THE REDEFINED ROLE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

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This study examined the role of the superintendent in an era of reform. The primary interest was to determine how current superintendents perceived their role in a context of school reform, what kinds of supports they need to effectively function in their redefined role, and where superintendents find these supports that will enable them to be successful in their redefined role.

This is rich, descriptive, narrative, qualitative study that occurred in a natural setting. Participants were chosen because of their experiences and because they were willing to share their thoughts. Methods of data collection included a survey, semi-structured interviews, and a personal journal. Interview data was transcribed and organized into major and minor themes. Personal thoughts were kept in a journal for the purpose of adding reflective thoughts to the study.

This researcher found that the role of the superintendent in an era of reform is constantly being redefined and evolves through his/her context. There is a universal context for all superintendents that is characterized by change, collaboration, and financial leadership. Yet, at any given moment, the universal context interfaces with personal beliefs/values, personal context, professional growth, types of support, and internal/external influences. The interfacing is fluid because of the variety of demand. Gaps full of tension are created between a superintendent's beliefs, behavior, and skill vs. influences and demands. This researcher concludes that the superintendent's role in an era of reform can be described as a Gap Closer.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Our present school system and the way children learn are being challenged by the complexities and the social challenges of our society. Houston (2001) refers to these challenges as the "demanding D's" of change. He identifies changes in demographics and diversity. Shifts and diversification of populations challenge district leaders. Adding to societal complexity is the division between the haves and the have nots. Inequity is enhanced when Americans place emphasis on remediation instead of prevention.

Several D's are most directly related to the role of the superintendent of the future. Education is now being deregulated by such issues as homeschooling, vouchers, and privatization. Houston (2001) states, "The superintendent of the future will also serve as the broker of services and as an ensurer of equity" (p.430). Devolution is the push toward decentralization. Houston states, "Successful superintendents of the 21st century will be those who find a way of leading by sharing power and by engaging members of the organization and the community in the process of leading" (p. 430). Demassification refers to increase in the number of choices of how people can spend their time. Because of some many choices, there are fewer common experiences. The result is a threat to the glue that holds society together. Disintermediation is the phenomenon that occurred because of the introduction of technology. According to Houston, "Twenty-first-century superintendents will understand that learning is no

longer about place, it is now about process. . . And choosing to face this new future from a position of strength will require a new breed of leader" (p. 431).

Fullan (2001) agrees with Houston about the societal complexities that are facing district leaders. He contends that it is grounded in the rapid, nonlinear changes that our society is experiencing. According to Fullan, one reason for this kind of unprecedented change is the availability of information. We have become an information society because of its easy access. Knowledge gained through business information and global information has influenced the educational community (Fullan, 2001). Such a context requires today's district leaders to understand the concept of change and its relationship to reform.

Successful district leaders understand change so that they can influence it, not control it. In doing so, reform efforts place new demands on district leaders. They are being asked to do things that they have not done in the past. Fullan (2001) states:

> This is the leader's dilemma. On the one hand, failing to act when the environment around you is radically changing leads to extinction. On the other hand, making quick decisions under conditions of mind-racing mania can be equally fatal. (p. ix)

The challenge for district leaders is how to cultivate and sustain learning under these conditions of continuous, complex change. Since change often ignites intense emotions, effective leadership is key. Additionally, how can district leaders then sustain success? Fullan (2001) stated, "But there is one… leadership is needed for problems that do not have easy answers" (p. 2). He adds that in order to support a change process, district leaders are often called upon to alter or to reculture the environment or context.

Reculturing transforms that way things are done. Heifetz (as cited in Fullan, 2001) asserts, "Instead of looking for saviors, we should be calling for leadership that will challenge us to face problems for which there are not simple, painless solutions – problems that require us to learn in new ways" (p. 3).

