The Aphrodite business leader stated:

“We built a consortium of local competitor businesses to create a presentation/website for local schools to promote the technical opportunities here in the county...(and) we talked with the local school boards and superintendents about providing plant tours and internships.”

The business leaders saw the value of the networking and viewed it as an excellent way to support one another (the schools and the businesses). The Athena Chamber of Commerce CEO responded:

“We want to be a conduit for education to the business community. They're looking for us to create one umbrella program, events like a business and industry career fair that brings 25 employers together. If school's bring their 10th graders to that fair, that will save employers trying to put one on in every school.”

The Apollo CEO of the United Way saw the value of meetings, such as the United Way Early Childhood summit, in the following manner:

“Yes, I guess the takeaway, from an event like this, is that we have opportunities to change things. We're not necessarily looking at things through the same lens that we did five, ten, or even 20 years ago. We need to be more agile when it comes to embracing change in this community.”

When asked about more regional events such as workforce summits or Chamber of Commerce sunrise breakfasts at the local schools, five of the business leaders participated in these types of events through the Chamber of Commerce and other regional organizations.

Regarding participating in regional economic events and their usefulness, the business leaders responded:

- Effective use of their time (7 out of 8)
- Promotes working together and improves awareness of local and regional opportunities (7 out of 8)
- People love to talk about problems but fall short on execution (1 out of 8)
- Nothing new, but good to hear it again (1 out of 8)

The Apollo CEO took this away from an economic summit at the Penn-Northwest Development Corporation:

“That economic development is more than just searching for a company to come into this community and start a business. It takes a whole community in all different facets to attract or to maintain businesses and a diverse economic base. In today's world, there's a cross-pollination that needs to take place between education, government, and business, that promotes dialogue.”

He added this note of caution:

“To just talk about economic development is a waste of time. You need to talk about economic development in the eyes that government has a seat, the business leaders have a seat, and educational leaders have a seat.”

The Hermes CEO, tied these economic summits right back to the main issue of creating a viable workforce stating:

“We have to have folks that are willing to work, want to work, and that want to stay here. There are plenty of opportunities, but it’s a community thing...It’s how the state can change. We have to have the paradigm shift for the whole state that says ‘we’re not a rust belt state anymore.’ We’re technology driven. There are clean jobs. The fallacy that there’re no jobs in Pennsylvania is crap. A lot of people think we don’t have the manufacturing jobs in PA. Today, Pennsylvania’s output from manufacturing far exceeds what it ever was. We have a smaller workforce that is much more efficient.”

For the most part, the business leaders saw the educational leaders as responsive but shared a similar feeling of the educational leaders regarding follow through. The CEO of Penn-Northwest stated:

“I think that people love to talk about these issues. It’s execution that’s important. It was great to talk about it at that event but where was the execution afterwards? And I say that to the school districts too; we have great talks about how the school districts need to be part of economic development, but yet in the eight county region, if you looked at the boards of all the economic development groups, there’s not one superintendent or school board member that serves on those boards.”

The Zeus plant manager, when asked if the Youngstown Workforce Summit was a good use of his time, stated:

“Yes, but it wasn’t enough. It was a start.”

Every business leader interviewed saw the value in networking and collaborating with the local school district superintendent. The Aphrodite fabricator expressed a concern about the responsiveness of the educational leaders. The fabricator stated: “five-twelfths of them are responsive.” The five-twelfths was in reference to the five of the twelve county’s superintendents.

### *Summary*

As occurred with the role of education in supporting economic growth, the business leaders expressed, with limited exceptions, a solid consensus about the positive value of open dialogue

with school district superintendents. The finding generated from the interview data revealed certain underlying issues or concerns:

- Business leaders are reaching out to educational leaders to provide learning opportunities such as career fairs and job shadowing.
- Two superintendent-recommended business leaders they had never met.
- Expressing underlying concern over the lack of execution on the part of other stakeholders in the process, someone must take the lead.
- No superintendent or school board member was on the board of any of the region's economic development organizations.
- One business leader called for a paradigm shift that says the area is not a rust belt state any more and has technology-driven clean jobs.
- Career opportunities are plentiful but parents need to be educated about those opportunities.

These business leaders' findings relay two major concerns: 1) talk is cheap and actions speak louder than words; and 2) business leaders are willing to help but are not going to take the lead.

#### **4.6.4.3 Community leaders**

The researcher asked the community leaders a similar set of questions that focused on the level and quality of communications between themselves and the other stakeholders. Of the community leaders, five discussed local community issues with either the superintendent or the superintendent and the board. Two recently elected community leaders had not met with their school district superintendents prior to being interviewed (see table 17).

**Table 17 Discussions with the local school district superintendent**

Discussions with the school district superintendent							
Community Leader	Apollo	Dionysus	Poseidon	Aphrodite	Hermes	Athena	Zeus
Conversations with local school leaders	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Were the school leaders responsive?	Yes	Meetings fell apart	Yes	Not as of the interview	Not as of the interview	Briefly	Brief discuss. with Super. & board
If no, would you consider a meeting?			Yes	Yes	Yes		
Formal Meetings and Summits:							
Community Leader	Apollo	Dionysus	Poseidon	Aphrodite	Hermes	Athena	Zeus
Business & Education Round table discussions	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Was the meeting useful?	Yes	N/A	Yes, very effective	No	Yes	Yes	Absolutely
Educational leadership responsive?	Yes	N/A	Yes, very responsive	No	Yes	I think they were	Yes, very enthusiastic
If you have not attended, would you consider it?	Yes					Yes	

In examining the table, the researcher observed that only four out of the seven community leaders experienced positive meetings with their local school superintendent or other school officials and of that four, two had met only briefly. The level of discussions between superintendents and community leaders reinforces the communication concerns outlined in the relationship diagrams, and the superintendents’ and business leaders’ inability to recommend strong community leaders to interview. Of the five community leaders who had discussions with the superintendent, only the Apollo and Poseidon leaders felt the school board was responsive and discussed having a good rapport with the district superintendent. On the effectiveness of the activities, the Poseidon borough manager stated:

“Well, I guess that has yet to be told. Local manufacturers are saying they need these people, that there's a market for these positions. So, I think that tells us that we need to continue working to achieve the workforce levels that they're looking for.”

The Poseidon borough manager and the district superintendent developed their relationship past the meet-and-greet stage and well into undertaking joint projects to assist in the creation of a stronger local workforce through activities such as the annual Business Week event

at the high school. The Apollo city manager's relationship with the superintendent was still in its beginning phases, but he felt positive about removing barriers to collaboration. The city manager stated:

"I think we're still beginning to build relationships. I don't want to make it sound like the city's way out in front of the curve, but we've been able to take down some barriers. It just takes time, and it takes successes."

The Zeus and Athena city managers both discussed having brief meetings with the superintendent and the Zeus city manager added:

"I've had just a brief discussion with the superintendent and the school board president. We do some collaboration with the summer recreation activities, but the summer welding program would be the first endeavor directly with the superintendent. (We're) trying to talk to them about what we found from local businesses, and how they can provide certain just-in-time trainings that these industries are going to need...Also providing training in the soft skills...e.g. direct deposit, dealing with your HR person."

While the Zeus and Athena community leaders described their school board's leadership as enthusiastic and responsive, the Dionysus community leader was actually upset because they started discussing economic development but the meetings fell apart. He stated:

"Twice I've had discussions with them...they had started to do a study and...for some reason it fell apart...to me that was a waste of good time."

The Aphrodite township supervisor bluntly responded to the suggestion of talks with local school leadership:

"No, (why) because no one has initiated it."

The Hermes township supervisor was honest but hopeful when asked about his discussions with the local school superintendent:

"I have not at this point...(we) just haven't done it yet."

The smaller communities in the study presented bigger communication issues among the stakeholders than the larger cities, but the implied level of enthusiasm from the interviews ran from tepid to disgruntled over the lack of communication with district leadership.

In discussing what could be done to improve on these conversations, four of the five community leaders wanted to move the process forward and see stronger relationships built. The Zeus city manager discussed how the two groups worked to move the community forward:

"We're in the preliminary talks. If you were back here a week from now, I'd probably have a lot more to tell you. I'm definitely working on it. There is a willingness to talk

between the city and the school district, and we've already discussed working together to create a community newsletter that'll benefit both the city and the school district."

Regarding business roundtables and economic summits, five of the community leaders participated in some form of regional economic discussions (see table 14). Only, the Dionysus mayor and Aphrodite township supervisor had not participated in a regional event but both remained open to the opportunity. Of the community leaders who participated in a round-table discussion, the Zeus city manager described a collaborative effort that impacted every school in the study:

"Just a few weeks ago, we had a meeting regarding the summer welding program attended by a representative from the PA Department of Community & Economic Development (DCED), the executive director of the career center, five district superintendents, several local business owners, the Athena city manager, myself, and my economic development consultants...everyone wanted to ensure the summer welding program would be a success."

The Zeus manager observed that some of the stakeholders expressed concerns, which reflected the newness of the project and the need to build confidence amongst the stakeholders. In line with that thinking, the Poseidon borough manager described the long-term value of these types of activities and collaborations:

"Because we all live in a hands-on, tangible society, we like to see instant results, and that's something we're not going to see. We need to work towards the goal of being able to implement (a project) to its fullest."

At least four of the community leaders actively collaborated with school district personnel to promote economic development activities and coordinate programs among the business, education, and community stakeholders, but these relationships were only in their beginning stages.

### ***Summary***

The community leaders interviewed demonstrated various levels of connectivity to their local school superintendents and the interview data generated these findings:

- Only the Zeus city manager actively worked on a project with the local public school leadership, the summer skills welding camp.
- Only two community leaders participated in their school's Business Week programs.
- Two community leaders had never entered into discussions with their local school superintendent or other school leadership.

The relationships developed with the community leaders corresponded to the other data generated in that the relationships among the community leaders and other stakeholders were weak at best. In connecting this to the research on the inability of community leaders to make strong decisions, a potential problem with implementing economic strategies became apparent (Pennsylvania Economy League, 2007).

#### **4.6.4.4 Summary**

The majority of all three stakeholder-groups participated in conversations with the other stakeholder groups and found these efforts worthwhile. The main concern expressed by all three groups related to taking the next step to action. Three of the districts, Poseidon, Athena, and Apollo, had started working toward stronger partnership efforts through the creation of a Business Week project in each district. The Dionysus and Hermes superintendents had established the highest levels of connectivity and the strongest relationships with the business leaders in their districts. The data showed that one person could be the catalyst to promoting stronger networking and collaboration. A strong example was the Zeus city manager's holding the meetings for the summer welding program or the Apollo United Way CEO's efforts to bring all three stakeholder-groups together with the Early Childhood Summit.

#### ***Economic Gardening***

The data from the interviews supported the concept that improving networking maximizes the effectiveness of all the stakeholders' efforts and promotes a greater understanding of other's needs (Peel, 1988; Thompson, 2002; Kerr, 1994). The findings highlighted the need for someone to step into a leadership role and take action. Many of the stakeholders voiced concern about the lack of results from the meetings and discussions among the stakeholders. The stronger relationships resulted from individual commitment to a project and using networking contacts to pursue those projects.

#### ***Academic Excellence***

The data showed that participating in discussions about economic development and community needs created a better awareness of the business and educational needs of the stakeholders. An awareness of the need to make adjustments to curriculum and programmatic focus should serve

to improve the effectiveness of the local school's efforts in producing well-prepared workforce candidates. With all the sharing of concerns and ideas, only the Athena superintendent sent teachers into local businesses and made significant changes to focus parts of the school's curriculum on the development of S.T.E.M. and specifically engineering professions. The collaborations among the stakeholders should strive to focus Academic Excellence efforts to promote workforce preparedness and economic development, which directly connects Academic Excellence to Economic Gardening. If collaboration among stakeholders is needed to create a strong economic environment, are the current state initiatives seen as helping or hurting school districts and economic development?

#### **4.6.5 Theme 3: Maintaining public schools' position as the number one educational provider**

Theme 3 directly links to research questions #2 and #4 regarding the implementation of Academic Excellence as a means to better prepare students for the rigors of the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy:

*Question #2:* How do local leaders, including superintendents, support education for local economic development?

*Question #4:* How are these local leaders responding to current education initiatives being promoted by Pennsylvania's legislative leaders?

The researcher asked every leader the following questions:

1. What do you think about the following options to make schools more economically competitive?
  - a. Partnering with or converting your local district into a charter school?
  - b. Using vouchers to improve student mobility?
  - c. Creation of regional magnet programs or consortiums?
  - d. School consolidation and school district mergers?

The business and community leaders were asked an additional question:

2. With more and more educational options available, what do you feel would be necessary for local public school districts to maintain their position as the number one educational source in the local community?

As the data supported in theme 1, the leadership expressed a definite need for high quality public schools. If the local public schools were to remain as the number one source of a

quality education, what changes were needed? How do the educational options being touted in Harrisburg fit into the local community's need to provide students with a quality education?

Table 18 shows the lack of attention school choice received in the literature. Dr. Kerr (1994) was the only researcher to list all four options and no mention of any of the school choice options was found in any of the other Economic Gardening sources. However, School choice is a major focus of both the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (107th Congress, 2002) and several legislative actions by the state of Pennsylvania. The researcher experienced this lack of acknowledgement in the literature during the interview process when he had to explain the school choice options to several of the business and community leaders.

**Table 18 School choice options**

Links to the Literature	Academic Excellence Content/Concept Categories			
	Charter Schools	Vouchers	Regional Magnet Programs	Consolidation
107 <sup>th</sup> Congress (2002) NCLB	X	X	X	
Allen (2007)				
Armstrong & Yazdi (2004)				
Birch (1987)				
Bush (2006)				
Dahl, G.B. (2002) & Dahl, M. (2010)				
Desplaces, Wergeles, & McGuigan (2009)				
Doms, Lewis, & Robb (2010)				
Dooley (1994)				
Friedman (2007)				
Fritsch & Mueller (2005)				
Gibbons (2006)				
Glaser, Rosenthal, & Strange (2010)				
Greenwood & Hunt (1984)				
Gunderson (2010)				
Hamilton-Pennell (2010 & 2011)				
Hinz (2011)				
Johnston & Singh (2003)				
Kerr (1994 & 2010))	X	X	X	X
Knopp (2009)				
Morgan (2009)				
Morgan, Lambe, & Freyer (2009)				
National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983)	X	X	X	
Northway (2009)				
Peel (1988)				
Pennsylvania Department of Education (2012)	X		X	X
Peters (2001)				
Powell (2005)				
Rodrigue (2009)				
Rossano (2000)				
Roth (2009)				
Roxas, Lindsay, Ashill, Vitorio (2008)				
Stangler (2010)				
Stangler & Litan (2009)				
Staples (2007)				
Thompson (2002)				

#### 4.6.5.1 Superintendent

The superintendents were asked for their opinion of these different educational options and if any of these options could benefit their school districts. The first option discussed focused on partnering with a charter school to provide greater educational options and flexibility (see table 19).

**Table 19 Partnering with charter schools to improve educational quality**

Superintendent	Apollo	Dionysus	Poseidon	Aphrodite	Hermes	Athena	Zeus
Partnering with a charter school	Feasible but unethical	Actually did application but School Board declined	Not a significant benefit	Hurts district by taking away funds	Hurts district by taking away funds	Hurts district by taking away funds	No benefit

Only the Dionysus district considered a partnership with a charter school as a viable option to increase revenues. The Dionysus superintendent saw the charter school option as creating a way to convert the district’s approximately 30 tuition-paying students into full ADM contributors to the district. The superintendent stated:

“We know what partnering with a charter school could do for us. With the 30 students we have now, we make \$60,000. If we partnered with a charter school, we could generate \$10,000 a student and we could make \$300,000, creating a swing of \$240,000.”

The district actually completed the charter application to create an entrepreneurial focused charter school. This charter school would have purchased all significant services from the Dionysus school district and provided several options to maximize the district’s assets.

The Apollo superintendent, presented the alternative to the Dionysus position, stating:

“I think you can do it, but then the blood’s in the water. It’s every man for himself, then I promote myself to steal as many kids as I can from Dionysus, Poseidon, Zeus, Athena, and the other districts. I didn’t sign up for that system. That’s not the public education system.”

Being the largest and most affluent district in the study, the Apollo district could have been the biggest winner in a totally open enrollment situation, but the superintendent did not see that as being good for all districts in the region. The five other districts in the study expressed no benefit to partnering with a charter school and saw cyber charter school options as a financial drain to public schools. School vouchers yielded similar results.

The option of tuition vouchers for other public and private schools received a mix of responses but from different superintendents (see table20).

**Table 20 Vouchers promoting school choice**

Superintendent	Apollo	Dionysus	Poseidon	Aphrodite	Hermes	Athena	Zeus
Vouchers for other public and private schools	Vouchers are the same as charter schools	No, just a backdoor to funding parochial schools	Our district would gain from vouchers	Vouchers would be an upside for us	Vouchers would not help us because of our location	Anti-voucher, public money should stay public	No significant benefit

Apparently, some of the superintendents saw a benefit to vouchers but not in partnering with a charter school. The Dionysus, Zeus, Athena, Apollo, and Hermes superintendents came out against vouchers. The Poseidon and Aphrodite superintendents viewed vouchers as beneficial to their districts. The Poseidon superintendent simply stated:

“I think the Poseidon district would attract students. We would gain in a voucher situation.”

This was the same position taken by the Aphrodite superintendent in that his district would gain students in that situation.

When asked about the option of regional magnet programs, the superintendents responded with discussions about an entrepreneurship project that five of the districts were developing with the Intermediate Unit and a local college called the Senior Experience (see table 21).

**Table 21 Regional magnet programs or schools**

Superintendent	Apollo	Dionysus	Poseidon	Athena	Zeus	Aphrodite	Hermes
Regional Magnet programs or schools	Currently working with four other districts to create an Entrepreneurship program					I think magnet programs are an excellent idea	Geographic limitations would hinder trying to do a magnet program here

The Poseidon superintendent added this statement about regional magnet programs:

“Well, we’re kind of just scratching the surface with the Senior Experience, and I think that would enhance our region. I definitely support that 100 percent. I think we need to do more of it but who’s going to do it? Ideally, I think the state should come in and say we’ll give you some seed money.”

The Aphrodite district was not part of the Senior Project Consortium but he supported the concept of regional magnet programs. Only the Hermes superintendent expressed no benefit, citing geographic limitations hindering any regional-level program.

Finally, the superintendents were asked about school consolidations or mergers. Some of the superintendents saw consolidations as inevitable given the current funding philosophies of the state governor and legislature (see table 22).

**Table 22 School consolidations and mergers**

Superintendent	Apollo	Dionysus	Poseidon	Aphrodite	Hermes	Athena	Zeus
School consolidation and mergers	It could work in some places with dramatic drops in enrollment	Consolidations have to happen geographically and socio-economically	Does not know if it will make a big difference	Sounds good on paper but when you propose a change everyone gets up in arms	Not feasible with transportation issues	People will not want to address the race and poverty issues	Someday it will happen

All of the superintendents recognized the potential of the area having to consolidate schools. The Athena superintendent responded straightforwardly in his assessment of the limitations of consolidation:

“What's the old saying? What's the hardest animal in Pennsylvania to kill? The school mascot...and it's true. Everybody's very territorial and everybody's very traditional ...the white elephant in the room is the race and poverty. I always say in Athena, diversity is our greatest strength. It's also our greatest weakness. It's a double edge sword. Some people don't want that. They don't want economic diversity. They don't want ethnic and racial diversity.”

During the interviews, the researcher felt the anxiety that the Athena superintendent discussed. None of the superintendents wanted to go into great detail about something that probably would not be a pleasant process in the region. The Poseidon superintendent stated:

“If you’re looking purely as an economic point, I think that’s one set of variables. But, if you’re looking at programmatic offerings, I don’t think it’s going to necessarily save dollars.”

***Summary***

The Apollo superintendent summed up the schooling alternatives by stating:

“This isn’t what I signed up for.”

The race and socio-economic issues referenced in the discussions about school consolidation represented factors generating economic pressures for the Olympus Mount Region. Generally, the superintendents saw some things that would benefit them but at the same time would hurt the schools around them in a “big winners and big losers” scenario. The business

leaders took a different tact in discussing school choice options and what was necessary for public schools to stay the number one educational provider.

#### **4.6.5.2 Business leaders**

The researcher subdivided this theme into three points of discussion. 1) What would be necessary for the local public school to do to maintain their positions as the number one educational provider in the local community? 2) Are you willing to partner with the local public schools to assist them in maintaining their positions as the number one educational resource in the community? and 3) What is your opinion of educational options proposed by the governor and legislature?

In response to maintaining the local public school as the number one educational provider in the local community, the business leaders gave the following responses:

- Promote career-ready students and training (8 out of 8)
- Create the best-educated and trained student possible (8 out of 8)
- The outlier opinion discussed teacher quality (1 out of 8)

Consistent with the responses given to theme 1, the business leaders unanimously responded that schools needed to promote career-ready students with quality workforce skills. The Zeus vice president and plant manager stated:

“I think they need to promote themselves better. Provide curriculum that teaches the employable skills, and they need to promote higher education as an option, not a requirement for gainful employment.”

The plant manager was emphatic that schools need to promote college as an option and not a requirement for gainful employment. The CEO of the Penn-Northwest Development Corporation added this to the discussion:

“Schools need to keep the curriculum relevant. I saw a commercial the other day for a cyber charter school that will teach kids how to make video games. What kid’s not at the end of that commercial running to mom and dad and saying how do I drop out of Apollo High School and sign up for this cyber school that’s going to teach me how to make video games? And what do you think that’s going to do to the school district?”

All of the business leaders saw the quality of the student achievement of public school graduates being highly important. For a business leader who depends on quality workers to compete, the idea of producing the best student possible translates quite well to the public schools. The Hermes CEO of the Hermes Development Corporation stated:

“I just think they have to produce the best student. They have to produce a quality end product. (The public schools have) the ability to create workers to improve the economic vitality of the area.”

As an extension of this concept, the researcher asked if and how businesses would be willing to assist schools in making the changes to keep the local schools as the top educational source in the area. All the business leaders were positive in wanting to assist the school districts in maintaining their position as the top educational choice in the local community. The business leaders discussed these activities to assist local schools:

- Provide job shadowing opportunities and side-by-side programs
- Provide job descriptions
- Promote opportunities to stay local
- Support technology integration
- Assist schools to keep aligned to current regional workforce needs

With the business leaders expressing a strong need for a larger pool of workforce candidates, their willingness to work with the school districts was understandable.

### *Outliers*

The Poseidon milk producer discussed the concept of teacher quality and by the words he chose, he clearly did not want to be controversial:

“Another thing that I feel (I’ve got to be careful here) necessary to keep that high standard (of education) is a sound evaluation process of their employees, which rewards the best, and challenges the ones not meeting those standards to improve.”

The Poseidon milk producer views teacher quality as important to schools as worker quality is to his business. The Dionysus fabricator echoed this point when asked about what school needed to do to stay competitive by stating matter-of-factly:

“Hire good teachers.”

The fact that more business leaders did not discuss teacher quality was surprising; instead they focused on schools’ producing a quality student to ensure the long-term success of the school. Coupled with the findings from theme 1, the business leaders clearly do not see a connection between PSSA achievement and success in the workplace.

### *Other Educational Options*

The researcher asked the business leaders if any of these options could help improve the economic viability of their local public schools. The first option discussed was partnering with a charter school to provide greater educational options and flexibility (see table 23).

**Table 23 Partnering with a charter school:**

Business Leaders	Partnering with a charter school:
Apollo	Did not see the advantage of charter schools vs. public schools
Dionysus	Did not know what a charter school was
Poseidon	Did not favor charter schools because takes away funding from public schools
Aphrodite	Just to create another school, he did not see the point
Hermes	Is against charter schools
Athena	Charter schools will not improve the outcome of kids in public schools
Zeus	Charter schools take funding from our local schools
Penn-Northwest	Is not a big fan of charter schools

Seven out of the eight business leaders interviewed opposed charter schools for various reasons, the biggest of which related to the loss of funding for the public schools. The Zeus plant manager responded:

“I would think charter schools would be a negative for the schools because they lose funding. I mean, basically they’re taking their monies and it’s almost like a voucher system, and the schools then lose the money that they would spend on a student.”

The loss of funding to public schools translated into hampering the public schools ability to deliver a quality person into the workforce. The Apollo CEO gave this response:

“I think we have something very valuable in this country, and it's called public education, and I'm not so sure that the charter school system, the way it's designed right now, would be that much of an advantage over what we currently have.”

The opinions about the negative impact of charter schools carried over to tuition vouchers but with a couple of dissenters (see table 24).

**Table 24 Vouchers for other public and private schools**

Business Leaders	Vouchers for other public and private schools:
Apollo	Would rather students take advantage of higher education
Dionysus	Liked vouchers because they promoted competition to create better schools
Poseidon	Not in favor of vouchers
Aphrodite	Liked vouchers because they promoted competition to create better schools
Hermes	Not in favor of vouchers
Athena	Did not believe in vouchers
Zeus	Was not a proponent of vouchers
Penn-Northwest	Definitely opposed to vouchers

The majority of the business leaders responded solidly against the option of vouchers but the two business leaders who endorsed vouchers did so because vouchers promoted competition. The Dionysus fabricator simply stated:

“It gives the public school a challenge to have a better school so the parents won’t send their kids to private school... you know, competition.”

Regarding magnet schools and consortiums, seven of the eight business leaders saw value in a magnet or consortium to pool resources (see table 25).

**Table 25 Regional magnet programs or schools**

Business Leaders	Regional magnet programs or schools:
Apollo	We are not big enough as a county or community to make that work
Dionysus	There are some points to magnet programs where they can specialize in certain things
Poseidon	I think it’s beneficial to students to find something they can excel in
Aphrodite	I think magnet programs are a great idea
Hermes	The ability to share assets and provide stronger programs is good
Athena	Magnet schools could pool talent and opportunities for students and keep kids in school
Zeus	Magnet schools are more beneficial to the community
Penn-Northwest	I think there is a lot of value with magnet programs

The business leaders’ responses showed a desire to improve opportunities and maximize resources. The Athena CEO stated:

“I like the pooling of talent to make opportunities. Because of funding cuts, we’re seeing districts drop programs that may not attract the largest group of kids, but that’s what may be keeping those kids in school every day. I had a teacher one time tell me about a kid that cut into school every day for just one class. Take that class out of the curriculum, that kid wouldn’t have come to school at all.”