Fullan (2001) suggests five components of leadership for addressing this new mindset of leadership. The components are independent yet they are mutually reinforcing forces for positive change. The components for this framework for leadership are moral purpose, understanding change, relationship building, knowledge creation and sharing, and coherence making. Fullan explains the components as:

- Moral purpose means acting with intention of making a positive difference in the lives of employees, customers, and society as a whole. Moral purpose is critical to long term success.
- It is essential for leaders to understand change. Guidelines to think about productive change include: (a) the goal is not to innovate the most; (b) it is not enough to have the best ideas; (c) appreciate the early difficulties of trying something new – the implementation dip; (d) redefine resistance as a potential positive force; (e) reculturing is the name of the game; (f) never a checklist, always complexity.
- Relationships are improved through successful change initiatives. Effective leaders foster purposeful interactions and problem solving
- We are living in an information age is a cliché but true. However, leaders turn the information into knowledge. Turning information into knowledge is a social process rooted in moral purpose, purposeful change and positive relationships.

- There is continuous search for coherence. Yet, effective leaders also ambiguously reside on the edge in order to sustain creativity. This disequilibrium is common and valuable as long as coherence is continuously sought.

In an era of standards based reform, school leaders and school systems are held accountable for the improvement of student learning. Leaders cannot just implement changes. Mere change is not enough. Today's leaders strive for improvement in student learning. Improvement is comprised of the elements of challenge and support. According to Elmore (2000):

> Improvement is change with direction, sustained over time, that moves entire systems, raising the average level of quality and performance while at the same time decreasing the variation among units, and engaging people in analysis and understanding of why some actions seem to work and others don't. (p.13)

The effectiveness of educational reform is often measured by the identification and measurement of continuous progress towards the achievement of standards. Elmore (2004) contends that the current standards reform movement involves a fundamental shift in the relationship between policy and practice. This current reform movement began more than 20 years ago and has experienced steady development. During this time both the federal and state government became involved. This, in turn, had an impact on state policy. States have sustained a high level of involvement with policy. The effect of this involvement has reached the school and classroom practice level and has forced all states to adjust their accountability systems.

Over the past 15 years, the theme for reform has been the accountability of student performance. Federal, state, and local policy has seen a shift from the distribution of inputs

(money) to outputs (student test scores). Such a shift requires different leadership responses than in the past. Standards based reform demands a new kind of leader (Elmore, 2004).

Houston (2001) agrees with Elmore and further states:

> But there is much about the current role that is dysfunctional. Expectations and resources are mismatched. Accountability and authority are misaligned. This means there must be a shift in expectations and a corresponding shift in the role. Part of the shift that must take place is a change in how the world sees and treats superintendents. But the bigger part of the shift must take place in the hearts and minds of those who fill the role. For one who chooses to confront the challenges of the superintendency will make all the differences. (p. 429)

The paradoxical role of the superintendent requires a new kind of leader. A leader that can effectively face the challenge of external pressures such as state policies for accountability and the information age along with internal possibilities such as guiding students along their life's path, altering organizational behavior, and expanding future possibilities for entire communities (Houston, 2001).

A school district's educational leader, the superintendent, seeks to improve the quality of education for all learners and seeks to improve the quality of performance of all teachers and administrators (Wallace, 1996).

Wallace (1996) states:

> The emphasis is on leadership, for although management is as an important part of the role and preparation of a

> superintendent, one must remember that management skills alone are not enough for those who face the challenge of educational reform. (p. ix)

Today's superintendent is the visionary, educational leader for the school district and the community. He/she guides the direction for the future through an agenda for excellence (Wallace, 1996). The agenda for excellence is, in essence, goals for the future. His/her actions to reach these goals make him/her a visionary leader. Wallace asserts that the role of a visionary leader can be described as a direction setter, a change agent, a spokesperson, and a coach. He states the following:

> As a change agent, he or she is the catalyst for implementing initiatives to bring about the shared vision; the superintendent must understand change processes and anticipate actions needed to achieve the excellence agenda. As a spokesperson, the superintendent becomes the chief advocate for the district's agenda. He or she must articulate the agenda to various publics in ways that will be meaningful to them. Finally, the superintendent empowers and guides the professionals under his or her aegis to create the conditions to implement the excellence agenda. (p.4-5)

Houston (2001) agrees with Wallace that an educational leader of the future will be more than a manager of buildings, busses, books, budgets, and bonds. He stated, "Superintendents of the future must see themselves as village builders. They can use the centrality of their institutes to help re-create a support system. But they must do so by reaching outward to connect to the resources of the broader community" (p. 32).

It will be necessary for the successful superintendent of the future to approach his/her job differently. In fact, superintendents are being asked to do things that they have not done in the past. Successful superintendents in the future will search for internal and external means in order to build a support system for student learning. According to Houston (2001), superintendents of the future will be required to be skillful at the "crucial C's" of collaboration, connection, communication, community building, child advocacy, and curricular choices (p. 431). Leaders of the future see the effect that contextual issues have upon student learning and they muster support for students to be successful within that context. Superintendents of successful school reform are "village builders" (Houston, 2001).

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

School leaders are facing the complexities of society and the changing landscape of education due to educational state/federal reform efforts aimed at improving ALL students' learning. The superintendent, as the educational leader of the school district (Wallace, 1996), is expected to lead within this changing context. How will the role of the superintendent be defined in lieu of this changing context?

1.2 QUESTIONS

1. What does the current literature say about the key variables that define the changing role of the superintendent in an era of reform?

2. How do superintendents perceive their redefined role in the context of school reform?
3. What supports do superintendents need to effectively function in their redefined role?
4. Where do superintendents get support that will enable them to be successful in their redefined role?

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

As I conducted my literature review, I found that recent literature is beginning to address the changing role of the superintendent within educational reform. The purpose of my study is to add to this growing literature.

For the purpose of my study, I am interested in surveying and interviewing superintendents who are members of the Superintendents Forum at the University of Pittsburgh to seek to find out how they perceive their changing role in order to meet the complex needs of their school district. Additionally, I will study what they believe to be their role within the context standards of learning communities, leadership and resources as stated by the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) standards. The conceptual framework for my study is based on the belief that familiarity with the standards does not translate into high quality professional development. This belief led the NSDC to create Innovation Configurations (ICs). These are descriptive actions of five role groups, one being the superintendent. The NSDC collaborated with Hall & Hord, 2001 along with Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin & Hall, 1987 to create IC maps to more clearly identify and describe the standards in action. The IC maps that are intended to help leaders understand what the NSDC standards mean and to describe when the standards are operational. I want to find out if a specific group of superintendents, who are

members of the Superintendents Forum of the University of Pittsburgh, believe that their role in learning communities, leadership and resources has an impact on student learning.

The NSDC identifies the learning community standard as: Staff development that improves the learning of all students organizes adults into learning communities whose goals are aligned with those of the school and district. Their rationale is that high quality staff development impacts all students learning and is different from workshop driven approaches. High quality professional development that has the highest impact on student learning is through a commitment of continuous learning through adult learning teams.

The leadership standard, as identified by the NSDC, is stated as: Staff development that improves the learning of all students requires skillful school and district leaders who guide continuous instructional improvement. Their rationale is that successful, ambitious learning goals for students and adults requires skillful leadership skills. Effective leaders recognize the value in professional development as the key for supporting on-going improvement.

The resource standard states: Staff development that improves the learning of all students requires resources to support adult learning and collaboration. The NDSC ‘s position is that well designed and implemented professional development for school leaders is essential as a long term investment to successfully teaching all students to high standards. Resources are required to support coherent improvement efforts.

Along with input from researchers and practitioners, the NSDC wrote the first set of staff development standards in 1994. These 27 standards were presented in three editions for the high school, middle school and elementary school levels. In 2000 the NSDC believed that to be more effective in the field by practitioners, the standards were in need of revision. Mizell (as cited in Roy & Hord, 2003) offers that the 12 revised standards are intended as “guidelines for [planning

and providing] professional growth…in part as a reaction to frequent abuses of staff development, from concept to implementation" (p. 6). Historically, professional development produced no action or affect on student learning (Roy & Hord, 2003). Mizell agrees and continues to state:

> The standards are necessary because for too long professional development practices of too many school systems and schools have led nowhere. Year after year, their staff development has mounted to little more than a disparate set of adult learning activities with few demonstrable results other than the participants' mounting frustration… [NSDC's new standards] are informative and provocative, but not regulatory. They are clear and direct. (p.6)

The standards are intended to be guidelines for professional growth which in turn affects student learning.