The Aphrodite fabricator saw magnet programs as a way to consolidate schools from twelve districts to six districts stating:

“I think that’s (magnets) a great idea. In our county, we have 126,000 residents and 12 schools, a charter school, and a couple of private schools. We need about six schools. If we (consolidated), we’d have some super schools that could offer four or five languages instead of just two.”

In general, the idea of improving options and maximizing resources was a positive for seven of the eight business leaders. When asked about consolidation or mergers, seven of the eight business leaders leaned toward some form of consolidation but some qualified their position with reservations (see table 26).

**Table 26 School consolidation and school mergers**

Business Leaders	School consolidation and school mergers:
Apollo	I think you’re going to see some kind of collaboration
Dionysus	I don’t think the people will go for that (mergers and consolidation)
Poseidon	Consolidation would maximize the available resources and funding, and it would free up monies to be invested in other developments
Aphrodite	Absolutely (See table 4.8.5.2.C)
Hermes	To some extent it would be good, but transportation would be an issue; maybe shared staff and administration, but still have local schools
Athena	We are going to see this driven from a financial standpoint because we just can’t carry the overhead
Zeus	I am in favor of it, but I think the community struggles with the concept of mergers
Penn-Northwest	I’m a big fan of school consolidation when it means true savings. Just doubling everything doesn’t make any difference when you can’t eliminate positions through the consolidation

The business leaders liked the idea of efficiency, but some of the leaders struggled with the geographic issues. Some business leaders expressed concern that consolidation may not lead to real savings. Only the Dionysus fabricator responded totally negatively toward school consolidation because in his opinion, the people just would accept consolidation. This response echoed the concern of some of the superintendents.

### ***Summary***

In discussing how to maintain the quality of the local public schools, the business leaders made several points:

- Schools must provide a curriculum that is relevant and teaches employable skills.
- Courses must appeal to the high-tech interests of kids, e.g. video game design.

- Schools need to produce the best students possible and students are a school's end product.
- Hire good teachers, reward excellent teachers, and challenge weaker teachers to improve.

Businesses are willing to help through providing:

- Job shadowing and side-by-side opportunities
- Job descriptions
- Opportunities to stay local
- Support for technology integration
- Assistance for schools in staying aligned to local and regional workforce needs

In discussing alternative schooling options, business leaders saw:

- Charter schools as taking funding from local schools and only exacerbating the problems faced by the local school districts. (7 out of 8)
- Vouchers as promoting competition but hurting local public schools (6 out of 8)
- Magnet school options as providing more opportunities to give students quality experiences (7 out of 8)
- School consolidation as necessary to improve the educational opportunities for students (7 out of 8)

These responses were a sharp contrast to the policies coming from the state legislature and the governor in that two major elements of the state's education reform are charter schools and vouchers to promote school options. From the point of view of the business leaders, these options will weaken the local public schools, hurt the students still in those schools, and weaken the local and regional workforce quality. Nevertheless, business leaders want to see the tough decisions made regarding school consolidation and mergers to improve the quality of educational opportunities in the Olympus Mount Region. For as unified as the business leaders were, the community leaders were diversified.

#### **4.6.5.3 Community leaders**

As with the business leaders, this theme subdivided into three points of discussion. 1) What would be necessary for the local public school to do to maintain their positions as the number one educational provider in the local community? 2) Are you willing to partner with the local public schools to assist them in maintaining their positions as the number one educational resource in the community? and 3) What is your opinion of educational options proposed by the governor and legislature?

In response to maintaining the local public school as the number one educational provider in the local community, the community leaders gave no clear consensus (see table 27).

**Table 27 Maintaining school as the number one educational source in the community**

Community Leaders	What do the schools need to do to maintain their position as the number one educational provider in the local community?
Apollo	Provide strong STEM education and making folks understand they can do it right here
Dionysus	I would like to see the school district more involved in the community to keep people here
Poseidon	Developing their sense of community and working with the community
Aphrodite	I don't know what schools can do
Hermes	Staying current with technology and being on the cutting edge of what's going on out there around the world as far as educational needs
Athena	To continue to provide a better product, strengthen Vo-Tech, and educate parents to the opportunities locally for highly skilled labor
Zeus	By reaching out and opening communications to local industry who are here in their backyard and educating students for the jobs that already exist locally and making sure that students can fill those jobs' needs

The main theme that goes through the majority of the responses regarded promoting the local community and working to inform students about the opportunities available in the Olympus Region. Only the Aphrodite township supervisor gave a straightforward answer of “I don't know what schools can do.”

When asked how the local community leaders could assist the local public schools to remain as the number one source of education in the local community, the community leaders gave another set of diverse answers (see table 28.).

**Table 28 Assisting schools to maintain their positions as the number educational source**

Community Leaders	Do you see ways that the community can assist schools in maintaining their educational status?
Apollo	Just coming out of our community silo and being available to serve as a conduit between business and education is important. Helping school get parents and students to understand the opportunities that are available right here in the region and community
Dionysus	Sit down and come up with a plan, if we could get everyone to the table I think we could hash it out and make it come together for the entire community
Poseidon	We need to support the school and work with the school to continue to fight for our school and our community to be strong
Aphrodite	I don't know, I think the school system is out-of-touch with reality
Hermes	Communicating issues and trying to meet the needs of both the community and the school system
Athena	Providing a school resource officer, drug education, make the community aware of why they're paying school taxes and understand what will happen if the educational programs go downhill
Zeus	Partnering with other organizations and talking with the school board members to help to create a conduit between the local school and the business community and that remains even when the school doesn't need anything

The main emerging theme was communication, whether between the district and business or in support of the school district programs with members of the community. While the

majority of the community members did not have specific suggested courses of action, the community members focused strongly on collaboration and working together to strengthen the community as a whole. The Dionysus mayor expressed many concerns and frustrations about the direction the community was headed because of the inability to get people onboard to make improvements to the sewer system or consolidation of the borough and the township. When asked about how to support the school, the researcher was surprised by his answer of:

“We’ll sit down and come up with a plan. If we could get everyone to the table, I think we could hash it out and make it come together for the entire community.”

Even with all the conflict he perceived in the community, he was still willing to sit down and come up with a plan to assist the school district.

### ***Outlier***

In asking this question of the community leaders, the only response that created alarm came from the Aphrodite township supervisor who stated:

“I don’t know, I think the school system is out-of-touch with reality.”

This was the only community leader who gave such an abrupt and disconcerting response. Additionally, this comes from a district where the superintendent could not recommend a community leader to interview.

### ***Other Educational Options***

The community leaders were asked for their opinions of these different educational options and if any of these options could make their local public school more economically viable. The first option discussed regarded partnering with a charter school to provide greater educational options and flexibility (see table 29).

**Table 29 Partnerships with charter schools**

Community Leaders	Partnerships with charter schools:
Apollo	I really don't know enough about charter schools to have an opinion
Dionysus	Would it really bring students in?
Poseidon	No, I don't think partnering with a charter school is good for our school district or our students
Aphrodite	The problem with charter schools is you'll have winners and losers, and what happens to the kids stuck in the loser schools?
Hermes	I would eliminate school districts, not add charter schools
Athena	I think partnering with or creating a charter school is a good idea, not all kids learn the same way
Zeus	Charter schools don't bother me

In response to the idea of promoting partnerships with charter schools, the community leaders appeared to be spread across the spectrum ranging from the Zeus and Athena city managers who did not have a problem with partnering with a charter school to the other extreme posed by Poseidon, Aphrodite, and Hermes. In contrast to his other response in this theme, the Aphrodite township supervisor expressed a strong concern regarding how charter schools could negatively impact the local public schools:

“The problem with charter schools is you’ll have winners and losers, and what happens to the kids stuck in the loser schools?”

His response showed a concern for the educational and financial health of the local public schools in spite of saying he felt the local public school district was, “out-of-touch with reality.”

The community leaders displayed a higher level of consensus on the topic of tuition vouchers with five community leaders being against vouchers because they would hurt the local school district (see table 30).

**Table 30 Tuition vouchers**

Community Leaders	Tuition vouchers:
Apollo	At the end of the day, the school districts that are strong enough to survive are going to, but I worry about vouchers hurting our public school system
Dionysus	I have no idea how vouchers work
Poseidon	I think the voucher system hurts our school, parents who send their kids to private school should get some kind of break, but I'm not sure what that break is.
Aphrodite	I don't think we should go to vouchers
Hermes	I don't think vouchers would work, some schools would thrive and others would fail
Athena	I think it's a good idea giving people choices
Zeus	Vouchers bother me because it is a cop-out, you live here, but you don't want your child in the local school

One outlier in the responses came from the Zeus city manager that saw charter schools as a good idea but feels:

“It is a cop-out, you live here, but you don't want your child in the local school.”

The only community leader in favor of the vouchers was the Athena city manager and he remained consistent in his support of giving people choices.

Examining magnet schools and consortiums, three of the seven community leaders saw value in a magnet or consortium to pool resources (see table 31).

**Table 31 Magnet and programs and consortiums**

Community Leaders	Magnet program and consortiums:
Apollo	I think those are very important, we just have to get past the football mentality
Dionysus	I don't know what they are or if they're feasible
Poseidon	I don't think our region is ready for that at this time
Aphrodite	Transportation costs would be an issue
Hermes	I think making larger schools would afford more options for kids
Athena	It sounds like a very good idea
Zeus	The jury is still out in Youngstown, but I think the kids like the options

In examining the community leaders' responses, the researcher found no consistent position. Three community leaders stated that magnet programs and consortiums would be a good option to give children access to more opportunities in their educations. The Hermes township supervisor continued to be consistent in his statements to close smaller districts and merge them into larger districts.

The concept of school consolidation brought more of a consensus of its inevitability but not of the issues that surround it (see table 32).

**Table 32 School consolidation and mergers**

Community Leaders	School consolidation and school mergers:
Apollo	I think they are very financially practical, but sports would be your biggest hurdle
Dionysus	If you can get someone to take them (Zeus) and if you do a consolidation, it might not help you in the way you wanted it to
Poseidon	With taxpayers crying for relief and as a community, we have had to consolidate some of our efforts, but this area is not ready for that yet
Aphrodite	It should happen, why are we busing kids around our school district to go to the next school over, it doesn't make sense
Hermes	Yes, bigger graduating classes, more opportunities for college bound and workforce training
Athena	It could work in a lot of places, but I'm not sure it's a good idea in all situations, some schools will benefit and others will not
Zeus	I think it is an inevitability and the same thing with municipalities

The community leaders saw consolidation as inevitable but raised the question of the communities being ready for school consolidation. The Apollo borough manager brought up the same issue as the Athena superintendent, the sports mentality of parents would be the biggest hurdle. The question is how do the superintendents bring the divergent views of the community leaders into line with what needs to happen to maintain the strength of the local school districts?

### ***Summary***

The community leaders presented many different opinions about what schools need to do and how to do it. Four of the seven leaders had solid suggestions:

- Reach out to local business and educate students to local opportunities
- Strengthen the Vo-Tech and educate parents about local opportunities for highly skilled labor
- Provide strong STEM education regarding opportunities right here
- Staying current with technology and out front of innovations in education

When it came to assisting schools, only one leader provided solid support in tangible services and actions stating the city could:

“Provide a resource officer, drug education, make the community aware of why they are paying taxes and what would happen if the local educational programs go downhill.”

All the community leaders expressed a willingness to help, but the community leader responses regarding how to assist the local public schools demonstrated a need for guidance from superintendents.

In addressing school choice, the community leaders expressed several conflicting opinions regarding charter schools but were aligned against vouchers because they would hurt the local public schools. The community leaders responded favorably to regional magnet programs but they may have been confusing the magnet options with ways to consolidate schools. Every community leader saw consolidation as a strong option that would meet with strong public resistance.

#### **4.6.5.4 Summary**

The business leaders presented a clear picture of what they needed schools to do to maintain themselves as the number one educational provider in the community and that focused on workforce development and career ready students. The community leaders lacked that level of consensus but did present an underlying theme of promoting the community and training students so they could find work in the Olympus Mount Region. While the business leaders supplied specific tasks they could perform to assist the schools, the community leaders did not. They only focused on collaborating and working with the schools to maintain and improve the school district programs.

The most important finding was that the majority of superintendents and business and community leaders viewed the major state initiatives of charter schools and vouchers as hurting the local schools and weakening the community and the local economic climate. This consensus from the leaders interviewed could serve as a sharp contrast to the current Pennsylvania governor and legislature's position on school choice options. Specifically, school choice options found the business leaders and the superintendents in agreement on several options, i.e. against charter schools and vouchers and in favor of magnet and consortium programs. The community leaders responses reflected incongruity in that some leaders supported charter schools but opposed vouchers and vice versa. The one common ground for the business and community leaders was consolidation. The community leaders voiced a concern that the public would never support school consolidations. The superintendents presented diverse opinions regarding school consolidation and the political issues it creates with the public. The question regarding the superintendent's resistance to school consolidation may have been related to the possibility of their losing their positions as superintendents.

The findings to the research theme 3 created another question: If the majority of the leaders interviewed in this study were against charter schools and vouchers, why are the legislators and the governor promoting legislation favorable to charter schools and vouchers?

### ***Economic Gardening***

Both the community and the business leaders expressed the importance of quality public schools to local economic growth and saw the development of workforce programs as critical to meeting the local community and business needs. Both businesses and community leaders expressed a willingness to be a part of assisting schools to maintain and strengthen programs. These positions directly supported an Economic Gardening strategy to strengthen the local community and the local public schools.

### ***Academic Excellence***

In this theme the main issue that arose related to workforce development and collaboration of all the stakeholders to improve the quality of the local public schools. Many aspects of the program improvements suggested by the business leaders could directly translate into improving Academic Excellence. The majority of the leaders viewed the school choice options as weakening the local public school, hurting Academic Excellence, and being detrimental to the community and its children. The big issues related to what was not discussed: 1) how to generate business support to improve the mathematics and reading skills of students most likely to directly enter the workforce, and 2) how assist the community in reducing the drug problems to improve the quality of the local workforce.

#### **4.6.6 Analysis of the Seven Case Studies' Interview Data Responses**

The interviews revealed that the business leaders presented a strong need for higher skilled and trainable labor and experienced problems in filling these positions because the pool of potential candidates lacked appropriate academic skills or the personal work ethic to fill these positions. At the time of the interviews, the superintendents appeared specifically focused on entrepreneurial-type training and only recently started to examine the need for highly skilled labor. The community leaders revealed a strong desire to promote economic development and support the other stakeholders but, as a group, were least inclined to agree to a specific strategy.

The community leaders demonstrated the weakest connections to the superintendents and business leaders. The limited connectivity of the community leaders to the superintendents and business leaders manifested itself in the lack of understanding of the region's economic development needs.

School choice options being touted by the Commonwealth are perceived as hurting local public schools and weakening local communities. All the leaders interviewed discussed the benefits of inter-district collaboration, and business leaders expressed concern over the number of schools versus the depth of programs available to the region's students.

The interview process disclosed several outliers not exposed through the other forms of research data. One exposed outlier was the problem of applicants not being able to pass a drug test. Another outlier related to the number of applicants needed to fill positions. The number of applicants business leaders discussed ranged from 150 to 250 applicants to fill 20 positions. Once the business selected and hired four appropriate candidates, two would come to work on the first day, and only one person would make it through the three-month probationary period.

The findings presented in Chapter IV will be analyzed in Chapter V to construct the individual cases and the collective case study analysis.

## **5.0 CHAPTER V: CONSTRUCTION OF INDIVIDUAL CASES AND THE COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

In Chapter IV, the researcher presented the four types of data created and analyzed for the research project. These data types included: statistical data, background data, a deductive content analysis to assess the interviewees preference for or tendency toward either the Academic Excellence or Economic Gardening strategy, relationship data demonstrated through the use of a visual representation, and interview response data. Using the background data and the three types of generated data analysis, the researcher provided analysis of the seven individual case studies and the case of cases (Tananis, Personal conversation, 2012) collective study found in Chapter V. The researcher elected to use only the relevant data needed to create the background for each case. All of the statistical data is presented in Chapter IV for reference as needed.

In the creation of the individual cases, the researcher found two separate schools of thought regarding the reporting of the individual case studies. Yin (1994, p. 137) stated:

“In a multiple-case study, the individual case studies need not always be presented in the final manuscript. The individual cases, in a sense, serve only as the evidentiary base for the study and may be used solely in the cross-case analysis.”

Yin saw the individual cases as being secondary to the multiple or collective case study and therefore, these individual cases could be referenced instead of being created and placed in the core document.

Stake (2006, p. 82) stated:

“Comparison is a search for similarity and difference in cases. There is comparison in all inquiry and all discourse, but comparison has only a minor role to play in individual cases. Comparative studies...seek similarities and differences among cases on a relatively few specified attributes. The purpose of those studies is to make some grand comparison rather than to increase understanding of individual cases.”

Stake noted the fact that in collective or multiple case studies, the individual cases often are designed without taking the collective case analysis into consideration. These two researchers pointed to the concept presented in Chapter III that the individual cases were not the focus of the study, but the true analysis was found in the comparison of the individual studies. To focus the analysis on the quintain or actual purpose of the collective study (Stake, 2006), the researcher created the individual and collective case studies’ analysis using the three themes established in Chapter IV as the framework for the analysis. These themes were:

- Theme 1: Promoting economic development and community vitality
- Theme 2: The quality of networking and collaboration among leaders
- Theme 3: Maintaining public schools’ position as the number one educational provider in the local community

Each individual case study consists of the analysis of statistical and interview data gathered by the researcher based on the themes outlined in Chapter IV and how the data related to the Academic Excellence and Economic Gardening strategies.

### 5.1.1 Order of Presentation

Table 33 set forth the order of presentation to assist the reader in finding cases of interest and particular points of analysis.

**Table 33: Order of Presentation**

<b>Section 5.2: Individual Cases</b>	p. 184
Sub-section 5.2.1: Apollo School District	p. 184
Sub-section 5.2.2: Dionysus School District	p. 188
Sub-section 5.2.3: Poseidon School District	p. 192
Sub-section 5.2.4: Aphrodite School District	p. 195
Sub-section 5.2.5: Hermes School District	p. 198
Sub-section 5.2.6: Athena School District	p. 201
Sub-Section 5.2.7: Zeus School District	p. 204
<b>Section 5.3 The Collective Case Study</b>	p. 208
Sub-section 5.3.1: Background Data	p. 208
Sub-section 5.3.2: Theme I: Promoting economic development and community vitality	p. 209
Sub-section 5.3.2.1: Deductive content analysis	p. 210
Sub-section 5.3.3: Theme 2: The quality of networking and collaboration among leaders	p. 211
Sub-section 5.3.4: Theme 3: Maintaining public schools’ position as the number one educational provider	p. 213
Sub-section 5.3.5: Collective Case of Cases Summary	p. 215

## 5.2 INDIVIDUAL CASES

The following section presents the seven individual case studies' analysis used to create the collective case study in the next section of Chapter V. The cases are presented for the purpose of comparison to the other cases. The researcher placed emphasis on unique characteristics (outliers) that may have an impact on the comparisons among cases in the collective case study.

### 5.2.1 Apollo School District

#### *Statistical and background data*

The wealthiest school district in the study, the Apollo school district experienced a slight increase in population of .4% between 2000 and 2010. With the Average Daily Membership (ADM) or the cost to educate an individual student for 2012-2013 school year being \$8,647.84 (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2012), With 60% of their revenue coming from local sources, Apollo was the only district in the study to receive more local revenue than state and federal funding. Despite the lack of dependence on state funding, the district still eliminated eight positions through furlough and eleven through attrition to balance the 2011-2012 budget. As with all the districts in the study, the Apollo communities' comprehensive plans contained no reference to partnering with the school districts to promote economic development or to assist with local business needs.

#### *Theme 1: Promoting economic development and community vitality*

The Apollo superintendent stated that the district had not been involved in promoting economic development in any way and only discussed a TIF proposal because the company forced it on the district. The interview data revealed a strong focus on academic development and limited concern about promoting economic development. The superintendent's position is framed in his statement:

“Here's what I think. I think that in public education, we need to focus on the basics and that's highly literate kids that know to write well and know how to do the math, understand their world, and then they can start (focusing on specific career related skills) in college.”

The Apollo case reflected the stability of the local community and the substantial nature of the existing tax base, but even with that tax base, the district furloughed eight teaching positions for the 2011-2012 school year. With infrastructure in place that promoted housing growth, the Apollo community's economic design placed importance on people moving into the district and bringing their personal income with them. The City of Apollo manager discussed the dependence on income taxes over real estate taxes to generate revenue, which created a reasonable level of stability for the community and school district. The fiscal stability of the community allowed the Apollo supervisors to take a regional approach to economic development, which the economic growth from surrounding areas could be turned into economic prosperity for Apollo. The economic prosperity in the Apollo community permitted the superintendent to place an emphasis on Academic Excellence over career preparation and specialization. The superintendent's desire to promote Academic excellence gained support from his choice of business leaders to be interviewed. The United Way CEO demonstrated the strongest tendency toward Academic Excellence of any business leader interviewed. The CEO strongly emphasized early childhood education as a means to build the future local workforce.

### ***Analysis of Academic Excellence vs. Economic Gardening***

The economic stability in the Apollo district allowed the superintendent to focus his concern on Academic Excellence in spite of laying off eight teachers for the 2011-2012 school year. At the time of the interviews, the superintendent's position of solely promoting Academic Excellence and college preparation conflicted with the concerns of many of the business leaders interviewed. The Apollo superintendent demonstrated a lack of concern for workforce development, which could be an economic development issue if housing development moves outward toward the Dionysus or Poseidon districts.

Because of their financial positions, the leaders of the Apollo case study wanted to continue doing what they were doing and politely moving forward with their personal projects. Being a stable bedroom community with a strong tax base gave them the luxury of maintaining the status quo. Whether or not they will be able to continue in that direction will be determined by the economic and political climate outside of their district.

## ***Theme 2: The quality of networking and collaboration among leaders***

The superintendent participated in discussions with the local business and community leaders but he recommended a business leader who represented a social services perspective. The Apollo city manager saw his position as a liaison between local business and the education community. The city manager discussed the need to breakdown barriers and actively promoted networking between the stakeholders in the economic process. The business leader expressed limited discussions with the local school district and the superintendent.

The relationship diagram demonstrated the superintendent's limited connectivity to the business and community leaders. While other superintendents were members of the boards of the Chamber of Commerce or members of social organizations such as the Masonic Lodge, the Apollo superintendent's strongest connection outside the school was to the United Way. When interviewed, the only other board the superintendent served on was the community recreation board and position was directly tied to the district's coordination of their summer academy course offerings.

The superintendent, CEO of the United Way, and the Apollo city manager all discussed the establishment of a solid working relationship among the other leaders. These relationships demonstrated a limited level of depth and, as discussed by the city manager, were only in the beginning stages of development.

## ***Analysis of Academic Excellence vs. Economic Gardening***

The networking relationships of the superintendent reflected a focus on Academic Excellence and the district's needs. The CEO of the United Way was connected to every district in the study as well as many of the business leaders and used those connections to promote the United Way's vision of Economic Gardening. Only the city manager demonstrated strong Economic Gardening tendencies in his promotion of regionalism and his efforts to break down the siloing effects of community borders and programs. The position presented by the superintendent appeared to be more concerned about businesses sponsoring and funding district programs than creating true partnerships to promote mutually beneficial programs. The superintendent demonstrated a level autonomy and disconnect in working with other stakeholders in the community. While the community leader worked to break down barriers, the superintendent's efforts reinforced the

traditional barriers. As with their approach to economic development, whether this approach to partnering with other stakeholders can continue is a question yet to be answered.

### ***Theme 3: Maintaining public schools' position as the number one educational provider***

The United Way CEO and the city manager felt that schools needed to promote the new manufacturing paradigm and STEM related career fields. Both the CEO and the manager reflected ideas presented by many of the other leaders in the study. The question came back to how responsive was the school district's leadership to creating a stronger career-orientated focus.

#### ***School choice options***

When discussing charter school and voucher school choice options, the superintendent responded:

“That’s not the public education system...that’s going private and that’s what I don’t like about it.”

The business leader took the same position as the superintendent and the community leader saw, as did the superintendent, that these options would create winners and losers. While Apollo might be a winner, what would be the cost to the surrounding districts?

The superintendent expressed concerns over the health of the surrounding districts, but how long will that concern remain when his district cuts back staff at a rate of 5 teaching positions a year? This magnanimous position, combined with the superintendent's belief that career preparation needs to occur after high school, reflected a desire to maintain the status quo even though the state actively promoted school choice through vouchers and charter options.

#### ***Summary Analysis of Academic Excellence vs. Economic Gardening***

The superintendent focused clearly on Academic Excellence and student achievement. His network of business and community contacts revolved around what was required from his position as superintendent and not promoting the economic development and financial stability of the local community. The United Way CEO and Apollo city manager were well connected and actively promoted Economic Gardening activities to strengthen the region and local community. The superintendent's decision to maintain the current relationship paradigms with business and community leaders relies solely on the economic and business environments

remaining unchanged. In contrast, the business leaders desired a more responsive and proactive approach to local workforce needs.

## **5.2.2 Dionysus School District**

### ***Statistical and background data***

The second richest school district in the study, the Dionysus school district maintained the second most stable population in the study. The district's ADM was \$7,829.44 and this represented the second lowest ADM behind the Aphrodite school district (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2012). A large percentage of the local community population worked outside of the district's borders because income levels outlined in the census data outpaced the earnings power of the employment available in the district. The district communities' comprehensive plans reflected a desire to maintain the current character of the municipalities and limit expansion of business and commercial enterprises.

### ***Theme 1: Promoting economic development and community vitality***

#### ***Disconnected but connected***

The superintendent promoted tax incentives through Tax Increment Financing (TIFs) and tax abatement. In contrast, the Dionysus fabricator indicated that job skills and workforce preparations needed to be a major focus of the school district and career center if he was to maintain and build his business. The fabricator expressed deep concern over the lack of qualified workforce candidates for his business and the inability of the few candidates he did have to pass the drug test. The community leader desired to consolidate municipalities and promote community growth. This group of leaders demonstrated the strongest connectivity but exhibited limited understanding of each other's issues and concerns.