Today's 12 revised standards (Appendix A) are framed around context, process, and content. However, during the 1970's, the focus of staff development was only on contents. Staff developers, at the time, believed that as long as the right content was chosen, then staff development would effectively fall into place (Roy, 2004). In 1978 the Rand studies were published. These studies scrutinized Title IV-C projects to evaluate their effectiveness. As a result of these studies, staff developers came to realize that factors other than content influenced the effectiveness and the sustainability of this study. They found:

- Teacher involvement was necessary for project success.
- While district support was essential, neither top-down nor grassroots efforts were sufficient. Collaboration was key.

- The greater the scope of change, the more time and effort are required.
- Staff may need to “reinvent” their own process for implementation.

Thus, process, along with content, was seen as an important focus for professional development. Additionally, by 1983, professional researchers came to realize another important area. Mohlman-Sparks (as cited in Roy, 2004) indicated that in order for teachers to be involved in decision making, there needed to be a context of acceptance. It was the administrative leaders of the district’s responsibility to provide such a context that logistically and psychologically supported teachers through any change process.

Roy (2004) states, “All three areas – content, process, and context – need to be in place to plan, design, and implement the kind of professional development that will impact student learning” (p. 2).

NSDC assumes that implementation of the standards will produce higher quality professional development, higher quality teaching, and high quality of learning. The NSDC asserts that familiarity with the standards was not enough. Pure awareness of the standards will not make a difference in the learning for all students. Therefore, the NDSC developed Innovation Configurations (IC) for the standards.

Innovation Configurations originated when a Texas Research and Development team visited a school to gauge the progress of a newly implemented mathematics initiative. According to Shirley Hord (as cited in Champion, 2003), a member of the original research team and program manager at the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, they observed that the interpretation and the implementation of the initiative looked grossly different in different classrooms. Such differences made it difficult for the team to understand and describe the initiative. Their confusion led to the development of a tool called Innovation Configurations.

Champion (2003) reports that the Innovation Configuration tool is a checklist that can be used to:

- Describe a new initiative to stakeholders;
- Set long range and interim goals;
- Establish realistic expectations and a timeline to implement each part of the initiative;
- Monitor and gauge implementation through observation
- Guide individuals or teams in self assessment;
- Gather data to diagnose emerging staff needs for professional development

According to Roy and Hord (2004), ICs enable the staff development standards to be identified and described in operation. ICs provide actions for role groups. ICs add clarity to actions for teachers, principals, central office staff, superintendents, and school board members. This is important for most innovations are typically implemented in a variety of ways with a variety in quality. In other words, implementation does not guarantee fidelity.

An IC map can be the tool to define the quality and to measure the fidelity along a continuum. Roy and Hord (2004) found that "IC maps identify the innovation's major components and describe various uses ranging from ideal implementation to nonuse along a continuum….The IC map can be used to measure the degree to which our implementation approached the ideal by being faithful to the desired outcomes – fidelity" (p.33).

IC maps measure the degree that an individual is approaching the vision for the desired outcome. NSDC (2003) developed the IC maps of standards for educators to:

- Have a clear and richly descriptive vision of what the standards look like in action (in schools, districts, state departments, etc.- wherever professional development occurs in order to support the continuous learning of staff members);
- Use the vision to design professional development so that teachers know what the standards look like in operation and how to use them;
- Use the vision to create precise plans and access sufficient resources for implementing the standards in staff development work and in the work of those who teach about professional development; and
- Use the vision to assess implementation of the standards. IC maps for staff development standards were created by analyzing the 2000

NSDC standards, by reviewing research, and by reviewing best practices of exemplary professional developers. After consulting with these resources and individual, the NSDC defined the desired outcomes of the ICs for each role group and then prioritized their set of actions along a continuum of actions. Additionally, a crosswalk was developed to illustrate a matrix of the relationship of actions across the role groups. The matrix was developed to communicate the interrelatedness and the systemic responsibility of standards.