#### ***Deductive content analysis***

The deductive content analysis showed that while all interviewees displayed a tendency toward Economic Gardening, a distinctively stronger tendency existed on the part of the mayor and the

fabricator. The issues demonstrated by the business leader and the community leader related to training children for careers and fulfilling local workforce needs. The mayor was emphatic in his desire to see more young people stay in the local community and strengthen the local economic base.

### ***Analysis of Academic Excellence vs. Economic Gardening***

In the interview, the business and community leaders discussed promoting local workforce opportunities as a major concern. The superintendent pointed to having students prepared for local workforce opportunities as being an excellent option for his graduates. While actively supportive of each other, the three leaders expressed different emphasis on which course of action to take to improve the economic environment of the local community. All three of the leaders expressed an Economic Gardening position when discussing promoting economic development.

### ***Finding quality candidates***

The business leader discussed a lack of basic mathematics and reading skills demonstrated by his job applicants. With the school districts' concerns regarding PSSA and basic academic development, businesses' inability to find children with these skills may mean that the vast majority of their applicants are low achieving or "At Risk" students.

### ***Outlier: Drugs***

Dionysus fabricator stated, "one in 30 can pass the drug test." Finding quality job applicants who can pass a drug test is extremely difficult for the manufacturers interviewed. Adding drugs to the lack of mathematics and reading skills quickly takes pools of 250 candidates down to four or five hireable candidates.

### ***Theme 2: The quality of networking and collaboration among leaders***

The key difference among the cases related to the Dionysus superintendent's development of personal connections with the fabricator and mayor. Because of the fabricator and mayor's relative isolation from the regional economic discussions, the responsibility fell to the

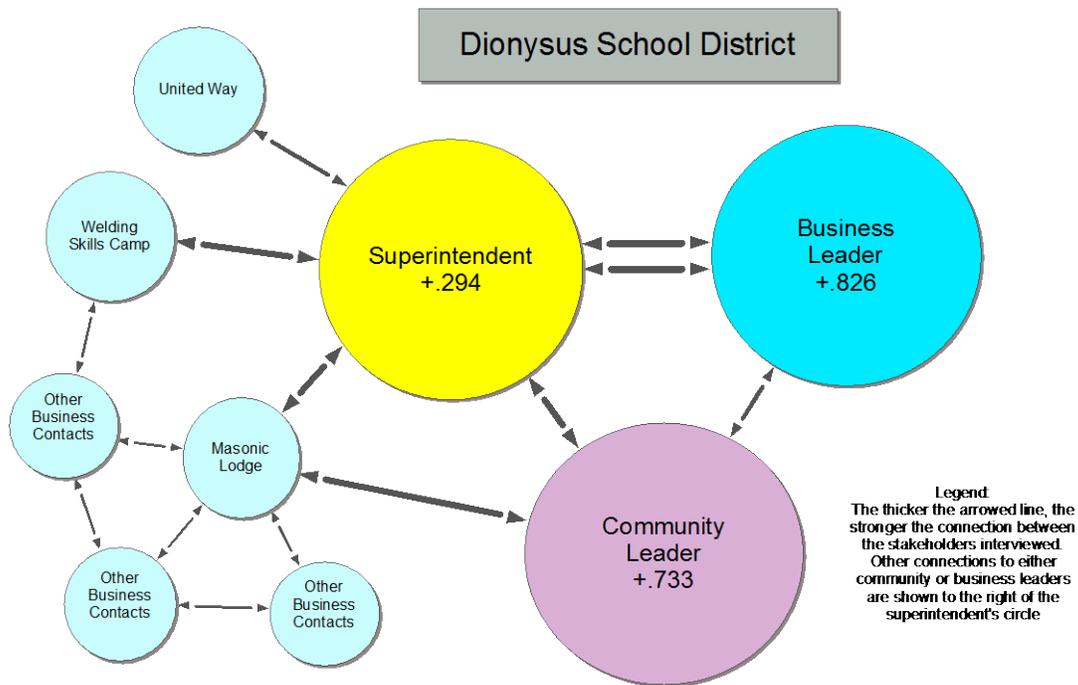
superintendent to build personal relationships with these individuals to solicit their support either in the form of in-kind services or financial backing.

***Outlier: Taking action***

It was documented in several interviews how the superintendent promoted and facilitated the summer welding skills camp at the Pantheon County Career Center. The superintendent used his network of connections from the Masonic Lodge Brothers, the Kiwanis, and the United Way to solicit both in-kind and financial support. The superintendent solicited \$1,000 donations to sponsor students in the camp and worked with Randy Seitz of the Penn-Northwest Development Corporation to find donations of ¼”, ½”, and 1” steel plate and welding supplies to operate the camp. The actions of the superintendent to access his personal community connections to facilitate this summer camp project set him outside of the normal types of relationships demonstrated by the other superintendents interviewed.

The networking undertaken by the Dionysus superintendent made significant impacts on his ability to coordinate over twenty businesses and every school district in the county to promote the summer welding skills camp (figure 18).

**Figure 18 Dionysus relationship diagram**



(The relationship chart clearly demonstrates how the superintendent used his connections to facilitate the summer skills camp.)

### ***Analysis: of Academic Excellence vs. Economic Gardening***

The topic of networking represented a core aspect of Economic Gardening. All of the Dionysus stakeholders demonstrated the value of personal networking to accomplish tasks and improve the economic climate of the local community. The summer welding skills camp took business arm-twisting on a personal face-to-face level to be successful. This event demonstrated how one driven superintendent could positively impact the local workforce environment.

### ***Theme 3: Maintaining public schools' position as the number one educational provider***

The discussions about maintaining quality schools reverted back to the issue in theme 1 of promoting workforce preparedness and keeping the community's children in the local area after graduation from high school or college. In discussions of school choice options, neither the fabricator nor the mayor grasped a strong understanding of what was being proposed and legislated in Harrisburg. Because the fabricator and mayor had limited understanding of the school choice options, the superintendent needed to be proactive to develop their positions in a pro-public school manner. The business and community leaders supported consolidation but expressed concerns with lack of general community support.

### ***Analysis of Academic Excellence vs. Economic Gardening***

The business and community leaders raised the concern over keeping the local public school strong and in turn, strengthening the local workforce pool and community. All three leaders looked at the issues facing the district and the community through a lens of Economic Gardening and the need to promote local economic development for the benefit of everyone involved.

### ***Summary Analysis of Academic Excellence vs. Economic Gardening***

Formal communications promote positive relationships. People promote depth of relationships and the trust necessary to facilitate major projects, which benefit all of the stakeholders. The Dionysus superintendent developed his relationships beyond just professional interactions and made an impact on the region through his actions.

### 5.2.3 Poseidon School District

#### *Statistical and background data*

The third wealthiest school district in the study, the Poseidon school district was the only school district to increase in enrollment from 2000 to 2010. Poseidon gained 50 students from 1,275 to 1,325 while the district's population shrank by 2.95%. The ADM for the Poseidon district for the 2012-2013 school year was \$8,383.85, which was the fourth highest of all the districts in the study (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2012). Primarily a bedroom community, the majority of Poseidon's residents were employed outside of the boundaries of the district. With a cut of \$900,000 in state and federal funding, the Poseidon school district eliminated one position through furlough and five through attrition to balance the 2011-2012 budget. The Poseidon school district was the only district to raise taxes. The superintendent stated:

“We got the board to raise taxes three quarters of a mil and that money was specifically designated to bring back some classroom aides.”

Representing one of the two financially struggling districts in the study, the Poseidon superintendent felt the district could be in financial trouble in one or two years if the state funding did not improve.

#### *Theme 1: Promoting economic development and community vitality*

Because Poseidon consisted as primarily a bedroom community, the three leaders viewed their community as being limited in economic options. The milk producer and the borough manager discussed initiatives to maintain the community and the health of the local dairy, but lacked insight into promotion of the local community and region. This limited understanding of the region's economics, coupled with the concerns of the superintendent regarding school district sustainability lead to minimal efforts to do more than maintain the community at its current economic development levels. The milk producer and the borough manager discussed the need to promote local employment and to collaborate, but lacked solid recommendations for action.

The milk producer made a strong connection to Academic Excellence in discussing that students needed to be equipped with strong basic skills and a good work ethic. The borough manager viewed Academic Excellence as a way to promote Economic Gardening stating:

“Poseidon is a good place for someone to live, raise a family, and without a good school system, it makes it harder to market the community as that kind of a place.”

While the superintendent neglected to discuss Business Week as an effort to promote workforce development, the milk producer and the borough manager viewed the project as supporting local businesses and economic development.

### ***Analysis of Academic Excellence vs. Economic Gardening***

The superintendent, milk producer, and borough manager supported the premise of Economic Gardening through using local suppliers and promoting employment options that benefit local manufacturing and business. The issue pulled from the findings related to a sense of ‘we do what we can, but we can not do much.’ For a district and community financially struggling, the question became who will step into the leadership role and take action? Also in line with the Dionysus fabricator, the milk producer expressed concerns about basic skills development of job applicants.

### ***Theme 2: The quality of networking and collaboration among leaders***

The Poseidon superintendent participated in formal and informal discussions with the milk producer and borough manager. None of the interviewed leaders discussed any significance to the strength of the relationships except that they worked together to promote the area and the local employment opportunities. The superintendent discussed many board memberships and how his position as the fundraising chairman of the United Way led to his involvement in Early Childhood Economic Summit. With all of his connections, the superintendent failed to discuss any specific partnership activities generated by these connections.

### ***Analysis of Academic Excellence vs. Economic Gardening***

The superintendent maintained a large number of professional connections to the community and other educational providers, but none of these relationships generated significant partnering opportunities for the district. Whether the residential nature of the district impeded these collaborations is not known. The interviewer interpreted from the interview responses a level of professional politeness but not personal connections that promoted partnering for mutual benefit beyond the business week activities.

### ***Theme 3: Maintaining public schools' position as the number one educational provider***

The milk producer went on to discuss teacher evaluations and teacher quality:

“Another thing that I feel (I got to be careful here) is to keep that high standard (of education) is a sound evaluation process of their employees and rewarding the best, and challenging the ones that are aren't meeting those standards to raise their standards.”

While almost every business leader discussed educational quality and student preparation, this interview represented the only time teacher evaluations and challenging teachers to meet higher standards as professionals were mentioned.

In examining the school choice options, all three leaders viewed partnering with other local schools to create magnet or regional opportunities for students as positive for the region. The business leader firmly stated that consolidation would improve the educational options for students, but the superintendent saw no gain to consolidation.

#### ***Analysis of Academic Excellence vs. Economic Gardening***

The milk producer and the borough manager stated that quality academics were crucial to the health of the community and to local workforce development. Neither of these leaders promoted initiatives that would focus on ensuring the school district's ability to maintain and provide quality programming. In this case study, the responsibility clearly fell to the superintendent to be the leader in promoting the actions necessary to keep the district strong and vital.

#### ***Summary Analysis of Academic Excellence vs. Economic Gardening***

Regardless of the number of board memberships, actions speak louder than words. The district superintendent maintained a polite relationship with the business leader and community leaders. The superintendent needed to be the leader in this situation to promote the district, develop programs to improve workforce preparedness, and strengthen the local community.

## 5.2.4 Aphrodite School District

### *Statistical and background data*

The Aphrodite school district was the fourth wealthiest school district in the study. From 2000 to 2010, the district population fell by 7.3% outpacing the community population decrease of 5.7% by 1.6 percentage points. The ADM cost per student for the Aphrodite school district was \$7,765.96 for the 2012-2013 school year (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2012). The majority of the school district's residents were employed in education services or healthcare and work in the district due to the proximity of major employer, the local college, to the school district. Even with the major employer being the college, the district received 67% of its revenue from state and federal sources. This dependency exacerbated the impact of the cuts in state and federal funds of \$1.1 million. This caused the district to balance their budget by eliminating five positions through furlough and ten positions through attrition.

### *Theme 1: Promoting economic development and community vitality*

The Aphrodite district experienced a level of disconnect unparalleled by any other district in the study. The superintendent expressed frustration with the economic improvement organizations' lack of action and felt that the area's geographic location presented an un-surmountable obstacle to economic growth. Meanwhile, the district, along with the Hermes district, promoted the Aphrodite-Hermes Development Corporation whose businesses employ over 1,300 employees. The superintendent's position was in opposition to the business leader's opinion that the school district pushes college education without regard to the employability of the college graduates. The Aphrodite fabricator discussed job applicants unable to read a ruler or understand blueprints and that the schools need to teach workplace skills on top of academics. Add to that relationship, the only township supervisor recommended by anyone to be interviewed in this district takes this position:

“I think the school system is basically out of touch with reality. It's not all their fault but...”

The tension and frustrations expressed by these individuals was fed by the fact that their tendencies toward Academic Excellence and Economic Gardening represented the widest spread of any three candidates interviewed at 1.40 out of a possible 2.0 see figure 6, page 112).

### ***Analysis of Academic Excellence vs. Economic Gardening***

The superintendent focused on Academic Excellence and the fabricator and supervisor focused on Economic Gardening. The dichotomy of their positions highlighted the inability of the superintendent to recommend a community leader to be interviewed. The Aphrodite case study demonstrated the explicit need for a superintendent who understands the need for connections between the school and the community on economic development strategies.

### ***Finding quality candidates (part 2)***

- 1) College is not for everyone and schools need to look at skills development for students not suited to attend college.
- 2) High school graduates are not prepared to meet the employment requirements of local businesses.

These issues trend back to the discussions with the Dionysus fabricator. Businesses see non-college bound students who apply for their high skilled jobs as not having basic mathematics, reading, and workplace skills. The majority of non-college bound students may be represented by the “At-Risk” and Special Education (specific learning disabilities (SLD)) populations in high school. This segment of the student population is far more likely to not be proficient on the PSSA or other measures of academic achievement and therefore unlikely to be capable of demonstrating these basic skills in the workplace.

### ***Theme 2: The quality of networking and collaboration among leaders***

The tensions created by these leaders tendencies transferred to their interactions at the local community level. The superintendent stated that the meetings affirmed the programs that the district already put in place and stated the following about his frustration with the productiveness of these meetings:

“No, I don't (think they're productive) because the area is not going to attract any large businesses. There's a lot of problems with our location...There's other areas that if businesses are going to go someplace, they're going to go there. So far for two years, it's just been a lot of meetings.”

When asked about school districts being supportive, the fabricator stated:

“We have 12 public school districts and about a third of them are supportive. The other two-thirds tell the story to students and parents that if you want to be successful, go to college.”

Compounding the situation, the supervisor never participated in any discussions either on the local or regional level and openly expressed his inability to find solutions to the local community and region’s economic concerns.

### ***Academic Excellence vs. Economic Gardening***

The superintendent’s focus on Academic Excellence interfered with his ability to develop strong collaborative efforts with community and business leaders. Examining this case in comparison to the Dionysus case, the researcher found the level of formal interactions between stakeholders made little impact, but the quality of the relationships created a huge impact.

### ***Theme 3: Maintaining public schools’ position as the number one educational provider***

The fabricator saw academic excellence as the key to maintaining the local public school as the number one educational provider in the community stating:

“They have to have quality education for the kid. And for me that means that every kid comes out of there with at least an 8th grade education from the standpoint of reading, mathematics, being able to write, and communicate.”

He expressed that the schools needed to promote options other than college for highly skilled careers and family sustaining jobs.

The Aphrodite supervisor could not think of a way to answer the question except to state the quote listed on page 196.

One of the few positions of unity related to charter schools and vouchers. All three leaders disliked the options because they took funds away from the local public school districts. When discussing magnets and consolidation, both the supervisor and the fabricator stated that the schools districts needed to be consolidated. The supervisor stated:

“Why do we bus children through Aphrodite to get to the Hermes High School? It just doesn’t make sense.”

### *Analysis of Academic Excellence vs. Economic Gardening*

The problem generated from this case study involved a traditional position of protection and an outsider's view of situations that appear to lack common sense. The superintendent viewed school consolidation from a position of maintaining the status quo and the fabricator and supervisor came from the position of "why do we do it this way? It makes no sense." In this study, economic development and growth may only occur in spite of the school district's situation.

### *Summary Analysis of Academic Excellence vs. Economic Gardening*

All three leaders supported Academic Excellence, but the focus and results expected by the three did not align. These three individuals represent the dichotomy of positions that Economic Gardening strives to eliminate. As the frustration levels rise, these individuals' positions could generate friction and opposition without compromise. Someone must step up and build a consensus to move economic development forward.

#### **5.2.5 Hermes School District**

##### *Statistical and background data*

The Hermes school district ranked fifth in wealth in the study but represented a level of economic vitality closer to Aphrodite and Poseidon instead of Athena and Zeus. The district experienced a decline in student population of 418 students from 1,672 in 2000 to 1,254 in 2010. The student decline of 25% well outpaced the 7.3% population decline of the Hermes community. The loss in student population assisted in generating an ADM cost of \$9,464.91 per student (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2012). With inconclusive data, the Hermes district appeared to be the blue-collar neighbor to the Aphrodite school district, which it all but surrounds geographically. The Hermes school district received 70% of its revenue from state and federal sources and experienced a \$1.7 million cut in revenue for the 2011-2012 school year causing the district to eliminate 10.5 positions. While not a poor district, the Hermes district dealt with serious funding issues at the time of the interviews.

### ***Theme 1: Promoting economic development and community vitality***

The Hermes superintendent actively sought out and promoted the creation of a work release and internship program that partnered with local businesses and manufacturers. His focus aimed to give the students of the Hermes school district job skills and quality work experiences while still in high school. The superintendent actively sought out the United Way CEO and the CEO of the local development corporation to assist him in sponsoring a luncheon with many business owners in the district. This superintendent demonstrated the strongest understanding of the need for quality skilled labor and opportunities that local manufacturing created for his students. The superintendent's position worked in concert with the CEO of the local development corporation, who stated:

“The school district needs to create a workforce that's going to stay local. I go out and talk to industry all the time and they say we need to expand, we can't get workforce.”

The Hermes community leader, a township supervisor, considered infrastructure development a large impediment to economic development but expressed the need for the local community to grow economically to ensure its survival.

The deductive content analysis illustrated the tightest alignment of tendencies toward Economic Gardening of any district in the study. Because of the similarity in tendencies, the leaders naturally worked toward an Economic Gardening model (see figure 7, page 112).

### ***Analysis of Academic Excellence vs. Economic Gardening***

The Hermes leaders showed a strong consensus of their natural predisposition to support Economic Gardening. In antithesis to the Aphrodite school district, the Hermes leaders have developed a collaborative partnership that incorporated workforce development into the core academic philosophy of the district.

### ***Theme 2: The quality of networking and collaboration among leaders***

The Hermes superintendent displayed initiative and generated his own network using his contacts with the Aphrodite-Hermes Development Corporation and the CEO of the United Way. Unlike the other superintendents with connections to the United Way CEO, the Hermes superintendent sought out the CEO to promote his district's programs and not the United Way's programs.

### ***Analysis of Academic Excellence vs. Economic Gardening***

The superintendent created his own quality relationship connections by actively seeking business leaders and promoting student interest in local skilled workforce opportunities. The Hermes superintendent demonstrated the superintendent's capacity to take the lead in implementing economic initiatives and generating quality business, education, and community partnerships.

### ***Theme 3: Maintaining public schools' position as the number one educational provider***

The township supervisor and the CEO expressed the need for strong public schools. The CEO stated:

“When an executive comes in and they want to locate here, they're going to go to the schools and say what's this school's benchmark for my kid who's going to school here? ...I just think they have to produce the best student... They have the ability to create workers that will improve the economic vitality of the area.”

The CEO shared concerns over state and federal unfunded mandates straining district budgets. All the leaders viewed charters and vouchers as detrimental to public schools and saw magnet and consolidation as geographically impractical.

### ***Analysis of Academic Excellence vs. Economic Gardening***

These leaders regarded the school's academic programs and the need for workforce preparedness as being directly connected. Unlike Aphrodite, the Hermes superintendent perception of Academic Excellence included knowledge of the expectations and skills needed in the work place as a vital part of students' education.

### ***Summary Analysis of Academic Excellence vs. Economic Gardening***

The strength of the Hermes school district case was the common philosophical perspective regarding the role of the school district in promoting workforce development and local employability of its students. The Hermes superintendent, much like the Dionysus superintendent, created his own opportunities through taking action and reaching out to local business leaders regarding local workforce training opportunities for his students. This case represents, along with the Dionysus case, the superintendent as a leader of economic development and community growth.

## 5.2.6 Athena School District

### *Statistical and background data*

The Athena school district ranked second as the poorest school district in the study and was the 11<sup>th</sup> poorest school district in the state as per the superintendent. The school district's student enrollment dropped 12% from 2,501 to 2,200 from 2000 to 2010, which represented a lower percentage decline than experienced by the Athena community at 14%. The ADM per child cost was \$8,127.97 for the 2012-2013 school year (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2012). The Athena district received 76% of its revenue from state and federal funding sources. The district lost over \$2 million in state and federal funds for the 2011-2012 school year, which caused it to eliminate 8.5 positions through attrition to balance the 2011-2012 budget. The Athena district was struggling to limit lay-offs and maintain programs because of the cuts in state funding. While other districts were raising class sizes to a reasonable rate of 21 to 22 in the intermediate elementary, Athena was already pushing 30 students per class in 3<sup>rd</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> grades.

### *Theme 1: Promoting economic development and community vitality*

The Athena superintendent's main economic development efforts related to tax abatement or tax relief. The CEO of the Chamber of Commerce was focused on workforce preparation and filling existing job opportunities in the local community. The CEO expressed concerns about the quality of student preparations stating:

“The school districts give us kids, and we've got to send them to remedial school to get them into an apprentice program.”

The Athena school district was the only district to discuss creating a major curricular focus to promote the engineering and STEM professions in the school district. The superintendent pointed to a major commitment on the part of the district to deliver the “Engineering is Elementary” curriculum in all three of the district's elementary schools. Also, the Athena district used the Business Week curriculum with the eleventh graders.

In contrast, the Athena city manager saw the issue of economic development and maintaining fiscal stability as a two-fold question stating:

“1) We have to encourage people to grow the economy and we have to invite in businesses. 2) We have to encourage residents to come in and take hold.”

### ***Deductive content analysis***

The Athena superintendent, CEO, and city manager all demonstrated tendencies toward Economic Gardening, but there existed a communications disconnect as represented in the previous paragraphs.

### ***Analysis of Academic Excellence vs. Economic Gardening***

While all three leaders expressed an Economic Gardening tendency, there existed a disconnect as to the purpose and actions necessary to improve the economic situation in the local community and region. At some point in time, these leaders need to be on the same page to move forward, which is not currently the case.

### ***Finding quality candidates (part 3)***

As with the Dionysus fabricator and the Aphrodite fabricator, the Chamber of Commerce CEO discussed lack of skills in mathematics and reading. As observed in the prior cases, the students most likely to apply for these types of positions may fall into either the “At-Risk” or Special Education SLD populations.

### ***Theme 2: The quality of networking and collaboration among leaders***

The Athena case demonstrated plenty of communication and a willingness to meet and discuss issues, but limited collaboration and coordination of efforts. The superintendent discussed being on the Chamber of Commerce board and the boards of several other organizations. The superintendent attended several economic development summits and other discussions. The superintendent pointed to the many funding opportunities provided to the district through local businesses but had yet to meet the new CEO of the Chamber of Commerce and only briefly met with the Athena city manager.

### ***Analysis of Academic Excellence vs. Economic Gardening***

One simple question: “How can a superintendent be on the Chamber of Commerce board and not have met the new CEO of the Chamber of Commerce?” The superintendent made connections to the business and community leaders in his district and sent at least one mathematics teacher into the Zeus business leader’s plant to learn about that business’ workforce preparedness needs. These three leaders wanted to lead economic revitalization but they need to connect on a local level and coordinate their efforts.

### ***Theme 3: Maintaining public schools’ position as the number one educational provider***

The Athena CEO stated:

“Who’s the customer? Is it the student, the parents, or the employer? If you ask most educators, they’ll tell you it’s a combination of the student and the parent. If they’re happy, my life’s happy...But in the end, it’s really the employer who is the end customer.”

The Athena CEO and the city manager aligned with the other business leaders in calling for improved career readiness and better basic skills development as the way to ensure the local district’s position as the number one education provider in the community.

When looking at school choice options, the superintendent pointed to the issue of race and economic diversity as being a sticking point among members of the possible communities involved. The CEO presented a position of pro-consolidation or sharing of services, but anti-charter schools and vouchers. The city manager jumped from position to position being for vouchers and against magnet schools options and consolidation.

### ***Analysis of Academic Excellence vs. Economic Gardening***

In the Athena case, the interviewed leadership’s lack of communication resulted in the non-education focused leaders having opinions that conflicted with themselves. With this type of limited understanding, the superintendent faces difficulties building support and collaboration among his business and community counterparts. The CEO had a clear lens on the school’s role in the community, but the community leader who controls grant funding and community development lacked that level of insight. On the other side of the problem, the superintendent

and the CEO's lack of communication could translate into missed opportunities for both stakeholder groups.

### ***Summary Analysis of Academic Excellence vs. Economic Gardening***

Everyone presented a pro-economic growth attitude but no one was communicating. Everyone was going to meetings, but not connecting to the other leaders. A concerted effort to make connections and coordinate efforts among the leadership of the different economic stakeholders was lacking in this case study.

#### **5.2.7 Zeus School District**

##### ***Statistical and background data***

The Zeus school district was the poorest school district in the study and one of the poorest districts in the state of Pennsylvania with a poverty level of 22.2%. The Zeus school district lost 313 students from 2000 to 2010 or 25.7% of its school population versus a loss of 15.5% for the community as a whole. The labor force for the major employers in the district did not live in the district. The people in the high paying manufacturing positions in the district lived in the surrounding municipalities. The Zeus district's ADM cost per student was \$11,513.79, the highest in the study region and the county (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2012). Approximately 80% of the Zeus district's revenues came from state and federal sources. The district lost \$2.2 million in funding for the 2011-2012 school year and eliminated six positions through furlough and five through attrition to balance the 2011-2012 budget. The current state funding cuts have presented serious fiscal issues for the Zeus school district.