IC maps can be used in a variety of ways. They can be used as a tool to evaluate a district or school level's professional development program in relation to standards. First, an IC map could identify which standards are strong and which are weak within a district or a building. A closer look at the map would describe a clearer picture of what that weak standard would look like if it were stronger. Such information could be used to guide further professional development initiatives at a building or a district level.

At a personal level, IC maps could be used for self-assessment of teachers and administrators own practices. This, too, would guide planning for professional development initiatives that would support individuals in their quest toward working toward the desired outcome.

At another level, the school board could use the information to guide policy making and budget development. An example, the learning community Standard 1 requires time for people to come together. Advocacy for such a standard has implications. In order to build the capacity to support the standard, policy and budget must first build a structure of support. Additionally, the superintendent could use the information for professional development advocacy and for the implementation of desired practices. Since ICs describe ideal practices, such information supports superintendents in supporting teachers in their quest for understanding and implementing best practices in their classrooms. In all cases, the ultimate goal is to increase the quality of professional learning in order to improve the learning of all students.

IC Maps and the Role of the Superintendent

My research focuses on the role of the Superintendent in relation to the NSDC standards. The Superintendent has an active role in each of the 12 standards. The standards are identified as a context, process, or product standard. However, my focus will be specific to the 3 context standards of learning communities, leadership, and resources.

Content and process standards are significant yet context standards set the environment in which the process and the content either succeed or fail. Additionally, I believe that content and process standards are embedded within the context. In other words, the type of impact and the

degree of impact of the content and process standards is influenced by their relationship to the context standard.

Fullan (2001) confirms the importance of context when he discusses the element of knowledge building within his leadership framework. He emphasizes the importance of the role of knowledge sharing, knowledge creation and knowledge management in organizational performance. However, he reminds us, "If you remember one thing about information, it is that it only becomes valuable in a social context" (Fullan, 2001, p. 78). Fullan (2001) further emphasizes the importance of context:

> This is a fantastic insight: learning in the setting where you work, or learning in context, is the learning with the greatest payoff because it is more specific (involves the situation) and because it is social (involves the group). Learning in context is developing leadership and improving the organization as you go. Such learning changes the individual and the context simultaneously. (p.126)

The first context standard for superintendents addresses learning communities. The NSDC (2003) stated, "Staff development that improves the learning of all students organizes adults into learning communities whose goals are aligned with those of the school and district" (p. 165).

Professional learning requires a different approach from the workshop driven approach. The most effective professional development occurs when teams meet on an ongoing schedule in order to advance the development of the building or district goals. These teams, called learning communities, take collective responsibility for the learning of all students by examining students' achievement of standards, planning for more effective lessons, analyzing student work, and collaboratively solving problems of teaching and learning. School improvement is

commonly hindered because of incoherence. Learning communities are diverted from incoherence because its development of focus and clear direction by a variety of members ranging from staff to administrators to school board members.

A superintendent's role within the context standard of learning community is measured by desired outcomes: (a) 1.1 understands and implements a recognition and incentive system that rewards collaboration that achieves district goals; (b) 1.2 creates policies and structures that support the implementation of learning communities within the district; (c) 1.3 ensures that district administrators are prepared to be skillful leaders and members of learning team; (d) 1.4 participates in learning communities that focus on continuous improvement.

The second context standard for superintendents addresses leadership. The NSDC (2003) stated, "Staff development that improves the learning of all students requires skillful school and district leaders who guide continuous instructional improvement" (p. 169).

Leaders at all levels recognize the importance of the link between professional development and improved student learning. Leaders can effectively communicate the importance of this link to school boards, communities, and parents. Leaders are advocates of quality professional development.

Quality professional development is created and sustained by leaders who combine both pressure and support to achieve district goals. At the same time, they are establishing partnerships within the community along with their demonstration of values and practices that support the district. These leaders model and promote the school's organizational culture.