##### ***Theme 1: Promoting economic development and community vitality***

The Zeus school district was the only school district in the study with a significant revenue producing enterprise. The Zeus district operated the Child Care Information Services, which supplies information services to local childcare providers and operated an early intervention program called the Family Center. These operations, combined with revenues from housing the county Head Start program, accounted for approximately 5% of the district's operating revenue, translated to approximately \$750,000 a year in income to the district.

### ***District efforts not aligned to business needs***

The Zeus district participated in Tax Increment Financing and tax abatement programs and initiative to buy local to support the businesses in the region, but businesses responded that they need quality workforce applicants. The roll form plant manager needed applicants that can pass a basic third grade skills test, a pre-employment physical, and actually show up for work. The Zeus city manager clearly worked with the business leaders to promote and develop the area's workforce. The city manager stated:

“If the folks that live here can get the training, they'll be able to... get these jobs and stay here. They stay here, the tax base grows, local economy grows, and it stabilizes the community... College isn't for everybody. So, what are we doing for the ones that college might not be for?”

The disconnect between the business and community leaders and the superintendent was reflected in the deductive content analysis, which had the superintendent at a +.100 Economic Gardening tendency, the plant manager at +.707 and the city manager at +.814.

### ***Academic Excellence vs. Economic Gardening***

The Zeus superintendent's comments relatively balanced his position between the Academic Excellence and Economic Gardening strategies. Throughout the interview process, the superintendent represented a position focused on raising student achievement and dealing with the district's financial issues. The plant manager and city manager both focused on improving the workforce and building the local economic climate.

### ***Finding quality candidates (part 4)***

As with Athena, Aphrodite, and Dionysus, the students most likely to apply for the local skilled labor positions may fall into the “At-Risk” and Special Education SLD populations. Even with the district developing its own revenue streams, the difference in focus coupled with the communication issues from theme 2 created a concern that the children may be ready for the workforce but not the local workforce.

### ***Outlier: Drugs***

The Zeus plant manager uses a pre-employment physical/drug test to eliminate questionable candidates stating, “After they are told about the pre-employment physical, many just never come back.”

### ***Theme 2: The quality of networking and collaboration among leaders***

The superintendent, the plant manager, and the city manager had discussions on both the formal and informal levels, but the city manager and plant manager participated in higher quality conversations with other leaders from the surrounding districts. The city manager discussed struggling to get a meeting with the Zeus superintendent to coordinate the providing of funds for the summer welding skills camp being facilitated by the Dionysus superintendent and several local business leaders. The city manager and the plant manager both clearly coordinated their efforts. While the superintendent complained about the lack of action and the need to move the issues forward, the plant manager and city manager actively pursued other willing educational leaders. The Zeus city manager discussed an accessibility issue with the superintendent in this statement:

“I’ve been playing phone tag with the Zeus superintendent for the last couple of days now. I wanted to find out if he’s on board with promoting at least this summer welding program.”

### ***Analysis of Academic Excellence vs. Economic Gardening***

All the leaders believed in having discussions and collaboration. All the leaders expressed concerns about the lack of accomplishing substantive actions goals. The city manager and plant manager demonstrated a proactive response and physically went out and made contacts in the neighboring schools even though they could not meet with their home district’s superintendent.

### ***Theme 3: Maintaining public schools’ position as the number one educational provider***

The city manager and plant manager discussed workforce development and diversifying the curriculum to assist in the training and recruitment of the quality workforce candidates. The city manager stated:

“By diversifying the curriculum to accommodate those things that we’re referring to...the manufacturing base is coming back...How do we adjust the curriculum and how to we adjust the mindset?”

The lack of communication among the leaders resulted in a lack of consensus regarding school choice initiatives even though both the city and plant managers agreed that charter schools and voucher options hurt the local district. With a 25% decline in enrollment over the last ten years, all the leaders viewed consolidation and magnet type programs as strong possibilities.

### ***Analysis of Academic Excellence vs. Economic Gardening***

The superintendent supported the concept of keeping the curriculum relevant and expressed working to change the focus toward more workforce-related curriculum on top of the PSSA preparation focus stating:

“We’re getting people ready to be rocket scientists, well, that’s fine, but everybody can’t be a rocket scientist. Somebody needs to do skilled labor.”

The question remained regarding if and when these types of changes would occur. Funding issues and other social concerns impacted this district on a daily basis and impeded the ability to move workforce initiatives forward.

### ***Summary Analysis of Academic Excellence vs. Economic Gardening***

Faced with deep cuts in the district’s state funding, the Zeus superintendent was just starting to build the relationships necessary to strengthen the district and support the economic development to improve the district’s economic base. The local business and community leaders were not waiting for the superintendent, they were taking action. If the superintendent views economic development efforts as important to the district, his availability must improve and he needs to proactively promote the necessary relationships.

In assembling the seven cases of the collective study, the researcher worked to establish commonalities and differences (outliers) among the cases that directly supported or reinforced the three themes researched through the interview questions. In the next section, the researcher examined the commonalities and differences to create a basis for the conclusions and recommendations in Chapter VI.

### **5.3 THE COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY**

In Chapter IV, the researcher presented the four types of data created for this study. In section 5.2 of Chapter V, the researcher assembled the seven individual case studies and documented the data that aligned to responses from the other cases and noted individual case anomalies or outliers. In this section, the researcher assembled the collective case study data by statistical data and the three themes presented in Chapter IV. The collective data then was used to generate the conclusions and recommendations for further research presented in Chapter VI.

#### **5.3.1 Background Data**

Examining all seven cases, certain consistencies became evident. All of the school districts experienced substantial funding cuts, the severity of which related approximately to the level of state and federal subsidy the district received. The poorest district, Zeus, experienced a state cut of \$2.2 million because of their high percentage of state and federal funding (See table: Annual Financial Report Data pg. 96). All districts in the study eliminated staff either through attrition or furlough. Dionysus, Athena, Apollo, and Poseidon used their fund balances to balance their 2011-2012 budgets (see pg. 96), but only Poseidon raised taxes three fourths of a mil to close the funding gap (see pg. 192). The statistical background data established that every district experienced substantial funding cuts and reduced staff in some form to assist in balancing their budgets.

### 5.3.2 Theme 1: Promoting economic development and community vitality

**Table 34 Focus and Position of the stakeholder groups**

Stakeholder Group:	Major focus or position:
Superintendents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local tax relief, Tax Abatement, Tax Increment Financing (TIFs) (4 districts)</li> <li>• Limited use of tuition to generate revenues (three districts)</li> <li>• Generated revenue through entrepreneurial activities (2 districts, with one substantial revenue generator)</li> </ul>
Business Leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing a quality product (8 out of 8)</li> <li>• Developing and expanding workforce (8 out of 8)</li> <li>• Working with schools to improve the caliber of students going into the skilled labor workforce (8 out of 8)</li> <li>• Educating parents that their children can make a family supporting wage in local industry as skilled labor (8 out of 8)</li> </ul>
Community Leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote local, train for local employment opportunities, and keep our children in the region</li> </ul>

While the superintendents focused on tax relief, the business leaders expressed significant issues relating to workforce development and the changing of parents’ conceptions of the current manufacturing opportunities in the Olympus Mount Region (table 34). The community leaders created no real consensus but when analyzed, their responses revolved around keeping the community children in the community. Only the Zeus school district created an effective revenue generator in their early childhood activities (See section 4.6.3.1). The Dionysus district attempted to create a charter school option, but the school board voted against it (see section 4.6.5.1).

#### **Analysis of Theme I**

The superintendents were focused on balancing the budget and using tax relief to promote economic development. The business and community leaders need the school to do three things well: 1) actively promote careers in established businesses in the local and regional area, 2) educate parents as to the options other than college for finding family sustaining careers, and 3) improve the skills sets of students who are candidates for the local highly skilled workforce.

### *Outliers: Drugs and Lack of Taxation Concerns*

The two major outliers that arose from the data were drugs and a lack of business concern with taxation levels. Business leaders struggled to attract workforce candidates who could pass either a pre-employment physical or drug test. While excessive taxation could be an issue, it failed to be a concern with the current levels of taxation.

#### **5.3.2.1 Deductive content analysis for the collective case study**

The researcher documented the complete explanation of how the content analysis was constructed on page 80 of Chapter III and in sections 4.4.1 and 4.4.2 starting on page 100 of Chapter IV. The researcher reported all of the tendency scores on p. 109 of Chapter IV and included several scores in select case studies in section 5.2 of this chapter. For convenience of analysis, the table from page 109 is duplicated here with the results of the content analysis process.

**Table 35 Deductive content analysis scores**

School District:	Superintendent	Business Leader	Community Leader
Apollo	+.143	+.643	+.905
Dionysus	+.294	+.826	+.733
Poseidon	+.882	+1.00	+.905
Aphrodite	-.400	+.654	+1.00
Hermes	+.923	+.765	+.913
Athena	+.375	+.737	+.833
Zeus	+.100	+.707	+.814
Penn-Northwest CEO	N/A	+.666	N/A

The content analysis score chart (table 35) and the content analysis diagrams (figure 3 and figure 4, page 110; figure 5, page 111) displaying the tendencies on the continuum from Academic Excellence to Economic Gardening illustrated one obvious issue: superintendents focus on many aspects of a school district. Therefore, superintendents' emphasis and strengths may be in numerous areas. The business and community leaders interviewed expressed a primary concern, which related specifically to the health of their business or local municipality. Business and community leaders' Economic Gardening tendencies put them in a position to understand

the economic issues of the region. Superintendents need to develop a frame of reference through other experiences.

### ***Summary analysis regarding Academic Excellence vs. Economic Gardening***

With N.C.L.B and the emphasis on Annual Yearly Progress, superintendents' primary focus has been academic achievement as it relates to the PSSA. The federal and state governments designed the law to improve college and career, but is career readiness being lost in the push to promote academic achievement? The business and community leaders interviewed presented serious concerns over the workforce preparedness of their average applicant. The Academic Excellence strategy as a workforce development tool was a mistake to many of these business owners because their applicant pool grew weaker over the last 10 years rather than stronger. As stated in the individual case studies, the pool of workforce candidates for these manufacturers may consist primarily of "At-Risk" Regular Education and SLD Special Education students who struggle to achieve proficiency on the PSSA and other standardized achievement tests.

### **5.3.3 Theme 2: The quality of networking and collaboration among leaders**

As discussed in Chapter IV, section 4.6.4.1, all of the superintendents interviewed held discussions with stakeholders from the business and community leaders. While the Apollo and Athena superintendents sought ways to turn these relationships into funding for projects, the Zeus and Aphrodite superintendents felt the discussions had to lead to action, which did not always occur. This sentiment carried through to many of the business and community leaders (see section 4.6.4.2 and 4.6.4.3). The CEO of Penn-Northwest stated:

"I think that people love to talk about these issues. It's execution that's important. It was great to talk about it at that event but where was the execution afterwards?"

The major outlier in theme 2 demonstrated the effectiveness of this type of execution. Two superintendents took action to facilitate programs and opportunities.

### ***Analysis of Outliers***

As summarized in section 4.6.4.4, the Dionysus and Hermes superintendents established the strongest level of connectivity and developed the strongest relationships with the business

leaders in their districts. The data showed that one person could be the catalyst to promoting stronger networking and collaboration. Examination of the relationship diagrams for both of these superintendents showed their connections were based on personal one-on-one contact to bring about the two major projects discussed in section 4.5.9 cross case analysis of the relationship diagrams. Figures 15, 16, and 17, pages 124, 125, and 126 respectively, illustrate that the quality of the relationships made a difference in the business leader's perceptions of the superintendent. The Hermes and Dionysus superintendents had developed direct contacts with business and industry leaders. Both the Dionysus and Hermes superintendents went directly to the stakeholders involved to promote their projects (see figure 18, page 190 and figure 12, page 121).

The Dionysus and Hermes superintendent relationships contrasted directly with the Athena and Poseidon superintendents whose relationship diagrams illustrated more formal interactions of the superintendents with business and community leadership (see figure 13, page 122 and figure 10, page 119).

The Athena superintendent relationship diagram illustrated his many board memberships and connections to established business and community organizations, but it revealed the weakness of his relationships with the city manager and the current CEO of the Chamber of Commerce. While the Athena superintendent belonged to many organizations and parlayed those connections into funding for the district (see section 4.5.7), he had not developed the relationships into long-term interactive collaborations at the time of the interviews.

The Poseidon superintendent demonstrated a strong formal relationship diagram, but with the exception of the United Way Early Childhood Summit, had not developed these relationships with the local business leadership with the same quality or depth of relationships as discussed by other business leaders interviewed.

The comparison of the Aphrodite and Hermes superintendents illustrated another contrast in the quality of relationships. Both in their second year as superintendent, the Aphrodite and Hermes superintendents' tendencies toward Academic Excellence and Economic Gardening respectively demonstrated how personal predispositions could impact the ability to develop strong relationships with the other stakeholders groups. Examining the Aphrodite tendency chart and then his relationship diagram demonstrated the impact of his predispositions of his business and community relationships (see figure 6 page 112 and figure 11 page 120).

The Aphrodite superintendent stated the economic development meetings he participated were ineffective. In examining all of the data collected for the Aphrodite superintendent, the reasons for the tenuousness nature of this superintendent's relationships became apparent. When looking at the Hermes superintendent's tendency and relationship diagrams (see figure 7, page 112 and figure 12, page 121), his abilities to relate to and develop strong relationships with his business counterparts were clearly evident. The Hermes superintendent's diagrams revealed that strong relationships with the business leaders in the local community were not necessarily predicated on the existence of strong relationships to the elected community leadership.

### *Changes to Academic Programs*

The business leaders expressed a strong concern for basic skills development, work ethic, and job skills development. Only the Athena superintendent discussed implementation of significant curricular adjustments because of discussions with local business and community leaders.

### *Economic Gardening Tendency Data*

While the data was not definitive, the relationship and tendency data regarding the Economic Gardening strategy demonstrated a strong correlation to the effectiveness of the superintendents in developing quality relationships with business and community leaders. While all the superintendents had interactions with local business leaders, the lack of action led to frustration for many of the stakeholders.

### **5.3.4 Summary of Theme 3: Maintaining public schools' position as the number one educational provider**

The business leaders were unified in their responses that to remain as the number one source of education in the community, the school needed to create the best educated, career ready, and trained student possible (see section 4.6.5.2). On the other side of the equation, the community responses reflected a diverse set of needs from "I don't know" to developing a sense of community pride and working to grow the community. Four of the community leaders stressed focusing on the training of the community's children to fill the local workforce needs and be globally competitive (see section 4.6.5.3).

In discussing how either the business leaders or the community leaders could assist the school in becoming more competitive, business leaders provided options such as providing job shadowing opportunities, tours, job descriptions, and work with the school to stay aligned to local workforce needs (see section 4.6.5.2). The community leaders envisioned their roles as staying in communication with the school leaders and assisting in any way they could (see section 4.6.5.3). The researcher uncovered another concern in the relationships between community leaders and superintendents. The weakest relationships illustrated in the relationship diagrams occurred between the community leaders and the superintendents. In spite of this weakness, the community leaders were open to do everything they could to assist in maintaining the quality of the local public schools.

### *School options*

In examining the responses regarding school choice options (see sections 4.6.5.1, 4.6.5.2, and 4.6.5.3), the majority of leaders, regardless of stakeholder group, were not in favor of charter schools, did not support vouchers, and wanted stronger school options through regional and magnet programs. While the superintendents expressed concerns regarding the demographic, geographic, and fiscal problems of school consolidation, seven out of eight business leaders and five out of seven community leaders either supported consolidation outright or viewed it as inevitable. The business leaders thought that consolidation would create more options and opportunities for the students of the Olympus Mount Region and would present a possible cost savings to the taxpayers. The community leaders viewed school consolidation as necessary but something the public would be against. The Athena superintendent's comment in section 4.6.5.1 reflected the concerns of the community leaders and some of other the superintendents:

“What's the old saying? What's the hardest animal in Pennsylvania to kill? The school mascot.”

Two business leaders expressed one relevant outlier of promoting the use of vouchers to improve school programs through competition between public and private schools. The Dionysus fabricator stated:

“It gives the public school a challenge to have a better school so the parents won't send their kids to private school.”

### ***Academic Excellence vs. Economic Gardening***

Businesses envisioned stronger schools through relevant curriculum that would build a stronger local workforce. The community leaders envisioned the schools as a way to attract people (see section 5.3.2) and keep the community's children in the local area thereby strengthening the community. Both business and community leaders expressed a willingness to be active partners in working to strengthen local public schools. These responses reflected both a desire to promote Academic Excellence and engage in Economic Gardening to strengthen the local economy. The options of school choice were not supported by the three stakeholders groups except when viewed as a way to improve student-learning opportunities within the public school setting.

#### **5.3.5 Collective Case of Cases Summary**

Chapters IV presented the majority of the relevant data needed to compile both the individual cases and the collective case study. The three themes created from the interview questions formed the basis for the data analysis and served to uncover the major issues of the stakeholder groups.

Theme 1: promoting economic development and community vitality, uncovered a major concern of business leaders and a major concern of the local community leaders and generated these sub-themes:

##### **Business leaders concerns**

- Workforce development and equipping high school graduates with the basic mathematics and literacy skills to function at the entry level, in either an actual work environment or technical school training.
  - College is not for everyone.
  - There are highly skilled labor positions that are family supporting available in the local community.
  - Parents need to be educated about the available career options in the local community.

##### **Community leaders concerns**

- Public schools need to find ways to promote the local community and help the community growth.
- Public schools need to assist in keeping our children in the local community after they graduate from either high school or college.

- Public schools need to train students to fill the positions readily available in the local community.

### **Outliers**

- Students need to pass a drug test to be considered for the opportunities available in the local community.
- Keeping local taxes under control is important, but providing high quality and well-trained workforce candidates is the number one concern.
- Are the majority of applicants for fabricating and manufacturing skilled labor positions primarily from Regular Education “At-Risk” or SLD Special Education student population, who are more likely to not be proficient on the PSSA or other standardized achievement tests?

Theme 2: The quality of networking and collaboration among leaders, generated these sub-themes:

- The majority of leaders interviewed participated in some form of discussion with their business, education, or community counterparts.
  - Leaders found these discussions useful in staying aware of each other’s needs and specifically business’ workforce needs.
  - Many leaders want to get past the talking stage to the planning, then ultimately the action stage.
  - Several superintendents had developed strong connections to business and community leaders through participation in business and community organizations.
    - Two superintendents had created quality business, education, and community partnerships through development and use of their personal contacts, friendships, and community social organization memberships.
  - In spite of participation in business, education, and community discussions, only one superintendent made a significant curriculum change to his instructional program.
  - The predisposition for Academic Excellence or Economic Gardening impacted the relationships and interactions of the leaders interviewed.
  - The community’s leaders wanted to be involved but were frequently underutilized in the discussions between business and education.

Theme 3: maintaining public schools’ position as the number one educational provider, generated the following sub-themes:

- The business leaders interviewed provided the following suggestions to strengthen public schools position as the number educational provider in the local community:

- Public schools need to create the best-educated, career ready, trained student as possible.
- The business leaders interviewed are willing to support the schools through various joint activities to promote awareness of opportunities and workplace expectations.
- Communities saw the public school as strengthening their position in the community through:
  - Public schools need to develop a sense of community pride in the students of their community.
  - While unsure of what immediate action to take, the community leaders interviewed are willing to sit and discuss issues and work with the schools to strengthen the community and the local public schools.
- All three stakeholder-groups acknowledged the value of collaboration among school districts to create quality educational opportunities for the districts' students.
- Discussions about school consolidation in the region generated responses from avid support to recognition of the inevitable. The superintendents and community leaders expressed concerns that the general public would have several issues with consolidation and that those issues would need addressed if consolidation was to be considered.

These three themes and their analysis points are discussed in the next chapter, Chapter VI, Conclusions and Recommendations.

## 6.0 CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study was designed to explore the roles of business, education, and community leaders in promoting economic development. In investigating the actions taken by all three stakeholder groups to develop their local and regional economies, the researcher examined the following factors: what efforts were being made to promote economic development by each of the different stakeholder groups, the role of public education in promoting economic development, the level of involved collaboration among the stakeholders, and efforts to strengthen the local public school as the main educational provider in the community.

The initial research questions guiding the research were as follows:

*Question #1:* How does the literature frame two possible long-term economic development strategies: “Academic Excellence” and “Economic Gardening”?

*Question #2:* How do local leaders, including superintendents, support education for local economic development?

*Question #3:* To what extent does professional and social networking provide support for education and local economic development?

*Question #5:* How are these local leaders responding to current education initiatives being promoted by Pennsylvania’s legislative leaders?

The collective case study consisted of seven individual case districts making up the region of study. The four types of case data were analyzed and presented in Chapter IV. The researcher used the four types of data to assemble the seven individual cases and the case-of-cases study in Chapter V. With the extensive quantity of interview questions and prompts, the researcher used Robert Stake’s case study techniques to generate three main themes to analyze the interview data (2006). The researcher created the following themes:

1. Theme 1: promoting economic development and community vitality
2. Theme 2: The quality of networking and collaboration among leaders

3. Theme 3: maintaining public schools' position as the number one educational provider

The responses to the interview questions were placed into the appropriate theme and compared to the other responses for corroboration or deviations among the interviewees. Chapter IV discussed the significant trends and outliers found in the interview data, the development of collaborative relationships, and each interviewee's tendency toward either the Academic Excellence or Economic Gardening strategy. In Chapter V the researcher analyzed the four types of data and created each of the individual case studies and the collective case study. In Chapter VI the researcher discussed the results, generated conclusions, made recommendations for action, and presented options for future research.

## **6.1 RELATIONSHIP OF THE THEMES TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Relating the themes to the research questions:

Theme 1 (Promoting economic development and community vitality) addressed research questions two and three that examined the actions being taken by districts to ensure the economic stability and growth in their local communities. The theme examined what the three stakeholder groups envisioned as important to promote economic development and exposed a major difference among district-enacted practices and practices deemed necessary by the business and community leaders.

Theme 2 (The quality of networking and collaboration among leaders) directly related to the third research question focusing on the Academic Excellence and Economic Gardening strategies.

Theme 3 (Maintaining public schools' position as the number one educational provider) served to reinforce the responses to themes one and two and relate these responses to the educational options promoted by the governor and legislature of Pennsylvania.

Using the data generated through statistical documents and the interviews, the researcher formulated the following results.

## 6.2 DISCUSSION OF STUDY RESULTS BY THEME

Theme 1: The results of the research revealed conflicted thinking among the stakeholders, which, if addressed, could promote stronger relationships among the schools and the businesses and communities that support the school. The school leaders revealed in Theme 1 that with few exceptions, they focused primarily on tax relief as a method of promoting economic development. The business and community leaders focused entirely on workforce development and finding ways to acquire qualified candidates to fill positions requiring basic mathematics, reading, and problem solving skills.

Even though the stakeholders held discussions and everyone was working to network and collaborate, a disconnect remained between the superintendents and the business and community leaders. The CEO of the Chamber of Commerce related a position that reflected many of the business leaders' opinions:

“They (the school districts) get PSSA testing, and when you talk to them about workforce development, workforce development issues, it's a total disconnect.”

While business and community leaders discussed the need for quality schools to attract residents, they wanted schools to promote job shadowing, work release, and internship programs, as well as partner with business and community leaders to promote local employment opportunities in the region. This concern is the centerpiece of the Economic Gardening strategy. Gibbons (2006), Hamilton-Pennell (2011) and Roth (2009) discussed the need for collaboration of the three stakeholders to promote local economic development and design educational opportunities to prepare people to meet workforce expectations. Peel (1988) and Thompson (2002) discussed this type of conflict in their studies. Thompson (2002) discussed the need for a common vocabulary and discussions that lead to action. It is clear from this study that just communicating, in most cases, does not lead to understanding what the other stakeholders need.

Example: Half of the business leaders specifically discussed the inability to obtain workforce candidates who could pass a drug test. Not one superintendent discussed the drug issue or the need for making their students aware of the possible employment issues stemming from casual drug use. Some superintendents talked about the need to teach students how to read a ruler and do basic math, but the issues of job preparedness skills and the development of soft employment skills were not an emphasis.

Conclusion: Tying in the fact that school districts have found a limited number of ways to generate their own revenues, e.g. building rentals and limited sales of instructional services, superintendents must work to actively promote the quality of the economic climate of their local and regional community. Superintendents must actively pursue the development of quality relationships and understand the impact of their instructional decisions on the local businesses and community as a whole. Every stakeholder presented the issue of young people leaving the area to find family sustaining work opportunities. Michael Dahl (2010) and Gordon Dahl (2002) discussed the migration of skilled labor from one region to another to find suitable employment. Michael Dahl (2010) discussed how workers wanted to return home but quality employment opportunities prevented them from coming home. Superintendents must promote current local employment opportunities to help ease the exodus from the Mount Olympus Region.

The two following recommendations for action stem directly from the disconnect between the superintendent and the business and community leaders:

- Superintendents and school districts must actively promote and develop a quality workforce.
- Superintendents and school districts must examine the level of basic mathematics, reading, and writing skill development of the students most likely to apply for highly skilled labor positions.

Participating in discussions with business and community leaders on a local and regional level must lead to action.

Theme 2: Everyone held discussions with the other stakeholders in the business, education, and community triangle, but the results of the interview data revealed several concerns over individual follow-through and action being taken. Several of the superintendents expressed the opinions of the Zeus superintendent in that:

“We’ve got to get past the discussion point to actually putting something together and saying, ‘This is the plan,’ you need that and we’re going to do this.”

This concern was realized in the fact that only the Athena superintendent enacted significant curricular changes to improve his students’ awareness of STEM related professions.

One key factor uncovered by the research related to the type of relationships. Many of the superintendents attended workforce summits and other large convention-like programs that brought together large numbers of business leaders, educators, and community leaders. At least

two superintendents were on the board of the local chamber of commerce and various other oversight committees. The superintendents who developed the strongest working relationships with the business and community leaders were the Dionysus and Hermes superintendents who worked on a more personal level with local business leaders to achieve their goals. Peel (1988), Thompson (2002), and Kerr (1994) supported this type of personal commitment level to the local business workforce and economic development needs in their research.

The literature gave several examples of organizations designed specifically to promote and develop quality workforce candidates: e.g. The Armstrong County Forum for Workforce Excellence (Armstrong Educational Trust, 2010) and the Alliance for Education in San Bernardino California (Thomas, 2006-2010). These organizations stem from individuals taking the lead and making programs happen. In the case of San Bernardino, CA, it was the school district superintendent who took the lead. In the Mount Olympus Region, that role fell to the Dionysus superintendent who started the Summer Skills Welding Camp. Many of the leaders interviewed discussed the apprehension of other participants to commit funds and services to the program. The Dionysus superintendent took the lead, generated support for the project and followed through. Peel (1988) expressed that business leaders needed to experience the district's commitment to supporting business' needs through a strong dialogue being promoted by the district superintendent. Thompson (2002) stated "Schools must be seen as a primary contributor to human capital development and not just as an expenditure" (p. 85). Kerr (1994) expressed that a primary responsibility of the superintendent was to develop a school district that was responsive to the needs of the local businesses. Peel (1988), Kerr (1994), and Thompson (2002) all saw cooperation among the three stakeholder groups as crucial to building a strong local and regional economy.

This study's data analysis supports their findings and places a stronger emphasis on the need for the local superintendent to take the lead and act as the catalyst for programs and the creation of educational programs that prepare students for local employment opportunities.

The following recommendation for action stem directly from the interview data from the superintendent and the business and community leaders:

- Superintendents must take the lead in promoting business, education, and community partnerships.

As clearly seen in the literature and demonstrated by the data from this study, businesses and community leaders would rather work around unresponsive school leadership than wait for that leadership to take action. Proactive superintendents' projects such as the Dionysus superintendent's Summer Skills Camp and the Hermes superintendent's work-release program were well received by business and community leaders. Until the local superintendent takes the lead, businesses will find other ways to meet their needs and that could mean collaborating with training sources other than the public education system.

Theme 3: Questions on how to maintain the local public schools as the number one educational provider brought responses reflecting the concerns for developing the workforce, creating the best educated students possible, and finding ways to keep the community's children in the local area after graduation. All of the business and community leaders stated the need for quality public schools to provide skilled labor candidates and to draw in other quality workforce applicants. This position was supported in the positions of Peters (2001), George W. Bush (2006), and Thomas Freidman (2007) that education is the driving force behind economic development. Northway (2009) discussed how the areas with the highest quality education are also the areas with the highest level of economic development. The business and community leaders interviewed agreed strongly with Kerr (2010) regarding the development of a "Gold Collar" workforce with strong academics, sophisticated technical skills, and a personal commitment to excellence.

Both the business and community leaders expressed a strong desire to work with the local superintendents to make the local schools strong and generate more quality opportunities for students, which falls into alignment with Gibbons (2006), Hamilton-Pennell (2011), Morgan (2009), Powell (2005), and Roth's (2009) position that businesses, local public schools, and communities must work together to create an environment that is conducive to economic development and growth. The issue that came to light reflected the problem of what superintendents thought promoted educational quality, college preparedness, didn't translate into workforce preparedness. Thompson (2002) discussed the issue of alternate definitions impacting how stakeholders interpreted information and the actions they took to remedy situations. From the interview data collected, an understanding of what academic excellence consists of varies greatly among the leadership groups, as did the ways to create and promote quality public schools.

When considering the school choice options, the business and community leaders generated two main themes. 1) Charter schools and vouchers hurt the public schools through siphoning off funding; 2) regional collaboration or magnet programs would benefit all the majority of schools in the study; and 3) the number of school districts in Pantheon County needed to be consolidated from twelve to four or six larger districts. The position of the majority of the leaders felt that Charter Schools and Vouchers hurt public education. This response was similar to Kerr's (1994) research that Vouchers and Charter School options would not improve the quality of local educational programs. Another correlation to Kerr's (1994) study related to the leaders who favorably viewed vouchers. These leaders viewed vouchers as a way to improve schools through creating regional competition among public and private education providers. Regional magnet programs and other collaborative efforts among the study's school districts was an area where superintendents could work to improve educational opportunities for all the students in the region. Again, these responses reflected congruence with the findings of Kerr's (1994) research study. Efforts by the districts to collaborate to provide Mandarin Chinese and other joint courses were quelled by the budgetary actions of the state legislators. Promoting regional magnet programs requires start-up funding, which was severely curtailed by the state's fiscal issues.

Regarding consolidation, every leader expressed the realization that it could or would happen, but many leaders noted strong public resistance to the elimination of their local public school. The Athena superintendent presented this cautionary theme, which represented many of the other leaders concerns about consolidation:

“What's the old saying? What's the hardest animal in Pennsylvania to kill? The school mascot is what they say and it's true...The white elephant in the room is (who wants) the race and poverty...Some people don't want that. They don't want to see economic diversity. They don't want to see ethnic and racial diversity.”

While everyone interviewed expressed the need for some type of consolidation, the educational and community leaders related impressions that the parents and other community members would not be in favor of consolidation.

The following recommendations for action were generated from the responses to Theme 3: Maintaining quality public schools:

- Strong schools translate directly into strong communities and improved employment opportunities.

- School districts must collaborate to create quality educational opportunities for children.

The researcher found a strong desire to maintain and promote quality public school from all of the leaders interviewed. Strong local public schools mean strong communities and a strong local workforce. The final piece in the economic equation is the preparation of quality superintendent candidates that are trained to deal with these specific issues. Economic recessions are becoming a reoccurring reality for public school districts across the nation. Tying these fiscal limitations to the need to generate stronger better-prepared students creates a challenge for the majority of public school in the state of Pennsylvania. The superintendent preparation programs in the regional and local universities must make changes to their instructional programs to meet these recurring challenges.

The following recommendation for universities sponsoring Superintendent's Letter of Eligibility and school leadership programs:

- University superintendent training programs must design programs that prepare future school leaders to deal with the economic realities facing today's public schools.

In the next section, five examples of the individual superintendent's actions making a positive impact either on student workforce preparedness or the district fiscal stability are presented.

### **6.3 BEST PRACTICES**

The study revealed several exemplar practices that may warrant examination for potential implementation in other school districts. The following programs were implemented and facilitated by the superintendents of each school district. In most cases these programs required the leadership of one key individual to be effectively implemented.

### **6.3.1 Dionysus Superintendent's Facilitation of the Summer Skills Welding Camp**

The Summer Welding Skills Camp was discussed by many of the leaders interviewed. It provided 25 Pantheon County high school juniors and seniors with a four week welding program in which the majority of the participants received certification in ¼", ½", and 1" welding skills. This program had been proposed on several previous occasions by the Aphrodite fabricator but had never been pursued. The program had to overcome several barriers to be implemented, not least of which was resistance from business and educational leaders because of their fear of failure. Involved leaders expressed concerns about raising the necessary funds to pay each participating student a stipend of \$1,000 for successful completion of the camp, finding students who would be willing to participate, and identifying businesses to provide the necessary supplies and support.

The Dionysus superintendent used his business contacts and personal relationships through his Masonic Lodge Brethren to obtain several of the key business sponsors needed to pay for the summer program. Over 20 local manufacturers and fabricators participated in some capacity with the welding camp project. The Dionysus fabricator provided and paid his top welder to serve as an instructor for two weeks of the welding camp. The superintendent also used his connections to his fellow county superintendents to generate interest and promote the skills camp to the students while working with the Pantheon County Career Center to use their training facilities to run the program. He coordinated the administrative coverage for the program and found both a qualified welding instructor and the means for compensation.

Next, he tapped into his connections through the superintendents association and found funding to cover costs and volunteers to oversee the program. He led by example, donating his personal time to serve as resident administrator for the first and fourth weeks of the program and guaranteeing advanced payment of the instructional costs until other regional superintendents could find funding. Every superintendent, and business and community leaders who was asked about the program cited the Dionysus superintendent's efforts as key to facilitating the program. The Dionysus superintendent took action and made the summer welding skills program a reality.

### **6.3.2 Hermes Work Release and Internship Programs**

The creation of a work release and internship program for the Hermes High School juniors and seniors required the leadership of the Hermes superintendent to facilitate the meeting and generate the contacts with local business leaders to implement the program. The Hermes superintendent, who was new to the area, contacted the CEO of the United Way and asked the CEO of Aphrodite-Hermes Development Corporation to assist him in promoting a business luncheon to discuss work release and internship possibilities for his junior and senior students. Working with these leaders, the superintendent met with the local business leaders from the Aphrodite-Hermes Industrial Complex and made the necessary contacts to promote learning opportunities for his students. He experienced one major barrier to his program, the need for a Pennsylvania certified teacher to coordinate the co-op portion of the program. NCLB requires a highly qualified teacher to oversee these types of co-op programs. At the time of the interviews, the Hermes superintendent still was working to resolve the certification issues and get the program past the design stage and implemented.

### **6.3.3 Zeus School District's Revenue Generating Activities**

The Zeus school district represented the only district to effectively generate a significant portion of their funding from local entrepreneurial activities. The district positioned itself as the central hub of the early childhood services for the county and, in doing so, created several funding streams through rental fees and financial services. Prior to the state funding cuts, the district provided these services in collaborations with Head Start and other community outreach programs. After the cuts the district privatized the operations converting the programs into revenue generators for the district. As the district consolidated its programs into one central location, the building used for the Head Start early childhood programs and the Child Care Information Services went from a district expense to a revenue generator as the Head Start and other agencies began to pay rental and information service fees to the district.

#### **6.3.4 Athena Significant Curricular Changes and Educator and Business Collaborations**

The Athena superintendent discussed implementation of the Engineering is Elementary program into the elementary school curriculum. The purpose of the program was to provide a non-fiction reading and science curriculum for elementary school students that promoted the science and engineering fields. The superintendent stated that the program specifically sought to make students aware of the opportunities available for careers in the fields of engineering and science in the context of the science and non-fiction reading curriculums.

Along with integrating exposure to engineering into the elementary curriculum, the superintendent facilitated collaborations between the Zeus roll form company's vice president and the head of the mathematics department to match the high school mathematics curriculum to practical applications in local manufacturing businesses. This type of collaboration promoted business involvement and educator awareness to the training needs of local businesses. While this may not have been the only instance of this type of collaboration, it was the only instance of business and teacher collaboration to imbed relevance through practical application of mathematics instruction discussed in the interview process.

#### **6.3.5 Creation of Revenue Generating Tuition Strategies**

The Poseidon and Dionysus superintendents created district level tuition programs designed to generate revenue for their districts. Both superintendents set the tuition levels well below the state set Average Daily Membership (ADM) rates. The Dionysus rates were \$2,200 for elementary and \$2,400 for secondary students. The Poseidon rates were \$1,200 for elementary and \$2,400 for secondary students. Each district had between 25 and 40 tuition students attending their schools at the time of the interviews.

These five exemplars represent situations where the superintendent took the lead and made choices that impacted the district's bottom line. Individual superintendents, and not the state's superintendent's association (PASA), implemented these programs and financial activities. Many options for continued research exist in this area.

## **6.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study interviewed all three stakeholder-groups that make the business, education, and community partnership model, and may be the first to do so. It revealed significant differences in opinion among the school superintendents and the business and community leaders regarding what actions to take to promote economic development and community vitality. Using the case-of-cases collective case study model, this study created comparisons of perspective tendencies of the stakeholders and these tendencies' impacts on the relationship models of the business, education, and community leaders interviewed.

## **6.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The research's scope and the geographic areas limited the study. This study represents an initial attempt to use a case study model to study the stakeholder-groups responsible for business, education, and community partnerships. The quantity of data collected created challenges for the researcher to filter and organize the data into the three research themes. In and of themselves, many individual data elements could generate strong possibilities for future research.

## **6.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION**

The environments in which they are implemented govern the recommendations for action by the school superintendents. With that limitation, the following actions need to be examined by the superintendents as ways to improve the economic vitality of their local communities and regions and to ensure the fiscal stability of their schools.

1. Superintendents and school districts must actively promote and develop a quality workforce: Superintendents must network with local businesses and community leaders to understand the labor force opportunities for their graduates in the local and regional community. Once these options are defined, superintendents and

district administrators must actively promote these local opportunities to students and their parents. Superintendents must develop training programs for students to master entry-level skills including “employee soft skills” thus ensuring preparedness for local skilled labor positions. (e.g. work ethic, professional responsibilities, and understanding that alcohol and drug use will disqualify workers from being hired or be grounds for termination).

2. Superintendents and school districts must examine the level of basic mathematics, reading, and writing skill development of the students most likely to apply for highly skilled labor positions: Programs designed for college preparation are not adequate to ensure students are prepared for careers in high-tech fields or other skilled labor positions. Superintendents must assess the effectiveness of general track instructional programs designed for non-college bound students to ensure these students can demonstrate the level of mathematics, reading, and writing skills necessary for entry level positions or training programs. The issue of reaching proficiency on high stakes tests is only exacerbated by the ineffectiveness of non-college bound or general track curriculums. These deficiencies must be addressed through the creation of rigorous instructional programs specifically designed to close the skills gaps between college and non-college bound students.
3. Superintendents must take the lead: Superintendents, as the Chief Educational Officers of their school districts, must take a leadership role in the development of business, education, and community partnerships (public/private partnerships). If public schools are to remain the number one instructional provider in the local and regional community, then superintendents must take responsibility for coordinating training programs, developing a quality workforce, and moving the collaborative process forward.
4. Strong schools translate directly into strong communities and improved employment opportunities: Superintendents must realize that Academic Excellence is extremely important to community and business leaders. The local and regional communities are starving for qualified workforce candidates. Superintendents must strive for Academic Excellence that strengthens the local

and regional economic environment. Schools can no longer simply prepare children for higher education.

5. School districts must collaborate to create educational opportunities for children:

School leaders must aggressively pursue stronger educational opportunities for their students. The time to create stronger and more relevant educational opportunities is before viable charter school alternatives are established and not by scrambling around playing catch-up after the fact. Local school districts must partner with other regional training providers to maximize educational opportunities for the region's children. In economic situations, superintendents must be open to consolidation of struggling school districts to create fiscal stability, maintain instructional quality, and improve educational opportunities.

6. University superintendent training programs must design programs that prepare future school leaders to deal with the economic realities facing today's public schools:

Current fiscal realities have changed the purpose of resource management courses to resource development. Universities must change the way they prepare superintendents to lead. Strategic management courses must develop the understanding of today's realities and the need to work with business and community leaders to effectively combat these realities. Schools cannot operate in a vacuum. Universities must provide training on how to promote revenue generation, economic and community development, and the creation of public/private partnerships.

With these recommendations for action established, the next section recommends opportunities for future research.

## **6.7 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

This study's exploratory nature raised many possibilities for future research. The study itself has value and could be regionally reproduced. It could access the level of regional collaboration and interest in the creation of business, education, and community partnerships. A thorough analysis

of the existing interview questions and the deductive content analysis document should be completed to remove unnecessary redundancies and update the content analysis table to reflect regional references to Academic Excellence and Economic Gardening. Potential areas of new research uncovered by this study:

1. The study of current academic programs and the preparation of students not intending to go a to a four-year college program: Business and community leaders presented concerns with the preparedness of students to fulfill local employment needs after completing high school. A study of how districts create their curriculum for non-college bound students would provide insight into the actual effectiveness of these instructional programs to prepare students for employment in highly skilled labor and technical skill based positions.
2. Effectiveness of current career curriculum in raising awareness of employment options outside of traditional college trained careers: Business and community leaders discussed the need for school districts to educate both students and their parents of the opportunities currently available for highly skilled craftsmen in local and regional manufacturing businesses. Surveying students and parents regarding their understanding and willingness to explore career options outside of four-year college programs would provide useful data to improve career education programs and generate an interest in regional and local employment opportunities.
3. Effectiveness of school district's efforts to promote business-education partnerships: This study uncovered the need for superintendents to take the lead in networking and program development to promote local economic development. A study designed to specifically explore existing business-education partnerships would provide insights into the number, type, and quality of these partnerships and their impact on the number and preparedness of students entering the local workforce.
4. Magnet and school consolidation efforts voluntarily undertaken by Pennsylvania school districts: A study of the Central-Valley School District which is the result of the consolidation of the Center and Monaca School Districts in Beaver County, Pennsylvania and other similarly created consolidated school districts would provide insight into how to effectively promote school consolidations. Along with

the study of consolidations, investigating the effective creation of collaborative magnet programs among school districts in Pennsylvania would provide guidelines to promote greater collaborative educational endeavors among school districts in the commonwealth.

Due to the limited amount of research available, the researcher views most of the recommendations for action as potential research options. While outside of the scope of this study, the researcher viewed examination of the specific learning disability (SLD) students' workforce preparedness as a major concern of business leaders because of the high percentage of IEP SLD students participating in career and technical school training programs.

## **6.8 CONCLUSION**

This study explored a topic not generally researched and discussed in academia since the advent of the standards movement of the 1990's. With the exodus of young professionals from the study's region and other similar areas of the state of Pennsylvania, the researcher hoped to gain insight into the root causes and possible solutions to the issue of economic stability in the region. While the financial issues facing the region were not caused by the current education funding practices of the state, they are definitely exacerbated by those practices.

The study region's school districts sent an average of 64% of their graduates to either a two-or four-year college or university and another 4% to trade and technical schools (PDE, Division of Data Quality, 2012) (See table 6.8.1 for the district breakdown). Combining the percentage of students attending post secondary institutions with the Pennsylvania four-year public college graduation rates of 39.7% in four years and 62.1% in six years generated very sobering results. The combined rates translated into 25.4% of the region's high school graduates graduating from college in four years and 39.7% in six years (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2010). Of the region's 738 graduates in 2010-2011, 68% went on to some form of education after high school. Of the 2011 graduates, only 16.9% will graduate and enter the workforce in four years. That percentage increases to 27% when the time to graduate is extended to six years. That means, of the 2011 school year's 738 graduates, 539 will enter the workforce with only a high school diploma, or limited post secondary education (table 34). Because of

businesses’ dependency on basic mathematics, reading, and writing skills, Pennsylvania public schools must be conscious of their student’s skill development in regards to the needs of the local businesses and employment opportunities<sup>10</sup>.

**Table 36 The Study Region’s Graduate versus the Graduation Rates of Students Enrolled in Pennsylvania’s Four Year Public Universities**

District:	Total Number of Graduates:	Number of students attending college and/or technical school:	% of Graduates attending 2 or 4 year Colleges and Universities:	% of Graduates attending some form of post-secondary education:	% of students who will graduate in 4 years:	# of students who will graduate in 6 years:
Apollo	150	121	80.7%	84.0%	20.6%	32%
Dionysus	81	58	71.6%	71.6%	16%	28.3%
Poseidon	92	70	76.1%	80.4%	19.5%	30.4%
Aphrodite	107	65	60.7%	60.7%	15%	24.2%
Hermes	111	67	60.4%	60.4%	15.3%	24.3%
Athena	153	98	64.1%	71.2%	16.3%	25.5%
Zeus	44	19	43.5%	54.5%	11.3%	18.2%
Total:	738	498	64%	68%	16.9%	27%

A significant majority of high school graduates will not have a four-year college degree to build their career upon. This brings to question, what has the push for educational reforms via school choice and making Annual Yearly Progress done for these children? What are the schools and communities doing to support these children? Will taking funds from established public education providers improve these children’s chances in finding quality employment and earning a family-supporting wage?

This study has highlighted several of the issues confronting local public schools and the communities that support them and presented some possible solutions. If the purpose of public education is to prepare students for both college and career entry, then school superintendents must make a conscious effort to develop educational programs that produce students ready to meet the rigors of both college and careers. Combined with the economic realities facing the majority of Pennsylvania school districts, it is evident that the school districts that thrive in the current state-funding climate will focus on creating a workforce that meets the needs of the local

<sup>10</sup>(Disclaimer: The researcher chose the Pennsylvania four-year public college and university graduation rate for the sake of discussion only. The graduation rate for students starting in two-year community college programs is significantly lower and the rate for students attending four-year private institutions is significantly higher.)

business and manufacturing base. Collaborative efforts among business, educational, and community leaders that improves a region's existing economic competitiveness could mean the difference between economic stability and fiscal ruin for some school districts in Pennsylvania.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **ANNOTATED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

#### **A.1 FIRST ROUND SUPERINTENDENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

The superintendent interview questions are designed to elicit open and frank responses to the issues facing school district superintendents dealing with the current economic challenges. This appendix will outline the reason for each question, the prompts for follow-up information, and the approximate time expected for the superintendents to answer. (A copy of the actual interview question forms will be included following this section.)

The following questions will be asked of the superintendents. Each question has a brief description of the reasoning behind why it is included.

##### **Questions #1 and #2:**

Question #1 addresses the premise of the problem posed as the reason to research the current school funding issues. If district superintendents don't see the current economic trends and state funding as having an impact on their districts, the research will be rendered unnecessary. If funding gaps do exist, then the severity of these gaps will demonstrate the risks to the districts and their instructional programs.

1. Has your district experienced funding gaps in the budget over the past three years?  
(example: use of fund balance to balance the budget or a deficit requiring borrowing?)

\_\_\_\_\_

- Prompt: If so, would you label them as minimal or substantial?

\_\_\_\_\_

(Minimal means that the funding gaps didn't impact programs or instruction.  
Substantial means they did impact programs or instruction.)

- Prompt: Please describe what you see as the sources of these funding gaps?

Question #1 leads to question #2, which establishes the level of concern faced by each district in the study along with contributing factors that exacerbate the economic situation.

2. Do you think that these revenue issues will be negatively impacting the district in the next 5 years? 10 years? \_\_\_\_\_

- Prompt: If so, do you think the impact will be minor or substantial?

\_\_\_\_\_

- Prompt: Where do you see the financial support you will need coming from?

- Prompt: Do you see a potential breaking point? \_\_\_\_\_

- Prompt: If so, when do you think you will reach that point?

- Prompt: What do you see as major contributing factors?

- (Prompt: What about collective bargaining agreements, health care, or pension expenses?)

Questions #1 and #2 should serve to set the stage for the interview and develop a basis of common concerns for their districts' fiscal futures. (This set of questions should take between five and ten minutes to complete.)

### **Questions #3 and #4:**

The premise of the research is that there is a funding issue faced by these districts. Question #3 and #4 address the district's implementation of cost controlling measures. Question #4 is designed to uncover the adverse effects of the current budget cuts, if they exist. These questions set the foundation for what strategic planning is taking place on an administrative and board level to find workable solutions for these fiscal concerns.

3. Has the district implemented cost cutting measures? \_\_\_\_\_

- Prompt: If so, would you categorize your cost-saving measures as having a short-term or long-term impact? \_\_\_\_\_
  - Prompt: What cost saving measures you have taken?
  - Prompt: Are these cost savings enough to stabilize your funding issues?  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - Prompt: Have these measures impacted your instructional programming?  
\_\_\_\_\_
    - Prompt: If so, how?
  - Prompt: Do you have a prioritization plan for the budget cuts? \_\_\_\_\_
    - Prompt: If so, what types of programs will be first to be sacrificed?
4. If you are making cuts in staffing or programs, how do you see these cuts impacting the district students' college and career readiness in the current school year?
- Prompt: In 5 years?
  - Prompt: In 10 years?
- (Questions 3 and 4 should take five to ten minutes to complete.)

**Questions #5 and #6:**

Questions #5 and #6 examine the strategic (long range) planning of the district's administration and board to meet these fiscal challenges and still maintain and develop instructional programs.

5. Has your district had discussions about the long-term impacts of the current state fiscal policies, (e.g. basic education funding, charter schools, vouchers, pension fund)?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Prompt: What types of options have been discussed?
  - Prompt: How do you feel the parents and community will respond to these options?
  - Prompt: Is raising taxes one of the solutions being considered? \_\_\_\_\_
    - Prompt: If so, will Act 1 be an issue? \_\_\_\_\_
      - ❖ Prompt: Why?
    - Prompt: Do you feel your taxpayers would support a referendum to sustain the district's educational programs? \_\_\_\_\_
      - ❖ Prompt: Why?

6. Is the school board discussing how to maintain quality of instructional programs despite funding deficits? \_\_\_\_\_

- Prompt: If so, what types of solutions are being discussed?
- Prompt: Is anyone outside of the district being included in these discussions?

\_\_\_\_\_

- Prompt: If yes, who else is involved?
- Prompt: Are these other stakeholders supportive of the solutions being considered? \_\_\_\_\_
- Prompt: Do you have any insights into why they are or are not supportive?

Questions #5 and #6 establish what long term solutions are being considered, whether the community would support a referendum, does the community acknowledge the concerns regarding the current and long-term fiscal concerns of the district, and what is their level of commitment? These questions establish the investigative foundation for the implementing of an Economic Gardening strategy, which is based on developing business, education, and community partnerships. The ability to create and sustain such partnerships is directly dependent on the willingness of the stakeholders to be supportive of each other and work together.

(Questions #5 and #6 should take 5 to 10 minutes to complete.)

### **Question #7 and #8:**

Question #7 and #8 examine how the superintendents stay current with the needs of the community and business, whether this interaction impacts academic program design, and the superintendent's involvement in other business and community organizations. These questions come from the previous research done by Cheryl Kelley Thomas in her dissertation *The Role of the Public School Superintendent in Local Economic Development*.

7. As a superintendent, do you stay current with the workforce needs of local businesses and the community? \_\_\_\_\_

- Prompt: If so, what do you do to stay current?
- Prompt: Do you see these approaches productive? \_\_\_\_\_
  - Prompt: If not, what could improve these discussions?
  - Prompt: If so, what made the discussions useful or relevant?

- Prompt: Have you ever attended a business round table or similar discussion of local and regional workforce and economic development? \_\_\_\_\_
  - Prompt: If so, do you feel the meeting was an effective use of your time? \_\_\_\_\_
    - Prompt: If not, why?
    - Prompt: If yes, what did you take away from those discussions?
      - ❖ Prompt: How did the information gathered impact your development of your school district's academic program?

8. As the superintendent, have you been involved with other community government or business organizations? \_\_\_\_\_
- Prompt: If not, why?
  - Prompt: If so, which organizations?
    - Prompt: If you are involved, what do you see as the benefits to this involvement? \_\_\_\_\_

Superintendent involvement in other business or community organizations demonstrates a desire to make connections with other stakeholders whose actions could directly impact the school district.

(Questions #7 and #8 will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.)