The school culture supports distributive leadership (Roy & Hord, 2003) in which the district's leadership responsibilities are distributed among employees. Elmore (2000) further explains:

> In any organized system, people typically specialize, or develop particular competencies, that are related to their predispositions, interests, aptitudes, prior knowledge, skills, and specialized roles. Furthermore, in any organized system, competency varies considerably among people in similar roles;…Organizing these diverse competencies into a coherent whole requires understanding how individuals vary, the particular knowledge and skill of one person can be made to complement that of another…Distributed leadership does not mean that no one is responsible for the overall performance of an organization. It means, rather, that the job of the administrative leaders is primarily about enhancing the skills and the knowledge of people in the organization, creating a common culture of expectations around the use of those skills and knowledge, holding the various pieces of the organization together in a productive relationship with each other, and holding individuals accountable for their contributions to the collective result. (p. 14-15)

The superintendent's role within the context standard of leadership is measured by desired outcomes: (a) 2.1 ensures that improved student achievement is a district priority: (b) 2.2 promotes the understanding that staff effectiveness is the foundation for student achievement; (c) 2.3 advocates for results-driven professional learning; (d) 2.4 supports school-based professional learning practices; (e) 2.5 ensures that intended results of district-based staff development are articulated; (f) 2.6 creates a culture that rewards innovation and support continuous

improvement; (g) 2.7 advocates and practices distributed leadership to create commitment and ownership of district goals.

The third context standard for superintendents addresses resources. The NSDC (2003) stated, "Staff development that improves the learning of all students requires resources the support adult learning and collaboration" (p. 173).

The NSDC recognizes that a district can view their investment in professional development as a long term investment or as a short term expense that diminishes funds. If the view is that latter, the NSDC recommends that funds could be used for support in a variety of ways such as in-house trainers, coaches, outside experts, substitutes for teachers' release time, or for teacher stipends. Nonetheless, in order for such to happen, the NSDC recommends districts to allocate at least ten percent of their budget to staff development and at least 25 percent of a teachers' work time devoted to collaboration. If this were to happen, teachers also would need to demonstrate their new knowledge and skill and its impact on student learning. This approach requires a direct link between professional development and might require significant modifications in collective bargaining contracts. Ultimately, resources are spent in order to maximize adult learning in order to maximize student learning.

The superintendent's role in the context standard of resources is described by desired outcomes: (a) 3.1 focuses on efforts on a small number of high priority goals that can be accomplished with available resources; (b) 3.2 allocates professional development resources to attain school and district goals; (c) 3.3 adequately funds comprehensive, district wide professional learning; (d) 3.4 expects all leaders in the district to implement effective professional learning; (e) 3.5 promotes the use of 25% of the workweek for job embedded

learning; (f) 3.6 negotiates collective bargaining agreements that support results driven professional learning.

The social process of change is not a simple process. McGowan and Miller (2001) state that school change is not simple for variables such as high expectations, common standards, parent involvement, technology, assessment, professional development, funding, and facilities all permeate the equation. In addition, these variables are influenced by mandates, reports, research, and professional associations. They state, "We cannot just manage or administer our way through school change for its complexity requires a process of adaptive learning at the school, district, state and federal levels".

Effective leadership is critical and it must be local so that the leaders can help people cope with change, set direction, deflect fear and criticism, and engage all stakeholders for the sake of school improvement (McGowan and Miller, 2001). Peterson and Barnett (2005) agree and continue to state their concern that a superintendent's role is fragmented and consumed with politics and conflict. The ability to be the instructional leader can be an elusive goal. At the same time, superintendents are expected to have blended roles which occur at varying times depending on the public. To face the challenges of reform, success requires flexibility to make appropriate adjustments to the role of the leader.

1.4 DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following definitions are meant to bring clarity of understanding to this study:

1. National Staff Development Council (NCSD) as defined on their website (www.nsdc.org) – a non-profit professional association that is committed to ensuring success for all

students through staff development and school improvement. Their goal is that all teachers in all schools will experience high quality professional learning as part of their daily work by 2007.

2. Innovation Configurations maps (IC maps) as defined by Roy & Hord (2003) - identify and describe the new staff development standard in practice. IC maps define the quality and the fidelity of the implementation of the staff development standards.
3. Superintendents Forum of the University at Pittsburgh as defined by the University of Pittsburgh website at www.pitt.edu – a continuing professional development program for western Pennsylvania regional members that provides opportunities for superintendents to stay current in emerging issues of school leadership.
4. Staff development/professional development (For purpose of clarification within this study, these terms are interchangeable), as defined by the National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2004 – what individuals or groups of individuals do to improve themselves as professionals.
5. School or District leader (For the purposes of this study, these terms are interchangeable) – as defined by this researcher for this study as the superintendent.

1.5 SUMMARY

As the educational leader of a school district, a superintendent is held accountable for the improvement of all students' learning. However, his/her role of the past is being challenged to meet the complex social demands of our society such as demographics, diversity, decentralization, devolution, diversification, demassification, and disintermediation. Today we

live in a complex educational era of reform in which leaders are expected to effectively lead in complex ways. In order to meet the demands of current reform efforts, school leaders are required to understand their role within the context of the new demands, to develop an action plan for an educational excellence agenda, and then to assess the outcome of the plan. The assessment often requires change in roles, change in responsibilities, and change in direction. In order to sustain the effectiveness of change efforts, school leaders are held responsible for planning for their own growth and for providing challenge, pressure and support for the growth of others. Ultimately, leaders are held accountable for leading learning.

School reform demands a redefinition of leadership. This redefinition requires distributive leadership in which there is collective responsibility for pressuring and supporting individuals and systems to change perceptions, thinking, and action. As leaders are being held accountable for student performance, Elmore (2000) indicates that standards based reform challenges leaders to rethink the structure of school organizations and the roles of leaders.

Change is not a leader's option. Large scale and sustained change leads to improvement. When improvement occurs there can be a change in system's design and values. In the past, the teaching environment was characterized as practice by volunteerism or preference. Elmore (2000) contends that volunteerism causes (a) innovations that are highly correlated to personal values . . . and tends to be adopted only by a small proportion of receptive teachers at any point in time, (b) innovations that are highly disconnected from any collective goal or purpose of the school or school system. (p. 7)

In the past teachers worked in isolation and district leaders buffered them from the consequences of their decisions. This model became known as loose-coupling (Weick 1976; Rowan 1990; Meyer and Rowan 1992 (as cited in Elmore 2000). "Derived from the

institutional sociology, this view, in brief, posits that the "technical core" of education. . . resides in individual rooms, not in the organization that surrounds them" (Elmore, 2000, p. 7).

In an era of reform, the environment is characterized by discourse, inquiry, and debate. Contrary to the past, leaders' work is collective. At the same time, today's district leaders attempt to buffer teachers from unnecessary, unfocused intrusions to their teaching (Elmore, 2000).

Standards based reform forces the redefinition of the roles within leadership positions. Reform demands accountability for ALL students' learning from these new kinds of leaders. In order to respond to the needs of all learners within an era of school reform, the superintendent, as the lead learner, is required to collaboratively evolve his/her role along with the current demands of current and future educational reform movements.

2.0 REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

As I reviewed the literature, I searched to find the key variables that helped to define and support the changing role of a superintendent in an age of current reform. I categorized my findings into three areas: change/reform, leadership/reform, superintendent/reform.

2.1 THE RELATIONSHIP OF CHANGE TO EDUCATIONAL REFORM

Fullan (2001) states that as society gets more complex, educational leadership gets more complex. Since today's public educational system operates within a complex society facing competition in international markets, our students are required to perform to standards of excellence. Leaders analyze complex educational reform efforts within a context that is non linear. Such a context requires today's leaders to understand the concept and the process of change.

Green (2001) contends that the public's concern about educational quality has fueled reform. Reform has gone through phases of focus for the change. The phases progressed through alterations in governance to alternations in structure to alterations in teaching. Green believes that these reform initiatives have brought about change but not enough to affect the large number of students that attend our public schools. Because the latest focus for change is

academic standards for students, identifying assessment measures and benchmarks, Green believes that a new view of the educational process is required.

In his study, Green (2001) collected data from a two year study of 13 school districts engaged in reform focused around academic standards and assessment. Green concluded, " . . . it was determined that a redefinition of roles and relationships precedes success in districtwide reform efforts". (p. 738). The redefinition of roles and responsibilities included superintendents, principals and teachers. Changes occurred in the way people thought about personnel, governance, and instructional decisions. What emerged was a collaborative and cooperative spirit.