**Questions #9:**

Questions #7 and #8 lead directly to question #9. This question investigates the current types of district involvement in local economic development and efforts to ensure a sustainable community tax base. With the establishment of the threat to academic programs, are the districts looking to solve these financing issues long term or only dealing with the immediate economic concerns? Question #9 investigates concerns regarding the implications of working with the local business and community leaders and do superintendents see these types of collaborations as a threat to the academic focus of the school district.

9. Has your school district been involved in supporting local economic development? \_\_\_\_\_
- Prompt: If so, what has your district done to support local economic development?
  - Prompt: Do you find local businesses willing to collaborate with the district?

- 
- Prompt: If so, in what ways?
  - Prompt: If so, have these business leaders' views of the district's role affected the academic programs in your district? \_\_\_\_\_
    - Prompt: If so, do you feel these possible changes benefit your students' academic preparedness or hinder it? \_\_\_\_\_
    - Prompt: Why?

(Question #9 will take 5 to 10 minutes to complete.)

### Questions #10 and #11:

Question #10 examines ways districts may be investigating to become more economically viable through developing their internal capacities to generate revenue. This question looks at the possibility of other revenue options, which may be considered more effective and/or expedient by superintendents and school districts. Of the strategies proposed in the review of the literature, the option of turning public schools into for-profit entities was not a prominent consideration. With the changing legislative and political landscape and the age of the available research, this third option may have some viability and needs to be researched.

10. Have you looked into ways that your district could generate its own revenues?

- 
- Prompt: If not, why?
  - Prompt: If so, what types of business activities are you considering?
  - Prompt: If so, do you feel your board is supportive of these types of activities?

- 
- Prompt: Why?
  - Prompt: Do you see these revenue solutions as being capable of supporting a significant portion of the district's budget? \_\_\_\_\_
    - Prompt: What portion of the district's budget?
      - Prompt: What will it take for the district to sustain these solutions?

As superintendents and their school districts are faced with competition from private for-profit educational organizations, question #11 examines the superintendents' opinions of the current legislative policies. Also, it examines if superintendents are willing to use these same

policies to develop viable revenue sources.

11. Politicians promote charter schools, vouchers and school consolidation as ways to improve local schools. Do you feel that any of these different educational solutions could be implemented to make your district more economically viable? \_\_\_\_\_

- Prompt: Specifically, What do you feel is the feasibility of partnering with or converting your local district into a charter school?
  - Using vouchers to improve student mobility?
  - Creation of regional magnet programs or consortiums?
  - School consolidation and school district mergers?

(Questions #10 and #11 may take 5 to 10 minutes or longer depending on the respondents.)

**Question #12:**

Question #12 is designed to generate a pool of key business and community leaders to be interviewed in the second and third rounds.

12. Can you identify two key community leaders who you feel are directly involved in promoting community and economic development and have a strong knowledge of the community and economic development?

- Prompt: Why do you feel this person is a strong candidate for this study?

## A.2 SECOND ROUND, BUSINESS LEADER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The business leaders shall receive the following questions in advance of the interview.

### Questions #1 and #2:

Questions #1 and #2 are general background questions to give the interviewer to the business leader's position in his company or organization. This information will add context to the analysis used to develop the instrumental and multiple case studies.

1. Could you briefly describe your business or organization and what it does?
2. Could you also please identify your current position and its responsibilities with your business, firm, or organization?

(Questions #1 and #2 will take approximately 5 minutes to complete.)

### Questions #3 and #4:

Question #3 examines the strategies and programs that business leaders are implementing. The prompts for question #3 looks into the possible barriers experienced by business leaders and the their level of control over those barriers. Question #4 asked business leaders what course of action is most important in their opinion to economic development and fiscal stability in the local communities and the region.

3. As the region recovers from the current recession, have you implemented any strategies or programs to promote local or regional economic development? \_\_\_\_\_
  - o Prompt: If so, what strategies or programs?
  - o What do you see as barriers to these strategies or programs?
  - o Prompt: Do you feel you have control over these barriers? \_\_\_\_\_
    - Prompt: If so, how? If not, why?
4. What course of action do you see as most important to ensure local and regional fiscal stability and economic growth?
  - o Prompt: Why?
  - o Prompt: Have you been able to assist in making this happen? \_\_\_\_\_
    - Prompt: If so, in what ways?
  - o Prompt: Is the local school district supportive of these ideas? \_\_\_\_\_

- Prompt: If so, in what ways?

(Questions #3 and #4 will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.)

### **Question #5:**

Question #5 relates to the impact of the public schools on the local economy and workforce preparedness. This question establishes if there is a baseline level of concern on the part of the business leaders regarding educational quality. Do the business leaders feel a need to support quality education and public schools in particular?

5. From your perspective, what direct impact, if any, do the local public school districts have on the following:
  - Workforce quality?
  - Economic development?
  - Local tax revenues?
    - Prompt: In what ways could the local school districts do more to support local economic development?

(Question #5 will take approximately 5 minutes to complete.)

### **Question #6:**

Question #6 relates directly to this business leader's personal interests in the local economy and workforce quality. This question directly relates to how much of a personal stake this business leader has in the financial stability and instructional quality of the local school districts. Question #6 lays the groundwork for why businesses may want to partner with local public schools to ensure local economic viability. This is the foundation of the Economic Gardening strategy.

6. Have you experienced any economic impacts from the cuts in education funding to local public schools? \_\_\_\_\_
  - Prompt: If so, have the cuts impacted your business? \_\_\_\_\_
    - Prompt: In what ways?
    - Prompt: If they haven't yet, how would you envision these cuts impacting your business over the next 5 to 10 years? \_\_\_\_\_

(Question #6 will take approximately 5 minutes to complete.)

**Question #7:**

Question #7 investigates whether the local business leaders see the local school district as a potential partner in economic development initiatives. This relates directly to the Economic Gardening strategy discussed in the literature review.

7. Do you see opportunities for school districts to support and promote economic development in your community? \_\_\_\_\_
  - Prompt: If yes, in what ways?
  - Prompt: If no, why not?
- Are you willing to partner with the school district in promoting economic development?  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - If yes, then how would you see this working?
  - If no, why not?

(Question #7 will take approximately 5 minutes to complete.)

**Question #8:**

Question #8 relates back to a research question that arose from Cheryl Kelly Thompson's dissertation *The Role of the Public School Superintendent in Local Economic Development*, which found a major issue was the initiation of quality communications between superintendents and business and community leaders.

8. As a business leader, have you ever had discussions with the local public schools about the region's economic and workforce development needs? \_\_\_\_\_
  - Prompt: If not, would you consider it?
  - Prompt: If so, what types of discussion activities do you participate in?
  - Prompt: Do you see these activities as effective? \_\_\_\_\_
    - Prompt: If not, what could improve these discussion activities?
    - Prompt: If so, what made the discussions useful or relevant?
  - Prompt: Have you ever attended a business, education, and community round-table or other similar discussions of local and regional workforce and economic development?  
\_\_\_\_\_

- Prompt: If not, if you were invited to participate would participate in a round table type forum, would you? \_\_\_\_\_
  - Prompt: What do you think could be accomplished?
- Prompt: If so, do you feel the meeting was an effective use of your time?
   
\_\_\_\_\_
  - Prompt: If not, why?
  - Prompt: If yes, what did you take away from those discussions?
    - ❖ Prompt: Did you feel that the educational leaders were responsive to your opinions and positions? \_\_\_\_\_
      - Prompt: Why?

Business leaders involvement in other education or community organizations demonstrates a desire to make connections with other stakeholders whose actions could directly impact local economic development.

(Question #8 will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.)

**Question #9:**

Question #9 asks the business leaders to give ways that school districts could become more economically competitive and self-sustaining. The question then is extended to see if there would be local and regional businesses willing to assist in making school districts more competitive.

9. With more and more educational options available, what do you feel would be necessary for local public school districts to maintain their position as the number one educational source in the local community?
  - Do you see ways that businesses can assist schools in maintaining their educational status? \_\_\_\_\_
    - Prompt: If so, in what ways?
    - Prompt: If not, why?

(Question #9 will take approximately 5 minutes to complete.)

**Question #10:**

Question #10 examines the business leaders' perspectives regarding the current

legislative initiatives being implemented at the state level. This question will reveal how much the business leaders actually understand these different schooling options and how they could impact their local school districts. Also, question #10 examines the level of the business leaders' desire to maintain the economic status quo regarding how schools are funded.

10. What do you think about the following options to make schools more economically viable?

- Prompt: Partnering with or converting your local district into a charter school?
- Prompt: Using vouchers to improve student mobility?
- Prompt: Creation of regional magnet school programs or consortiums?  
(e.g. stem, arts, college preparatory)
  - Prompt: School consolidation and school district mergers?

(Question #10 will take approximately 5 to 10 minutes to complete.)

**Question #11:**

Question #11 is designed to continue the snowball selection process by asking for additional recommendations of community leaders to be interviewed. This question serves to find community leaders who are best suited to be interviewed for this research.

11. Could you please identify two key community people who are the most knowledgeable about the changing needs of the Olympus Mount Region's complex workforce?

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- Prompt: Why do you feel this person is a strong candidate for this study?

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### **A.3 THIRD ROUND COMMUNITY LEADER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

The community leaders will receive the following questions in advance of the interview. These questions are designed to gain insight into what community leaders see as the role of the local public school district in economic development and creating a sustainable tax base.

#### **Question #1:**

Question #1 is a background question to give the interviewer perspective into what role this community leader plays in the local government and his level influence.

1. What is your position in the local community government?
  - Prompt: How influential is your opinion in guiding local economic initiatives?

(Question #1 will take approximately 5 minutes to answer.)

#### **Questions #2, #3, and #4:**

Questions #2, #3, and #4 address the community leader's opinions on what actions are vital to establishing a strong economic development base to support the local community. In the literature review, several researchers found that the weakest link in the economic development process was community leaders that were ill prepared to make major economic decisions.

2. As the region recovers from the current recession, what has the community done to promote economic development?
  - What do you see as barriers to economic growth and stability in your local community?
  - Prompt: Do you feel you have control over these barriers? \_\_\_\_\_
    - Prompt: If so how? If not, why?
3. What course of action do you see as most important to ensure local fiscal stability and to promote local economic growth?
  - Prompt: Have you been able to assist in making this happen? \_\_\_\_\_
    - Prompt: If so, in what ways?
  - Prompt: Is the local school district been supportive of these ideas? \_\_\_\_\_
    - Prompt: If so, in what ways?

4. Prompt: Do you feel your community would support the types of infrastructure improvements that would promote economic growth? \_\_\_\_\_
    - Prompt: Why or why not?
    - Prompt: Do you see the local school district being able to assist in removing these barriers and promoting a pro-growth attitude in the community? \_\_\_\_\_
      - Prompt: In what ways?
- (Questions #2, #3, and #4 will take approximately 10 minutes to answer.)

**Question #5:**

Question #5 examines what the community leader sees as the role of the public school in strengthening the local community. This question seeks to uncover the community leader’s opinions regarding the potential of the local school district being an economic development partner. Also, the question will examine the willingness of community leaders to enter into large-scale economic development partnerships with the school district.

5. What do you see as the primary role of public education in strengthening the local community?
  - Prompt: Do you see the school district as a potential partner in local economic development? \_\_\_\_\_
    - Prompt: In what capacity?
  - Prompt: Would you be willing to partner with local districts in these endeavors? \_\_\_\_\_
    - Prompt: In what ways?
      - Prompt: Why or why not?

(Question #5 will take approximately 5 to 10 minutes to answer.)

**Questions #6 and #7:**

Questions #6 and #7 are the community leader equivalent to questions #7 and #8 in the superintendent interview. These questions relate to a research question that arose from Cheryl Kelly Thompson’s dissertation *The Role of the Public School Superintendent in Local Economic*

*Development*, which found communication among superintendents, business and community leaders as a major issue.

6. As a community leader, have you ever had discussions with the local public schools about the region's economic and workforce development needs? \_\_\_\_\_
- Prompt: If not, why?
  - Prompt: If so, what types of discussion activities did you participate in?
  - Prompt: How effective were these activities? \_\_\_\_\_
    - Prompt: If not, what could improve these discussions?
    - Prompt: If so, what made the discussions useful or relevant?
  - Prompt: Have you ever attended a business, education, and community round-table or other similar discussions of local and regional workforce and economic development?  
\_\_\_\_\_
    - Prompt: If not, would you? \_\_\_\_\_
      - Prompt: Why?
    - Prompt: If so, do you feel the meeting was an effective use of your time?  
\_\_\_\_\_
      - Prompt: If not, why?
      - Prompt: If yes, what did you take away from those discussions?
        - ❖ Prompt: Did you feel that the educational leaders were responsive to your opinions and positions? \_\_\_\_\_
          - Prompt: Why?
7. As the community leader, have you been involved with other business or education related organizations? \_\_\_\_\_ (e.g. chamber of commerce or educational foundation)
- Prompt: Why or why not?
    - Prompt: If so, which organizations?
    - Prompt: What types of benefits do feel your community gained?

(Questions #6 and #7 will take approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete.)

**Questions #8, #9, and #10:**

Questions #8, #9, and #10 examine the community leaders' perspectives and opinions as to how to make the local public schools more competitive. In the case of question #9, what is their opinion of the solutions posed by the state legislature to improve local educational opportunities? Do local community leaders feel it is appropriate for their school district to evolve into a for-profit organization?

8. With more and more educational options available, what do you feel would be necessary for local public school districts to maintain their position as the number one educational source in the local community?
  - o Do you see ways that the community can assist schools in maintaining their educational status? \_\_\_\_\_
    - Prompt: If so, in what ways?
    - Prompt: If not, why?
9. What do you think about the following options to make schools more economically competitive?
  - o Prompt: Partnering with or converting your local district into a charter school?
  - o Prompt: Using vouchers to improve student mobility?
  - o Prompt: Creation of regional magnet programs or consortiums?  
(e.g. stem, arts, college preparatory)
  - o Prompt: School consolidation and school district mergers?
10. Do you see the local school district's competitiveness impacting the children of the community's educational opportunities? \_\_\_\_\_
  - o Prompt: If not, why?
  - o Prompt: If so, in what ways?
  - o Prompt: Do you want to see changes in how the school prepares the community's children? \_\_\_\_\_
    - If so, in what ways would you like to schools change?

(Questions #8, #9, and #10 will take 10 to 15 minutes to answer.)

**Question #11:**

Question #11 relates directly to the Economic Gardening strategy discussed in the literature review. This question asks the community leader for his or her opinions regarding the creation of a team that includes business, education, and community leaders to strategize and

solve economic development issues.

11. We've talked a lot about the economic challenges effecting the local business, education and the community entities, to that point, how important do you feel it is that a strong team of leaders from business, education, and the community work together to overcome these challenges? \_\_\_\_\_

o Prompt: Why?

(Question #11 will take approximately 5 minutes to complete.)

## **APPENDIX B**

### **FORMATTED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

(White space has been removed to assist in review of the questionnaire format)

## B.1 SUPERINTENDENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (FORMATTED)

<b>Response Date:</b>  ____/____/____ Month      Day      Year	<hr/> <b>Subject Last Name</b>  <hr/> <b>Unique ID Number</b>
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### Superintendent Interview Questions:

1. Has your district experienced funding gaps in the budget over the past three years? (example: use of fund balance to balance the budget or a deficit requiring borrowing?)  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - Prompt: If so, would you label them as minimal or substantial? \_\_\_\_\_  
(Minimal means that the funding gaps didn't impact programs or instruction. Substantial means they did impact programs or instruction.)
    - Prompt: Please describe what you see as the sources of these funding gaps?
  
2. Do you think that these revenue issues will be negatively impacting the district in the next 5 years? 10 years? \_\_\_\_\_
  - Prompt: If so, do you think the impact will be minor or substantial?  
\_\_\_\_\_
    - Prompt: Where do you see the financial support you will need coming from?
    - Prompt: Do you see a potential breaking point? \_\_\_\_\_
      - Prompt: If so, when do you think you will reach that point?
      - Prompt: What do you see as major contributing factors?
      - (Prompt: What about collective bargaining agreements, health care, or pension expenses?)
  
3. Has the district implemented cost cutting measures? \_\_\_\_\_
  - Prompt: If so, would you categorize your cost-saving measures as having a short-term or long-term impact? \_\_\_\_\_

- Prompt: What cost saving measures you have taken?
  - Prompt: Are these cost savings enough to stabilize your funding issues?  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - Prompt: Have these measures impacted your instructional programming?  
\_\_\_\_\_
    - Prompt: If so, how?
  - Prompt: Do you have a prioritization plan for the budget cuts? \_\_\_\_\_
    - Prompt: If so, what types of programs will be first to be sacrificed?
4. If you are making cuts in staffing or programs, how do you see these cuts impacting the district students' college and career readiness in the current school year?
- Prompt: In 5 years?
  - Prompt: In 10 years?
5. Has your district had discussions about the long-term impacts of the current state fiscal policies, (e.g. basic education funding, charter schools, vouchers, pension fund)?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Prompt: What types of options have been discussed?
  - Prompt: How do you feel the parents and community will respond to these options?
  - Prompt: Is raising taxes one of the solutions being considered? \_\_\_\_\_
    - Prompt: If so, will Act 1 be an issue? \_\_\_\_\_
      - ❖ Prompt: Why?
    - Prompt: Do you feel your taxpayers would support a referendum to sustain the district's educational programs? \_\_\_\_\_
      - ❖ Prompt: Why?
6. Is the school board discussing how to maintain quality of instructional programs despite funding deficits? \_\_\_\_\_
- Prompt: If so, what types of solutions are being discussed?
  - Prompt: Is anyone outside the district being included in these discussions?  
\_\_\_\_\_

- Prompt: Who else is involved?
- Prompt: Are these other stakeholders supportive of the solutions being considered?

\_\_\_\_\_

- ❖ Prompt: Do you have any insights into why they are or are not supportive?

7. As a superintendent, do you stay current with the workforce needs of local businesses and the community? \_\_\_\_\_

- Prompt: If so, what do you do to stay current?
- Prompt: Do you see these approaches productive? \_\_\_\_\_
  - Prompt: If not, what could improve these discussions?
  - Prompt: If so, what made the discussions useful or relevant?
- Prompt: Have you ever attended a business round table or similar discussion of local and regional workforce and economic development? \_\_\_\_\_
  - Prompt: If so, do you feel the meeting was an effective use of your time? \_\_\_\_\_
    - Prompt: If not, why?
    - Prompt: If yes, what did you take away from those discussions?
      - ❖ Prompt: How did the information gathered impact your development of your school district's academic program?

8. As the superintendent, have you been involved with other community government or business organizations? \_\_\_\_\_

- Prompt: If not, why?
- Prompt: If so, which organizations?
  - Prompt: If you are involved, what do you see as the benefits to this involvement?

9. Has your school district been involved in supporting local economic development?

\_\_\_\_\_

- Prompt: If so, what has your district done to support local economic development?
- Prompt: Do you find local businesses willing to collaborate with the district?

\_\_\_\_\_

- Prompt: If so, in what ways?

- Prompt: If so, have these business leaders' views of the district's role affected the academic programs in your district? \_\_\_\_\_
- Prompt: If so, do you feel these possible changes benefit your students' academic preparedness or hinder it? \_\_\_\_\_
- Prompt: Why?

10. Have you looked into ways that your district could generate its own revenues?

\_\_\_\_\_

- Prompt: If not, why?
- Prompt: If so, what types of business activities are you considering?
- Prompt: If so, do you feel your board is supportive of these types of activities?

\_\_\_\_\_

- Prompt: Why?
- Prompt: Do you see these revenue solutions as being capable of supporting a significant portion of the district's budget? \_\_\_\_\_
- Prompt: What portion of the district's budget?
- Prompt: What will it take for the district to sustain these solutions?

11. Politicians promote charter schools, vouchers and school consolidation as ways to improve local schools. Do you feel that any of these different educational solutions could be implemented to make your district more economically viable? \_\_\_\_\_

- Prompt: Specifically, What do you feel is the feasibility of partnering with or converting your local district into a charter school?
  - Using vouchers to improve student mobility?
  - Creation of regional magnet programs or consortiums?
  - School consolidation and school district mergers?

12. Can you identify two community leaders who you feel could give insights into community's economic development?

- Prompt: Why do you feel this person is a strong candidate for this study?

**B.2 SECOND ROUND, BUSINESS LEADER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS  
(FORMATTED)**

<p><b>Response Date:</b></p> <p>____/____/____ Month Day Year</p>
---

<p>_____</p> <p>Subject Last Name</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Unique ID Number</p>
--

**Business Leader Interview Questions:**

1. Could you briefly describe your business or organization and what it does?
2. Could you also please identify your current position and its responsibilities with your business, firm, or organization?
3. As the region recovers from the current recession, have you implemented any strategies or programs to promote local or regional economic development? \_\_\_\_\_
  - o Prompt: If so, what strategies or programs?
  - o What do you see as barriers to these strategies or programs?
  - o Prompt: Do you feel you have control over these barriers? \_\_\_\_\_
    - Prompt: If so, how? If not, why?
4. What course of action do you see as most important to ensure local and regional fiscal stability and economic growth?
  - o Prompt: Why?
  - o Prompt: Have you been able to assist in making this happen? \_\_\_\_\_
    - Prompt: If so, in what ways?
  - o Prompt: Is the local school district supportive of these ideas? \_\_\_\_\_
    - Prompt: If so, in what ways?
5. From your perspective, what direct impact, if any, do the local public school districts have on the following:

- Workforce quality?
  - Economic development?
  - Local tax revenues?
    - Prompt: In what ways could the local school districts do more to support local economic development?
6. Have you experienced any economic impacts from the cuts in education funding to local public schools? \_\_\_\_\_
- Prompt: If so, have the cuts impacted your business? \_\_\_\_\_
    - Prompt: In what ways?
  - Prompt: If they haven't yet, how would you envision these cuts impacting your business over the next 5 to 10 years? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Do you see opportunities for school districts to support and promote economic development in your community? \_\_\_\_\_
- Prompt: If yes, in what ways?
  - Prompt: If no, why not?
  - Are you willing to partner with the school district in promoting economic development?  
\_\_\_\_\_
    - If yes, then how would you see this working?
    - If no, why not?
8. As a business leader, have you ever had discussions with the local public schools about the region's economic and workforce development needs? \_\_\_\_\_
- Prompt: If not, would you consider it?
  - Prompt: If so, what types of discussion activities do you participate in?
  - Prompt: Do you see these activities as effective? \_\_\_\_\_
    - Prompt: If not, what could improve these discussion activities?
    - Prompt: If so, what made the discussions useful or relevant?
  - Prompt: Have you ever attended a business, education, and community round-table or other similar discussions of local and regional workforce and economic development?  
\_\_\_\_\_

- Prompt: If not, if you were invited to participate would participate in a round table type forum, would you? \_\_\_\_\_
  - Prompt: What do you think could be accomplished?
- Prompt: If so, do you feel the meeting was an effective use of your time?
   
\_\_\_\_\_
  - Prompt: If not, why?
  - Prompt: If yes, what did you take away from those discussions?
    - ❖ Prompt: Did you feel that the educational leaders were responsive to your opinions and positions? \_\_\_\_\_
      - Prompt: Why?

9. With more and more educational options available, what do you feel would be necessary for local public school districts to maintain their position as the number one educational source in the local community?

- Do you see ways that businesses can assist schools in maintaining their educational status? \_\_\_\_\_
  - Prompt: If so, in what ways?
  - Prompt: If not, why?

10. What do you think about the following options to make schools more economically viable?

- Prompt: Partnering with or converting your local district into a charter school?
- Prompt: Using vouchers to improve student mobility?
- Prompt: Creation of regional magnet school programs or consortiums? (e.g. stem, arts, college preparatory)
- Prompt: School consolidation and school district mergers?

11. Could you please identify two key community people who are the most knowledgeable about the changing needs of the Olympus Mount Region's complex workforce?

- Prompt: Why do you feel this person is a strong candidate for this study?

### B.3 COMMUNITY LEADER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (FORMATTED)

<b>Response Date:</b>  ____/____/____ Month Day Year	<hr/> <b>Subject Last Name</b> <hr/> <b>Unique ID Number</b>
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#### Community Leader Interview Questions:

1. What is your position in the local community government?  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - Prompt: How do you assist in guiding local economic development?
  
2. As the region recovers from the current recession, what has the community done to promote economic development?
  - What do you see as barriers to economic growth and stability in your local community?
    - Prompt: Do you feel you have control over these barriers? \_\_\_\_\_
    - Prompt: If so, how? If not, why?
  
3. What course of action do you see as most important to ensure local fiscal stability and to promote local economic growth?
  - Prompt: Have you been able to assist in making this happen? \_\_\_\_\_
    - Prompt: If so, in what ways?
  - Prompt: Is the local school district been supportive of these ideas? \_\_\_\_\_
    - Prompt: If so, in what ways?
  
4. Prompt: Do you feel your community would support the types of infrastructure improvements that would promote economic growth? \_\_\_\_\_
  - Prompt: Why or why not?

- Prompt: Do you see the local school district being able to assist in removing these barriers and promoting a pro-growth attitude in the community? \_\_\_\_\_
        - Prompt: In what ways?
5. What do you see as the primary role of public education in strengthening the local community?
- Prompt: Do you see the school district as a potential partner in local economic development? \_\_\_\_\_
    - Prompt: In what capacity?
  - Prompt: Would you be willing to partner with local districts in these endeavors? \_\_\_\_\_
    - Prompt: In what ways?
6. As a community leader, have you ever had discussions with the local public schools about the region's economic and workforce development needs? \_\_\_\_\_
- Prompt: If not, why?
  - Prompt: If so, what types of discussion activities did you participate in?
  - Prompt: How effective were these activities? \_\_\_\_\_
    - Prompt: If not, what could improve these discussions?
    - Prompt: If so, what made the discussions useful or relevant?
  - Prompt: Have you ever attended a business, education, and community round-table or other similar discussions of local and regional workforce and economic development? \_\_\_\_\_
    - Prompt: If not, would you? \_\_\_\_\_
      - Prompt: Why?
    - Prompt: If so, do you feel the meeting was an effective use of your time? \_\_\_\_\_
      - Prompt: If not, why?
      - Prompt: If yes, what did you take away from those discussions?
        - ❖ Prompt: Did you feel that the educational leaders were responsive to your opinions and positions? \_\_\_\_\_

- Prompt: Why?
7. As the community leader, have you been involved with other business or education related organizations? \_\_\_\_\_ (e.g. chamber of commerce or educational foundation)
    - Prompt: Why or why not?
      - Prompt: If so, which organizations?
      - Prompt: What types of benefits do feel your community gained?
  8. With more and more educational options available, what do you feel would be necessary for local public school districts to maintain their position as the number one educational source in the local community?
    - Do you see ways that the community can assist schools in maintaining their educational status? \_\_\_\_\_
      - Prompt: If so, in what ways?
      - Prompt: If not, why?
  9. What do you think about the following options to make schools more economically competitive?
    - Prompt: Partnering with or converting your local district into a charter school?
    - Prompt: Using vouchers to improve student mobility?
    - Prompt: Creation of regional magnet programs or consortiums?  
(e.g. stem, arts, college preparatory)
    - Prompt: School consolidation and school district mergers?
  10. Do you see the local school district's competitiveness impacting the children of the community's educational opportunities? \_\_\_\_\_
    - Prompt: If not, why?
    - Prompt: If so, in what ways?
    - Prompt: Do you want to see changes in how the school prepares the community's children? \_\_\_\_\_
      - If so, in what ways would you like to schools change?

11. We've talked a lot about the economic challenges effecting the local business, education and the community entities, to that point, how important do you feel it is that a strong team of leaders from business, education, and the community work together to overcome these challenges?

- Prompt: Why?

## APPENDIX C

### C.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS TO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS MATRIX

*Question #1:* Who are the community and business leaders responsible for economic development and what economic strategies are they implementing?

*Question #2:* What are the funding strategies currently being enacted by Pennsylvania school districts to bridge the gap between tax revenues and operating expenses? Are these funding strategies sustainable revenue options?

*Question #3:* What does the literature articulate about the two long-term economic strategies school districts may be using; “Academic Excellence” or “Economic Gardening”, and what is the level of success? Or, are districts implementing other strategies, and what is the perceived effectiveness of these strategies?

*Question #4:* What are the responsibilities of the superintendent in developing and ensuring a sustainable local tax base?

#### Superintendent Interview Questions:

Research Questions:	Related Superintendent Interview Questions:
<p><i>Question #2:</i> What are the funding strategies currently being enacted by Pennsylvania school districts to bridge the gap between tax revenues and operating expenses? Are these funding strategies sustainable revenue options?</p>	<p>1. Has your district experienced funding gaps in the budget over the past three years? (example: use of fund balance to balance the budget or a deficit requiring borrowing?)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Prompt: If so, would you label them as minimal or substantial? (Minimal means that the funding gaps didn’t impact programs or instruction. Substantial means they did impact programs or instruction.)</li> <li>▪ Prompt: Please describe what you see as the sources of these funding gaps?</li> </ul>

Research Questions:	Related Superintendent Interview Questions:
<p><i>Question #2:</i> What are the funding strategies currently being enacted by Pennsylvania school districts to bridge the gap between tax revenues and operating expenses? Are these funding strategies sustainable revenue options?</p>	<p>2. Do you think that these revenue issues will be negatively impacting the district in the next 5 years? 10 years?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Prompt: If so, do you think the impact will be minor or substantial? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prompt: Where do you see the financial support you will need coming from?</li> <li>▪ Prompt: Do you see a potential breaking point? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Prompt: If so, when do you think you will reach that point?</li> <li>● Prompt: What do you see as major contributing factors?</li> <li>● (Prompt: What about collective bargaining agreements, health care, or pension expenses?)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><i>Question #2:</i> What are the funding strategies currently being enacted by Pennsylvania school districts to bridge the gap between tax revenues and operating expenses? Are these funding strategies sustainable revenue options?</p>	<p>3. Has the district implemented cost cutting measures?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Prompt: If so, would you categorize your cost-saving measures as having a short-term or long-term impact? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prompt: What cost saving measures you have taken?</li> <li>▪ Prompt: Are these cost savings enough to stabilize your funding issues?</li> <li>▪ Prompt: Have these measures impacted your instructional programming? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Prompt: If so, how?</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Prompt: Do you have a prioritization plan for the budget cuts?</li> <li>▪ Prompt: If so, what types of programs will be first to be sacrificed?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><i>Question #2:</i> What are the funding strategies currently being enacted by Pennsylvania school districts to bridge the gap between tax revenues and operating expenses? Are these funding strategies sustainable revenue options?</p>	<p>4. If you are making cuts in staffing or programs, how do you see these cuts impacting the district students' college and career readiness in the current school year?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Prompt: In 5 years?</li> <li>○ Prompt: In 10 years?</li> </ul>
<p><i>Question #2:</i> What are the funding strategies currently being enacted by Pennsylvania school districts to bridge the gap between tax revenues and operating expenses? Are these funding strategies sustainable revenue options?</p>	<p>5. Has your district had discussions about the long-term impacts of the current state fiscal policies, (e.g. basic education funding, charter schools, vouchers, pension fund)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Prompt: What types of options have been discussed?</li> <li>○ Prompt: How do you feel the parents and community will respond to these options?</li> <li>○ Prompt: Is raising taxes one of the solutions being considered? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prompt: If so, will Act 1 be an issue? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Prompt: Why?</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Prompt: Do you feel your taxpayers would support a referendum to sustain the district's educational programs? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Prompt: Why?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Research Questions:	Related Superintendent Interview Questions:
<p><i>Question #3:</i> What does the literature articulate about the two long-term economic strategies school districts may be using; “Academic Excellence” or “Economic Gardening”, and what is the level of success? Or, are districts implementing other strategies, and what is the perceived effectiveness of these strategies?</p>	<p>6. Is the school board discussing how to maintain quality of instructional programs despite funding deficits?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Prompt: If so, what types of solutions are being discussed?</li> <li>○ Prompt: Is anyone outside the district being included in these discussions? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prompt: Who else is involved?</li> <li>▪ Prompt: Are these other stakeholders supportive of the solutions being considered? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Prompt: Do you have any insights into why they are or are not supportive?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><i>Question #3:</i> What does the literature articulate about the two long-term economic strategies school districts may be using; “Academic Excellence” or “Economic Gardening”, and what is the level of success? Or, are districts implementing other strategies, and what is the perceived effectiveness of these strategies?</p>	<p>7. As a superintendent, do you stay current with the workforce needs of local businesses and the community?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Prompt: If so, what do you do to stay current?</li> <li>○ Prompt: Do you see these approaches productive? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prompt: If not, what could improve these discussions?</li> <li>▪ Prompt: If so, what made the discussions useful or relevant?</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Prompt: Have you ever attended a business round table or similar discussion of local and regional workforce and economic development? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prompt: If so, do you feel the meeting was an effective use of your time? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Prompt: If not, why?</li> <li>● Prompt: If yes, what did you take away from those discussions? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Prompt: How did the information gathered impact your development of your school district’s academic program?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><i>Question #3:</i> What does the literature articulate about the two long-term economic strategies school districts may be using; “Academic Excellence” or “Economic Gardening”, and what is the level of success? Or, are districts implementing other strategies, and what is the perceived effectiveness of these strategies?</p>	<p>8. As the superintendent, have you been involved with other community government or business organizations?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Prompt: If not, why?</li> <li>○ Prompt: If so, which organizations? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prompt: If you are involved, what do you see as the benefits to this involvement?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><i>Question #3:</i> What does the literature articulate about the two long-term economic strategies school districts may be using; “Academic Excellence” or “Economic Gardening”, and what is the level of success? Or, are districts implementing other strategies, and what is the perceived effectiveness of these strategies?</p>	<p>9. Has your school district been involved in supporting local economic development?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Prompt: If so, what has your district done to support local economic development?</li> <li>○ Prompt: Do you find local businesses willing to collaborate with the district? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prompt: If so, in what ways?</li> <li>▪ Prompt: If so, have these business leaders’ views of the district’s role affected the academic programs in your district? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Prompt: If so, do you feel these possible changes benefit your students’ academic preparedness or hinder it?</li> <li>● Prompt: Why?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Research Questions:	Related Superintendent Interview Questions:
<p><i>Question #2:</i> What are the funding strategies currently being enacted by Pennsylvania school districts to bridge the gap between tax revenues and operating expenses? Are these funding strategies sustainable revenue options?</p> <p><i>Question #3:</i> What does the literature articulate about the two long-term economic strategies school districts may be using; “Academic Excellence” or “Economic Gardening”, and what is the level of success? Or, are districts implementing other strategies, and what is the perceived effectiveness of these strategies?</p>	<p>10. Have you looked into ways that your district could generate its own revenues?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Prompt: If not, why?</li> <li>○ Prompt: If so, what types of business activities are you considering?</li> <li>○ Prompt: If so, do you feel your board is supportive of these types of activities? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prompt: Why?</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Prompt: Do you see these revenue solutions as being capable of supporting a significant portion of the district’s budget? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prompt: What portion of the district’s budget?</li> <li>▪ Prompt: What will it take for the district to sustain these solutions?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><i>Question #2:</i> What are the funding strategies currently being enacted by Pennsylvania school districts to bridge the gap between tax revenues and operating expenses? Are these funding strategies sustainable revenue options?</p> <p><i>Question #3:</i> What does the literature articulate about the two long-term economic strategies school districts may be using; “Academic Excellence” or “Economic Gardening”, and what is the level of success? Or, are districts implementing other strategies, and what is the perceived effectiveness of these strategies?</p>	<p>11. Politicians promote charter schools, vouchers and school consolidation as ways to improve local schools. Do you feel that any of these different educational solutions could be implemented to make your district more economically viable?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Prompt: Specifically, What do you feel is the feasibility of partnering with or converting your local district into a charter school? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Using vouchers to improve student mobility?</li> <li>▪ Creation of regional magnet programs or consortiums?</li> <li>▪ School consolidation and school district mergers?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>This question continues the snowball interviewee selection process.</p>	<p>12. Can you identify two key community leaders who you feel could give insights into community’s economic development?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Prompt: Why do you feel this person is a strong candidate for this study?</li> </ul>
<p>All questions relate to answering <i>Question #4:</i> What actions are necessary for the superintendent to be a catalyst for developing and ensuring a sustainable local tax base?</p>	

## Business Leader Interview Questions:

Research Questions:	Related Business Leader Interview Questions:
<i>Question #1:</i> Who are the community and business leaders responsible for economic development and what economic strategies are they implementing?	1. Could you briefly describe your business or organization and what it does?
<i>Question #1:</i> Who are the community and business leaders responsible for economic development and what economic strategies are they implementing?	2. Could you also please identify your current position and its responsibilities with your business, firm, or organization?
<i>Question #1:</i> Who are the community and business leaders responsible for economic development and what economic strategies are they implementing?	3. As the region recovers from the current recession, have you implemented any strategies or programs to promote local or regional economic development? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Prompt: If so, what strategies or programs?</li> <li>○ What do you see as barriers to these strategies or programs?</li> <li>○ Prompt: Do you feel you have control over these barriers? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prompt: If so, how? If not, why?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<i>Question #1:</i> Who are the community and business leaders responsible for economic development and what economic strategies are they implementing?	4. What course of action do you see as most important to ensure local and regional fiscal stability and economic growth? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Prompt: Why?</li> <li>○ Prompt: Have you been able to assist in making this happen? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prompt: If so, in what ways?</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Prompt: Is the local school district supportive of these ideas? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prompt: If so, in what ways?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<i>Question #3:</i> What does the literature articulate about the two long-term economic strategies school districts may be using; “Academic Excellence” or “Economic Gardening”, and what is the level of success? Or, are districts implementing other strategies, and what is the perceived effectiveness of these strategies?	5. From your perspective, what direct impact, if any, do the local public school districts have on the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Workforce quality?</li> <li>○ Economic development?</li> <li>○ Local tax revenues? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prompt: In what ways could the local school districts do more to support local economic development?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<i>Question #3:</i> What does the literature articulate about the two long-term economic strategies school districts may be using; “Academic Excellence” or “Economic Gardening”, and what is the level of success? Or, are districts implementing other strategies, and what is the perceived effectiveness of these strategies?	6. Have you experienced any economic impacts from the cuts in education funding to local public schools? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Prompt: If so, have the cuts impacted your business? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prompt: In what ways?</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Prompt: If they haven’t yet, how would you envision these cuts impacting your business over the next 5 to 10 years?</li> </ul>

Research Questions:	Related Business Leader Interview Questions:
<p><i>Question #3:</i> What does the literature articulate about the two long-term economic strategies school districts may be using; “Academic Excellence” or “Economic Gardening”, and what is the level of success? Or, are districts implementing other strategies, and what is the perceived effectiveness of these strategies?</p>	<p>7. Do you see opportunities for school districts to support and promote economic development in your community?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prompt: If yes, in what ways?</li> <li>▪ Prompt: If no, why not?</li> <li>○ Are you willing to partner with the school district in promoting economic development? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ If yes, then how would you see this working?</li> <li>▪ If no, why not?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><i>Question #3:</i> What does the literature articulate about the two long-term economic strategies school districts may be using; “Academic Excellence” or “Economic Gardening”, and what is the level of success? Or, are districts implementing other strategies, and what is the perceived effectiveness of these strategies?</p>	<p>8. As a business leader, have you ever had discussions with the local public schools about the region’s economic and workforce development needs?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Prompt: If not, would you consider it?</li> <li>○ Prompt: If so, what types of discussion activities do you participate in?</li> <li>○ Prompt: Do you see these activities as effective? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prompt: If not, what could improve these discussion activities?</li> <li>▪ Prompt: If so, what made the discussions useful or relevant?</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Prompt: Have you ever attended a business, education, and community round-table or other similar discussions of local and regional workforce and economic development? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prompt: If not, if you were invited to participate would participate in a round table type forum, would you? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prompt: What do you think could be accomplished?</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Prompt: If so, do you feel the meeting was an effective use of your time? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prompt: If not, why?</li> <li>• Prompt: If yes, what did you take away from those discussions? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Prompt: Did you feel that the educational leaders were responsive to your opinions and positions?</li> <li>❖ Prompt: Why?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><i>Question #3:</i> What does the literature articulate about the two long-term economic strategies school districts may be using; “Academic Excellence” or “Economic Gardening”, and what is the level of success? Or, are districts implementing other strategies, and what is the perceived effectiveness of these strategies?</p>	<p>9. With more and more educational options available, what do you feel would be necessary for local public school districts to maintain their position as the number one educational source in the local community?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Do you see ways that businesses can assist schools in maintaining their educational status? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prompt: If so, in what ways?</li> <li>▪ Prompt: If not, why?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Research Questions:	Related Business Leader Interview Questions:
<p><i>Question #3:</i> What does the literature articulate about the two long-term economic strategies school districts may be using; “Academic Excellence” or “Economic Gardening”, and what is the level of success? Or, are districts implementing other strategies, and what is the perceived effectiveness of these strategies?</p>	<p>10. What do you think about the following options to make schools more economically viable?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Prompt: Partnering with or converting your local district into a charter school?</li> <li>○ Prompt: Using vouchers to improve student mobility?</li> <li>○ Prompt: Creation of regional magnet school programs or consortiums? (e.g. stem, arts, college preparatory)</li> <li>○ Prompt: School consolidation and school district mergers?</li> </ul>
<p>This question continues the snowball interviewee selection process.</p>	<p>11. Could you please identify two key community people who are the most knowledgeable about the changing needs of the Olympus Mount Region’s complex workforce?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Prompt: Why do you feel this person is a strong candidate for this study?</li> </ul>
<p>All questions relate to answering <i>Question #4:</i> What actions are necessary for the superintendent to be a catalyst for developing and ensuring a sustainable local tax base?</p>	

## Community Leader Interview Questions:

Research Questions:	Related Community Leader Interview Questions:
<i>Question #1:</i> Who are the community and business leaders responsible for economic development and what economic strategies are they implementing?	1. What is your position in the local community government? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Prompt: How do you assist in guiding local economic development?</li> </ul>
<i>Question #1:</i> Who are the community and business leaders responsible for economic development and what economic strategies are they implementing?	2. As the region recovers from the current recession, what has the community done to promote economic development? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What do you see as barriers to economic growth and stability in your local community? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prompt: Do you feel you have control over these barriers?</li> <li>▪ Prompt: If so, how? If not, why?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<i>Question #1:</i> Who are the community and business leaders responsible for economic development and what economic strategies are they implementing?	3. What course of action do you see as most important to ensure local fiscal stability and to promote local economic growth? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Prompt: Have you been able to assist in making this happen? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prompt: If so, in what ways?</li> <li>▪ Prompt: Has the local school district been supportive of these ideas?</li> <li>▪ Prompt: If so, in what ways?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<i>Question #3:</i> What does the literature articulate about the two long-term economic strategies school districts may be using; “Academic Excellence” or “Economic Gardening”, and what is the level of success? Or, are districts implementing other strategies, and what is the perceived effectiveness of these strategies?	4. Prompt: Do you feel your community would support the types of infrastructure improvements that would promote economic growth? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Prompt: Why or why not? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prompt: Do you see the local school district being able to assist in removing these barriers and promoting a pro-growth attitude in the community?</li> <li>▪ Prompt: In what ways?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<i>Question #3:</i> What does the literature articulate about the two long-term economic strategies school districts may be using; “Academic Excellence” or “Economic Gardening”, and what is the level of success? Or, are districts implementing other strategies, and what is the perceived effectiveness of these strategies?	5. What do you see as the primary role of public education in strengthening the local community? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Prompt: Do you see the school district as a potential partner in local economic development? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prompt: In what capacity?</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Prompt: Would you be willing to partner with local districts in these endeavors? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prompt: In what ways?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Research Questions:	Related Community Leader Interview Questions:
<p><i>Question #3:</i> What does the literature articulate about the two long-term economic strategies school districts may be using; “Academic Excellence” or “Economic Gardening”, and what is the level of success? Or, are districts implementing other strategies, and what is the perceived effectiveness of these strategies?</p>	<p>6. As a community leader, have you ever had discussions with the local public schools about the region’s economic and workforce development needs?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Prompt: If not, why?</li> <li>○ Prompt: If so, what types of discussion activities did you participate in?</li> <li>○ Prompt: How effective were these activities? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prompt: If not, what could improve these discussions?</li> <li>▪ Prompt: If so, what made the discussions useful or relevant?</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Prompt: Have you ever attended a business, education, and community round-table or other similar discussions of local and regional workforce and economic development? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prompt: If not, would you? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Prompt: Why?</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Prompt: If so, do you feel the meeting was an effective use of your time? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Prompt: If not, why?</li> <li>● Prompt: If yes, what did you take away from those discussions? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Prompt: Did you feel that the educational leaders were responsive to your opinions and positions? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Prompt: Why?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><i>Question #3:</i> What does the literature articulate about the two long-term economic strategies school districts may be using; “Academic Excellence” or “Economic Gardening”, and what is the level of success? Or, are districts implementing other strategies, and what is the perceived effectiveness of these strategies?</p>	<p>7. As the community leader, have you been involved with other business or education related organizations? (e.g. chamber of commerce or educational foundation)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Prompt: Why or why not? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prompt: If so, which organizations?</li> <li>▪ Prompt: What types of benefits do feel your community gained?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><i>Question #3:</i> What does the literature articulate about the two long-term economic strategies school districts may be using; “Academic Excellence” or “Economic Gardening”, and what is the level of success? Or, are districts implementing other strategies, and what is the perceived effectiveness of these strategies?</p>	<p>8. With more and more educational options available, what do you feel would be necessary for local public school districts to maintain their position as the number one educational source in the local community?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Do you see ways that the community can assist schools in maintaining their educational status? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prompt: If so, in what ways?</li> <li>▪ Prompt: If not, why?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><i>Question #3:</i> What does the literature articulate about the two long-term economic strategies school districts may be using; “Academic Excellence” or “Economic Gardening”, and what is the level of success? Or, are districts implementing other strategies, and what is the perceived effectiveness of these strategies?</p>	<p>9. What do you think about the following options to make schools more economically competitive?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Prompt: Partnering with or converting your local district into a charter school?</li> <li>○ Prompt: Using vouchers to improve student mobility?</li> <li>○ Prompt: Creation of regional magnet programs or consortiums? (e.g. stem, arts, college preparatory)</li> <li>○ Prompt: School consolidation and school district mergers?</li> </ul>

Research Questions:	Related Community Leader Interview Questions:
<p><i>Question #3:</i> What does the literature articulate about the two long-term economic strategies school districts may be using; “Academic Excellence” or “Economic Gardening”, and what is the level of success? Or, are districts implementing other strategies, and what is the perceived effectiveness of these strategies?</p>	<p>10. Do you see the local school district’s competitiveness impacting the children of the community’s educational opportunities?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Prompt: If not, why?</li> <li>○ Prompt: If so, in what ways?</li> <li>○ Prompt: Do you want to see changes in how the school prepares the community’s children? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ If so, in what ways would you like to schools change?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><i>Question #3:</i> What does the literature articulate about the two long-term economic strategies school districts may be using; “Academic Excellence” or “Economic Gardening”, and what is the level of success? Or, are districts implementing other strategies, and what is the perceived effectiveness of these strategies?</p>	<p>11. We’ve talked a lot about the economic challenges effecting the local business, education and the community entities, to that point, how important do you feel it is that a strong team of leaders from business, education, and the community work together to overcome these challenges?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Prompt: Why?</li> </ul>
<p>All questions relate to answering  <i>Question #4:</i> What actions are necessary for the superintendent to be a catalyst for developing and ensuring a sustainable local tax base?</p>	

## APPENDIX D

### CONTENT LIST USED FOR DEDUCTIVE ANALYSIS DATA

	<u>Academic Excellence:</u>	<u>Economic Gardening:</u>	
	1. Rigor, Challenging, Stimulating, Rewarding, College Ready,	1. Collaboration, Working Together, Partnerships, Cooperation, Teamwork, Networking, Sharing, Connections	
	2. Critical Thinking, Problem Solutions, Problem Solving, Diagnostic Skills	2. Job Skills, Training, Workplace Apprenticeships, Trades, Craftsmen, CTC, Job Shadowing, Technician, Vo-Tec, Vo-Ag, Robotics, STEM	
	3. Academic Excellence, Scholarship, Perseverance, Outstanding, Superior	3. Drug Free, Safe Environment, Positive Workplace	
	4. Creativity, Talented, Skillful, Abilities	4. Citizenship, Character Education, Service Learning, Relationships	
	5. Intellectual, Curiosity, Scientific, Complexity	5. Work Ethic, Integrity, High Standards, Quality	
	6. High Achieving, Meeting the Challenge, Raising the Bar, AP, Dual Enrollment	6. Technical Institute, High Tech Jobs, Career Ready, Work Ready, Advancement	
	7. Leadership, Quality, Disciplinary	7. Dependability, Reliability, Work Ethic, Responsibility	
	8. Academic Standards, Eligible Content, SAS, Common Core, Literacy	8. Practical Application, Applied Skills, Applied Academics, Relevance, Adaptability, Foundation, Fundamentals, Real time education, Real world, Comprehensive	
	9. AYP, NCLB, PSSA, Graduation Rate, SAT, ACT	9. Industry, Building, Infrastructure, TIFs, LERTAs, Entrepreneurship, Grants	
	10. Science, Technology, Mathematics, Engineering, STEAM, STREAM, STEM-M	10. (Un)employment rate, Average Family Income, Home Ownership	

**APPENDIX E**

**BUSINESS MANAGER SURVEY AND LETTERS OF INVITATION**

## Business Manager's Budget Survey

Exit this survey

### Business Manager Budget Survey

Charles A. Prijatelj  
Researcher

The purpose of this survey is to gather budgetary data to assist in the study of the superintendent as a catalyst for economic development to ensure the sustainability of the local public schools.

#### 1. Survey identification number and date:

ID number:   
Date:

#### 2. What is the total school district budget amount for the 2011-2012 school year?

#### 3. What is the district's millage rate and how much revenue does a mil generate?

Millage rate:   
Amount of tax revenue generated by a mill:

#### 4. What is the projected fund balance for the end of 2011-2012 school year?

#### 5. Fund balance actions moving into the 2011-2012 year:

How much of the fund balance was used to balance budget?   
how much of the fund balance was rolled over into

capital reserve?

**6. Positions eliminated for the 2011-2012 school year:**

How many positions eliminated through attrition?

How many positions eliminated through furlough?

**7. Percentage of increases/decreases for the 2011-12 school year:**

What is the percentage increase/decrease in salary for professional personnel

What is the percentage increase/decrease in salary for non-professional personnel

What is the percentage increase/decrease for benefits package

Done

Powered by **SurveyMonkey**  
Create your own [free online survey](#) now!

## E.1 LETTERS OF INVITATION

(University of Pittsburgh Letterhead)

November 26, 2011

Name of Researcher

Charles A. Prijatelj  
Graduate Student  
University of Pittsburgh  
Dept. of Administrative and Policy Studies

Purpose of the Study: Partial Fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education

Dear (interviewee):

I am a graduate student working on my doctorate in school leadership in the Department of Administrative and Policy Studies at the University of Pittsburgh. I am doing research that focuses on the superintendent's responsibilities in promoting economic development and creating a sustainable and enduring tax base. This study will use existing public census and financial data, along with your business manager's survey and interview data from you as the district superintendent, a local business leader, and a local community leader to create an anonymous case study. This case study will then be combined with other case studies into a multiple case study to define strategies for improving the economic stability of Pennsylvania's public school districts.

As the superintendent of the \_\_\_\_\_ I am requesting your participation in the interview process. If you choose to participate, the information you provide as an interviewee will be incorporated into a dissertation.

You have been provided an advanced copy of the questions, which will be asked during your interview. I will be taking notes during the interview. With your permission, I will be making a digital recording of the interview to ensure accuracy of my documentation.

All answers will be reported anonymously in the dissertation and any other documents emanating from this research. All digital recording and their transcripts will be logged using interviewee numbers and will remain in the possession of the interviewer. Once all analysis of the interview and survey data is completed, all data will be destroyed.

There are no plans at this time to publish this research study. However parts of this study may be developed into material for publication at a later date. You can be assured that all anonymous comments will be honored in any potential study.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Within the next few days, I will be contacting your office to schedule the interview. The interview will be approximately 30 minutes to 45 minutes in length. Along with your interview, I will be requesting your business manager complete a short survey on Survey Monkey and provide a PDF of the 2010-2011 Annual Financial Report (AFR). The survey requests basic budgetary information relating to the current school year. A copy of the survey is attached.

Thank you for your time and interest in this study.  
Sincerely,

Charles A. Prijatelj  
(724) 685-1636 / [cprijatelj@zoominternet.net](mailto:cprijatelj@zoominternet.net)

(University of Pittsburgh Letterhead)

November 26, 2011

Name of Researcher

Charles A. Prijatelj  
Graduate Student  
University of Pittsburgh  
Dept. of Administrative and Policy Studies

Purpose of the Study: Partial Fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education

Dear (interviewee):

I am a graduate student working on my doctorate in school leadership in the Department of Administrative and Policy Studies at the University of Pittsburgh. I am doing research that focuses on the superintendent's responsibilities in promoting economic development and creating a sustainable and enduring tax base. This study will use existing public census and financial data, in combination with the local school district business manager's survey and interview data from the district's superintendent, a local business or community leader, and yourself to create an anonymous case study. This case study will then be combined with other case studies into a multiple case study to define strategies for improving the economic stability of Pennsylvania's public school districts.

You have been identified as a key business and/or community leader and I am requesting your participation in the interview process. If you choose to participate, the information you provide as an interviewee will be incorporated into a dissertation.

You have been provided an advanced copy of the questions, which will be asked during your interview. I will be taking notes during the interview. With your permission, I will be making a digital recording of the interview to ensure accuracy of my documentation.

All answers will be reported anonymously in the dissertation and any other documents emanating from this research. All digital recording and their transcripts will be logged using interviewee numbers and will remain in the possession of the interviewer. Once all analysis of the interview data is completed, the recordings will be destroyed.

There are no plans at this time to publish this research study. However parts of this study may be developed into material for publication at a later date. You can be assured that all anonymous comments will be honored in any potential study.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Within the next few days, I will be contacting your office to schedule the interview. The interview will be approximately 30 minutes to 45 minutes in length.

Thank you for your time and interest in this study.  
Sincerely,

Charles A. Prijatelj  
(724) 685-1636 / [cprijatelj@zoominternet.net](mailto:cprijatelj@zoominternet.net)

(University of Pittsburgh Letterhead)

November 26, 2011

Name of Researcher

Charles A. Prijatelj  
Graduate Student  
University of Pittsburgh  
Dept. of Administrative and Policy Studies

Purpose of the Study: Partial Fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education

Dear (interviewee):

I am a graduate student working on my doctorate in school leadership in the Department of Administrative and Policy Studies at the University of Pittsburgh. I am doing research that focuses on the superintendent's responsibilities in promoting economic development and creating a sustainable and enduring tax base. This study will use existing public census and financial data, along with your business manager survey and interview data from your district's superintendent, a local business leader, and a local community leader to create an anonymous case study of the district. This case study will then be combined with other case studies into a multiple case study to define strategies for improving the economic stability of Pennsylvania's public school districts.

As the business manager of the \_\_\_\_\_ I am requesting your participation in the survey process. Your participation in this study is voluntary and your superintendent has been notified of this request. The information you provide through completion of the survey will be incorporated into a dissertation. All answers will be reported anonymously in the dissertation and any other documents emanating from this research. Once the study is completed, all survey data will be destroyed.

The survey consists of seven (7) short response questions regarding the current school year information. The website where you may access the survey is <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/V3ND6FK>. Please enter \_\_\_\_\_ as the identifier in the first blank on the survey. This ensures only unique responses to preserve the integrity of the data for our study. Along with the survey, I am asking for a PDF file of your Annual Financial Report (AFR). Please email the AFR to [cprijatelj@zoominternet.net](mailto:cprijatelj@zoominternet.net).

There are no plans at this time to publish this research study. However parts of this study may be developed into material for publication at a later date. As part of this study, all information obtained will be kept confidential and names of school districts and participants will not be identified. Once all analysis of the interview and survey data is completed, all data will be destroyed.

Thank you for your time and interest in this study.  
Sincerely,

Charles A. Prijatelj  
(724) 685-1636 / [cprijatelj@zoominternet.net](mailto:cprijatelj@zoominternet.net)

## E.2 EMAIL AND TELEPHONE SCRIPTS

### **E-mail script:**

My name is Charles A. Prijatelj and I am a doctoral student at the University of Pittsburgh in the Department of Administrative Policy Studies focusing on a doctorate in School Leadership. I am writing this e-mail to ask if you would be willing to participate in my study for my dissertation. The study is focused on the superintendent as the facilitator of economic development to ensure sustainability of the local public schools. You would need to complete a brief survey through Survey Monkey available at this link \_\_\_\_\_. When prompted, please identify the ID # of **(ID Number Ranges from 01 to 10)**. This will identify your responses and ensure quality assurance that no individuals have participated in the survey more than once. Your participation is strictly voluntary and you may withdraw from the survey at any time. There are no foreseeable risks associated with this project. Dr. Maureen McClure, a faculty member at the University of Pittsburgh, is overseeing this study and she would be able to answer any additional questions that you might have. Should you have any questions, my phone number is 724-685-1636 and my e-mail address is [cap58@pitt.edu](mailto:cap58@pitt.edu). Thank you so much, have a great day!

### **Telephone Script:**

Hello, I am Charles A. Prijatelj a doctoral student at the University of Pittsburgh in the Department of Administrative Policy Studies focusing on a doctorate in School Leadership. I am making this call to ask if you would be willing to participate in my study for my dissertation, which is focused on the superintendent as the facilitator of economic development to ensure sustainability of the local public schools. This interview will take approximately 40-45 minutes to complete. Your participation is strictly voluntary and you may withdraw from the interview at any time. There are no foreseeable risks associated with this project. You will be audio recorded and all responses will remain confidential. After the study has been completed, the audio recordings will be destroyed. Dr. Maureen McClure, faculty at the University of Pittsburgh, is overseeing this study and she would be able to answer any additional questions that you might have. If you would be willing to help me by being interviewed, it would be greatly appreciated.

## **APPENDIX F**

### **CASE OF CASES MATRICES**

## F.1 CASE OF CASES RESPONSE MATRIX:

### Superintendent Interview Response Matrix:

<p>Question #1S: Has your district experienced funding gaps in the budget over the past three years? If so, would you label them as minimal or substantial? Please describe what you see as the sources of these funding gaps?</p>
<p>Superintendents' responses: Yes, Substantial; Between \$650,000 and \$2 million, 3 discussed borrowing from fund balance, Caused by the state cuts in funding and flat economic growth</p>
<p>Question #2S: Do you think that these revenue issues will be negatively impacting the district in the next 5 years? 10 years? If so, do you think the impact will be minor or substantial? Where do you see the financial support you will need coming from? Do you see a potential breaking point? If so, when do you think you will reach that point? What do you see as major contributing factors?</p>
<p>Superintendents' responses: Absolutely from all 7; All superintendents state money has to come from the state or higher taxes, some state that raising taxes will not generate any more funds due to the inability to collect said taxes; Raising taxes; Budget cuts, faculty copays, contracts, pay-to-play, staff reductions will all occur in every district interviewed</p>
<p>Question #3S: Has the district implemented cost cutting measures? If so, would you categorize your cost-saving measures as having a short-term or long-term impact? What cost saving measures you have taken? Are these cost savings enough to stabilize your funding issues? Have these measures impacted your instructional programming? Do you have a prioritization plan for the budget cuts? If so, what types of programs will be first to be sacrificed?</p>
<p>Superintendents' responses: Salary freezes of some sort in 5 districts; Attrition of positions due to retirement in all districts; Furloughs in four districts; Budget cuts in all districts; Class sizes rose in all districts; Stabilized for this school year only all districts; Instruction impact as of 2011-2012 school year: None at this time; Prioritization: Consumables and all luxuries cut first, non-instructional support and extra-curricular activities cost shifting cut second, instructional support and cuts of extra-curricular activities cut third, electives and non-core instruction cut fourth, core instruction cut last; (staff reductions because of decreasing enrollment are considered a luxury and cut third)</p>
<p>Question #4S: If you are making cuts in staffing or programs, how do you see these cuts impacting the district students' college and career readiness in the current school year? In 5 years? In 10 years?</p>
<p>Superintendents' responses: Not yet; 5 to 10 year: Absolutely; Staffing cuts driven by class sizes; District could cut up to 25 reaching positions, and music, art, physical education, and other electives could be gone</p>

Question #5S: Has your district had discussions about the long-term impacts of the current state fiscal policies? What types of options have been discussed? How do you feel the parents and community will respond to these options? Is raising taxes one of the solutions being considered? If so, will Act 1 be an issue? Do you feel your taxpayers would support a referendum to sustain the district's educational programs?
Superintendents' responses: All districts have had budget discussions with board; Districts have done many if not all of the following: Renegotiated insurance contracts, refinanced bonds, raised taxes; Parents are considered supportive until it impacts their child directly; Act I referendum: All districts feel passing a referendum will be very difficult or impossible because of the median age of the taxpayers in the district (ex. district of 15,000, and 3,000 have kids in school)
Question #6S: Is the school board discussing how to maintain quality of instructional programs despite funding deficits? What types of solutions are being discussed? Is anyone outside the district being included in these discussions? Are these other stakeholders supportive of the solutions being considered? Do you have any insights into why they are or are not supportive?
Superintendents' responses: All boards have discuss how to maintain programs; Collaboration with other school district to create STEM/STREAM opportunities; Collaboration with local businesses to create Summer Skills Camp for welding certification; Finding ways for elective courses to be self-funding e.g. entrepreneurship courses selling products; Partnering with business for work-release programs; Outside collaboration to assist in planning how to maintain programs: None

Business Interview Response Matrix:

Question #1B: Could you briefly describe your business or organization and what it does?
Business leaders' responses: Heavy Steel Fabricator; Manufacturer of rolled steel products; CEO of the Chamber of Commerce; CEO United Way; Dairy Products Processor; Steel Fabricating of Roll-off dumpsters and containers; CEO of a local non-profit industrial development corporation; CEO Penn-Northwest Regional Economic Development Corp.
Question #2B: Could you also please identify your current position and its responsibilities with your business, firm, or organization?
Business leaders' responses: Owner; Vice President; CEO; CEO; Vice President; Owner turned consultant; CEO; CEO

Community Leader Interview Questions:

Question #1C: What is your position in the local community government? How do you assist in guiding local economic development?
Community leaders' responses: Mayor (1); City manager (3); Borough manager (1); Township supervisor (2)

Business and Community Leader Question:

Question #3B and #2C: As the region recovers from the current recession, have you implemented any strategies or programs to promote local or regional economic development? If so, what strategies or programs? What do you see as barriers to these strategies or programs? Do you feel you have control over these barriers?
Business leaders' responses: Responses ranged from just continued to do business (1) to promoted local suppliers (5), efforts to improve the workforce pool (6 of 7); Working to remove government regulations and red tape to promote economic development; Commitment to local economic development programs (5)
Community leaders' responses: Go after grant money to support borough (1), Develops city's plan for economic development (1), Work as liaison to business and regional to promote economic growth (1), Utilize the tool the legislature gives us to bring in residents (1), Promote local businesses and economic interests (1), Promote the development corporation and other economic development groups (1), Done very little (1); Barriers: Size (1), Trained and capable workforce (1), Changing people behaviors and beliefs (1), Shrinking State and Federal monies (1), Other stakeholders lack of willingness to participate in events (1), Just don't have businesses moving in (1), Money to pay for improvements to infrastructure (1); Control over barriers: Yes (2), No (3), Yes and No (2)
Questions #4B and #3C: What course of action do you see as most important to ensure local and regional fiscal stability and economic growth? Have you been able to assist in making this happen? Is the local school district supportive of these ideas?
Business leaders' responses: Providing a quality product (8); Developing and Expanding Workforce (8); Working with schools to improve the caliber of students going in to the skilled labor workforce (8); Educating parents that their children can make a family supporting wage in local industry as skilled labor (8); <u>Not All Kids Should Go To College</u> , but they need better basic skills in reading and math (3); Infrastructure development and improvements (1)
Community leaders' responses: Consolidation with other local municipalities to attract more business (1), Community between business and community on how to train people already here (1), Promote residency (1), Help to build the regions economic growth e.g. region has economic growth we all benefit (1), Keep infrastructure in good repair (1), Bring in more manufacturing into the area (1), Find ways to keep our kids here (1); School district support: Yes (6), No (2): Reason: They participate in discussions (1), districts needs to make sure that they understand that college isn't for everybody (1), Tax Abatement and getting properties back onto the tax roles (1), District supports the Linden Pointe Technology Incubator (1), The district actively support career awareness with business week(1), I don't think they think that's their job (1), Board works to develop high tech career skills for kids after high school (1)

Community Leader Question #4:

Question #4C: Do you feel your community would support the types of infrastructure improvements that would promote economic growth? Do you see the local school district being able to assist in removing these barriers and promoting a pro-growth attitude in the community?
Community leaders' responses: Yes (5), Maybe (2); Reasons (Yeses): Finally got the wrong people out of the road (1), Residents want to see improvements that will revitalize downtown (1), Because of our partnerships we have been able to secure plenty of state and federal funding (1), The community wants to protect its investment (1), Community would support it, but they can't afford the improvements (1), (maybes) Depends on what is being done and are we getting enough bang for our buck (1), Agricultural part of the district doesn't want the change, and taxpayers aren't ready to pay for improvements with the hope that some business will come (1); School Support: Yes (6), No (1), Reasons: (Yeses) By being vocal about the improvements being good for the area (1), Recognize the needs of local businesses and point out that jobs are available right here (1), Better education system draws better people from outside to move in (1), Just be apart of the discussions (1), Participate in the local Chamber of Commerce and the Olympus Mount Chamber of Commerce (1), Promote involvement and growth-minded children to step in and lead the community forward (1), (Noes) I just don't know where they would fall into the mix (1)

**Business Leader Question #5:**

Questions #5B: From your perspective, what direct impact, if any, do the local public school districts have on the following: Workforce quality? Economic development? Local tax revenues?

Business leaders' responses: Development of reading, writing, and mathematics skills (8); Character training and work ethic development (7); Counselors need to promote skilled labor and trades as a viable option for more students to make a family supported wage (8); Limited taxation (school taxes can act as a lure or a deterrent) and don't waste our tax dollars (7); Promote Tax abatement and other tax incentives to make area more conducive to industry and manufacturing (7); Be a part of the Chamber and other pro-business organizations (6); Promote consolidation and other efficiency measures (2)

**Community Leader Question #5:**

Question #5C: What do you see as the primary role of public education in strengthening the local community? Do you see the school district as a potential partner in local economic development? In what capacity? Would you be willing to partner with local districts in these endeavors? In what ways?

Community leaders' responses: Provide a quality education and train the skilled labor workforce (6), Promote staying in the area (4), Make sure kids know that college isn't the only path to a well paying job (6), Tax abatements and exonerations (1); Community partnering with the schools: Yes (7); Reasons: Support school activities, clubs, scholarships, and team sponsorships (1), Share facilities with the school (1), Meet regularly to discuss issues and needs from both parties (1), Provide stipends for specific training programs (welding) (1), Have a presence in the school and work with school affiliated organizations e.g. boosters and PTO (1), I don't know what we could do (1)

**Business Leader Questions:**

Question #6B: Have you experienced any economic impacts from the cuts in education funding to local public schools? If so, have the cuts impacted your business? In what ways? If they haven't yet, how would you envision these cuts impacting your business over the next 5 to 10 years?

Business leaders' responses: Limited to no impact (6); Already has because we cannot find skilled labor (1); In 5 to 10 years: Will not be able to find any skilled labor (6); Cuts to schools will make cyber and charters more appealing and we will end up with a poorly (worse) prepared labor force (1); Taxes are going to get repressive to business and residents (2); Districts will be hunting for alternative funding and will look to businesses to fund programs (1); Social service providers will be strapped because of falling donations and higher need (1)

Question #7B: Do you see opportunities for school districts to support and promote economic development in your community? If yes, in what ways? If no, why not? Are you willing to partner with school districts in promoting economic development? If yes, then how would you see this working?

Business leaders' responses: Promote career awareness through factory tours, job shadowing, guest speakers, and work release programs (8); Teach and require the student to learn stronger basic skills and develop stronger problem solving skills (8); Willing to partner with school districts (8); Business involvement in promoting community economic development, career awareness in schools, and on the job site (field trips) (7)

Superintendent, Business, and Community Leader Questions:

Question #7S: As a superintendent, how do you stay current with the workforce needs of local businesses and the community?
Superintendents' responses: All superintendents have been involved in the United Way Early Childhood initiative; 6 of the districts have hosted some level of Chamber of Commerce meet, greet, and discuss meeting; All superintendents stated it was good to relate concerns and priorities and learn of workforce and economic issues of businesses; One superintendent says the meetings are not productive and that their area is not conducive to growth (this superintendent does not reflect the attitude of the other superintendents); Most superintendents see them as an excellent way to collaborate and build opportunities for partnering in student related activities
Questions #8B and #6C: As a business/community leader, have you ever had discussions with the local public schools about the region's economic and workforce development needs? If not, why? If so, what types of discussion activities did you participate in? How effective were these activities? If not, what could improve these discussions? If so, what made the discussions useful or relevant?
Business leaders' responses: Discussion on workforce development: Yes (6), No, but are willing (2); To network and communicate needs and share resources (8); To work together to promote business and economic development (8);
Community leaders' responses: Yes (5), No, but would participate if asked (1) Just haven't gotten to it yet (1); Meetings with the board or school leaders (3), Business week activities, entrepreneurship, and workforce development (4); Effectiveness of meetings: Yet to be seen (3) College preparation isn't what employers are looking for (2), a total waste of time (1)
Question #7S (cont.) Have you ever attended a business round table or similar discussion of local and regional workforce and economic development? If so, do you feel the meeting was an effective use of your time? Why? What did you take away from those discussions? How did the information gathered impact your development of your school district's academic program?
Superintendents' responses: Several have attended round table events, and several have hosted round table events; All but one superintendent see these efforts as time well spent, and these events either confirmed they were moving in the right direction academically or have impacted the program design/decision making process
Questions #8B & #6C (cont.) Have you ever attended a business, education, and community round table or other similar discussions of local and regional workforce and economic development? If you were invited to participate in a round table type forum, would you? What do you think could be accomplished? If you have attended such a discussion, do you feel the meeting was an effective use of your time? Why? What did you take away from those discussions? Did you feel that the educational leaders were responsive to your opinions and positions?
Business leaders' responses: Participated: Yes (7), No, but would (1); Effective use of their time (7); Promotes working together and makes people aware of local and regional opportunities (7), Developed understanding of how early childhood impacts the future workforce (1), People love to talk about problems but fall short on execution (1), Nothing new, but good to hear it again (1)
Community leaders' responses: Participated: Yes (5), No (1), Not yet (1); Excellent change to find out what business and educators need (5); Educational responsiveness: Yes (5); Why: Very enthusiastic about welding program (1), School realize we need people in the trades (3), School helped direct us to resources we would need (1)

Superintendent and Community Leader Question:

Question #8S and #7C As the superintendent/community leader, have you been involved with other community government or business organizations? If not, why? Which organizations? If you are involved, what do you see as the benefits to this involvement?

Superintendents' response: All superintendents are on the United Way Board; 6 of the 7 superintendents are members of the Local Chamber of Commerce; other group memberships include; Masonic Lodge, Kiwanis, Rotary Club, Penn-Northwest Board, Summer Recreation Board, Career Center Board, and two superintendents are part of community development boards

Community leaders' responses: Yes (7): Organizations: Chamber of Commerce, (6), Penn North West (1), Regional Planning commission (1), Olympus Mount Foundation (1), County School Business Partnership (1), Olympus Mount Enterprise Zone (1)

Business and Community Leader Question:

Question #9B and #8C: With more and more educational options available, what do you feel would be necessary for local public school districts to maintain their position as the number one educational source in the local community? Do you see ways that businesses can assist schools in maintaining their educational status? If so, in what ways? If not, why?

Business leaders' responses: Responses are varied: Hire good teachers (1), Promote career ready students and training (8), Consolidate schools (1), Create the best educated and trained student possible (8), Keep curriculum relevant (1); Businesses can assist through: Providing job shadowing opportunities, job descriptions, side-by-side programs, promote opportunities to stay local, support technology integration, and help to keep schools aligned to current regional workforce needs (a little of everyone)

Community leader responses: Community involvement (2), STEM and STREAM training (1), Communicate with local businesses in their own backyard (1), Provide a better product and Vo-Tech training (1), Staying current with curriculum and cutting-edge technology (1), I don't know (1); Community support of the local school: Long range planning that benefits the school and the community (1), Be conduit between business and the school (1), Provide services and educate the citizens as to what our taxes actually go towards (1), Continue to support the school through working together to keep both the community and the school strong (1), I don't know (1)

Superintendent Questions:

Question #9S: Has your school district been involved in supporting local economic development? If so, what has your district done to support local economic development? Do you find local businesses willing to collaborate with the district? If so, in what ways? If so, have these business leaders' views of the district's role affected the academic programs in your district? If so, do you feel these possible changes benefit your students' academic preparedness or hinder it? Why?

Superintendents' responses: Four superintendents' districts have participated in TIFs and other forms of tax abatements; One superintendent does pro-bono work to assist in training and workforce development; Six superintendents collaborate on either summer jobs or work-release programs; One superintendent has students directly involved in non-profit community service type activities

Question #10S: Have you looked into how your district could generate its own revenues? If not, why? If so, what types of business activities are you considering? If so, do you feel your board is supportive of these types of activities? Why? Do you see these revenue solutions as being capable of supporting a significant portion of the district's budget? What portion of the district's budget? What will it take for the district to sustain these solutions?
Superintendents' responses: All districts are promoting cost saving initiatives e.g. bringing back special students to be serviced in the district; Two superintendents have revenue generating tuition programs; Two superintendents' districts are looking into a foreign student tuition program to bring in 10 Asian students next school year at a rate of \$10,000 a student; One superintendent has applied to create an entrepreneurial charter school, but the school board elected not to move forward; One superintendent's district has entered into early childhood collaboration activities and selling of services that generate approximately 5% of the district's budget; All other superintendents' programs are not significant revenue generators

Superintendent, Business, and Community Leader Question:
Question #11S, Politicians promote charter schools, vouchers, and school consolidation as ways to improve local schools. Do you feel that any of these different educational solutions could be implemented to make your district more economically viable?
Questions #10B and #9C: What do you think about the following options to make schools more economically viable?
Partnering with or converting your local district into a charter school?
Superintendents' responses: One superintendent had staff complete a charter school application and formally presented it to the board; All other superintendents see the charter school option as a situation where the strong will get stronger and the weak will get weaker; One superintendent stated: "This is not the public education system I signed up for"
Business leaders' responses: Against charter schools for various reasons (6); For competition, but against charter schools (1); Didn't know what a charter school was (1)
Community leaders' responses: Not a good idea (4), Good idea (2), Don't know well enough (1)
Using vouchers to improve student mobility?
Superintendents' responses: Four superintendents state emphatic NO to vouchers, Two superintendents see vouchers a plus for their schools, One superintendent sees no gain to vouchers to their district
Business leaders' responses: Against vouchers for various reasons (6), Promotes competition (3), Improves mobility, but still against it (1)
Community leaders' responses: Don't like vouchers, or vouchers will hurt the local school (5), Good idea to have choices (1), Doesn't know how vouchers work (1)
Creation of regional magnet programs or consortiums?
Superintendents' responses: Five of the superintendents are already working toward the creation of a STREAM/Entrepreneurship course at the Linden Pointe Business Incubator; All participate in the Career Center; Two superintendents see magnet schools as not feasible due to geographic locations; One superintendent feels public schools are for general comprehensive education and magnet programs should be done at the community college level and technical school level
Business leaders' responses: Supports the idea of regional magnet schools and consortiums (7), Not big enough as a count or community (1), Wants to create 3 or 4 super schools (1)
Community leaders' responses: Not ready or feasible (3), Sounds like a good option (3), Larger school that would afford more options (1)
School consolidation and school district mergers?

Superintendents' responses: Five superintendents see consolidation as inevitable but at little or no cost savings; Two superintendents see the geographic limitations making it not cost effective; All superintendents see the public (parents and taxpayers) as being the biggest barrier to consolidation
Business leaders' responses: Don't think people will go for it (2), Community struggles with the concept (1), Will be driven from a financial stand point (1), We will see some kind of collaboration in the future (1), Support consolidation, but transportation will be an issue (1), Totally supports consolidation (1), Support consolidation only if true financial savings are attached (1)
Community leaders' responses: It should happen or is inevitable (7), There will be winners and losers (1), Sports are an issue (1), More opportunities for all (1), Yes, but the area isn't ready yet (1)

Community Leader Final Two Questions:

Question #10C: Do you see the local school district's competitiveness impacting the educational opportunities of the community's children? If not, why? If so, in what ways? Do you want to see changes in how the school prepares the community's children? If so, in what ways would you like schools to change?
Community leaders' responses: Yes (7), Schools can turn around the community (1), Better education the more competitive the area is (1), School need to think "outside the box" (1), Quality matters but community demographics play a role (1); Changes: Diversification of Curriculum and STEM education (4), Not all student are college bound (1), 12 month schooling so kids don't have time to get in trouble (1)
Question #11C: We've talked a lot about the economic challenges affecting the local business, education, and community entities. To that point, how important do you feel it is to have a strong team of leaders from business, education, and the community areas work together to overcome these challenges? Why?
Community leaders' responses: Yes (7), Together we can make better things happen for everyone involved (7)

Superintendent and Business Final Question:

Question #12S and #11B: Can you identify two community leaders who you feel could give insights into the community's economic development? Why do you feel this person is a strong candidate for this study?
Superintendents' responses: Several superintendents recommended the same business leaders, four superintendents recommended city managers; One superintendent recommended his Masonic lodge brother who was mayor; Two superintendents couldn't recommend anyone at all and didn't have any contact with anyone at the township or municipal supervisor or councilmen level; In general: Several superintendents had reservations or struggled with who they could recommend, and only one superintendent clearly knew who to recommend, choosing his lodge brother, the mayor
Business leaders' responses: Provided community leaders to be interviewed (5); Couldn't or declined to recommend a community leader (3)

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