Change themes include moral purpose, understanding change, developing relationships, knowledge building, and coherence (Fullan, 2001). These elements combine to create synergy for change. Synergy ignites a change process. Kotter (1996) identified an eight step change process to describe the task facing leaders who try to bring about reform:

1. Establish a sense of urgency
2. Form guiding coalitions
3. Create a vision
4. Communicate the vision
5. Empower others to act on the vision
6. Plan for and create short-term wins
7. Consolidate improvements and produce more change
8. Institutionalize new approaches

Change often ignites human emotions. Therefore, there is a need for a new kind of leadership to face this challenge and the complexity of the change. Guskey (2000) asserts that

researchers have come to realize that when individuals are faced with demands for improvement and change, they experience the same set of concerns. A researched based program for aiding in such innovations, the Concerns Based Adoption Model, offers a way to understand and address concerns of change. Its most common used component is "stages of concern" (Holloway, 2003). Hord (as cited in Holloway, 2003) as one of the principal authors of the concept states, "I run into people all the time who have heard of the stages of concern and kind of keep them in the back of their mind". (p. 1) Guskey (2000) continues to say, "These concerns evolve as participants become more familiar with related practices and consequences". (p. 182)

Holloway (2003) states the seven stages of concern as:

- Awareness: Aware that an innovation is being introduced but not really interested or concerned with.
- Informational: Interest in some information of the change.
- Personal: Wants to know the personal impact of the change.
- Management: Concerned about how the change will be managed in practice.
- Consequence: Interested on the impact on students or the school.
- Collaboration: Interested in working with colleagues to make the change effective.
- Refocusing: Begins refining the innovation to improve student learning results. (p.2)

Guskey (2000) agrees and further explains the stages:

- Awareness: Little concern
- Informational: Unworried about one's personal involvement in the change. Attention centered on information about the aspects of the change

- Personal: Focuses on one's adequacy to meet the demands of change. Attention is to the rewards, decision making, and potential conflicts of change
- Management: Focuses on the process and task of applying the change with attention to time demands and efficiency
- Consequence: Attention is given how the change affects students and what adaptations will be necessary to improve results
- Collaboration: Focuses on working with people regarding the change
- Refocusing: Exploring broader benefits from the change (p.183)

Hall (as cited in Holloway, 2003), one of the CBAM researchers and dean of the college of education at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas, states "Using the stages of concern, you can get a whole profile". (p. 2)

According to Guskey (2000), another CBAM aspect for implementing change that deserves addressing is the levels of use involved in implementing new practices. This involved the identification of actions or nonactions related to the participates involvement in the change. Hall and Hord (as cited in Guskey, 2000) label the levels of use as:

- Nonuse: no involvement or intent of involvement
- Orientation: seeks the resources and information for use
- Preparation: prepares for the first opportunity for use
- Mechanical: focus on mechanics which tends to be superficial with little reflection
- Routine: establishment of a pattern for use with little thought to improvement
- Refinement: varies use within the context to improve the impact on students

- Integration: makes deliberate efforts to coordinate with colleagues to achieve a stronger collective impact on students
- Renewal: reevaluates the quality of use and seeks alterations to improve the impact on students

According to Fullan (2001), a new framework for change is required and it develops through a process. Understanding the process involves the following:

1. The goal is not to innovate the most.
2. It is not enough to have the best ideas.
3. Appreciate the implementation dip.
4. Redefine resistance.
5. Reculturing is the name of the game.
6. Never a checklist, always complexity.

In order to support the change process, school environments are called upon to be recultured. Reculturing transforms the way things are done. It activates moral purpose through collaboration, respect of differences, and tests knowledge against results. Reculturing is promoted by the building of relationships, building knowledge, and by striving for coherence within a complex, non-linear world. (Fullan, 2001)

Elmore (2000) contends that the way leaders addressed change in the past is not an option in an era of standards based reform. In fact, improvement is needed, not change. Improvement requires changes in the way people think and act and in the way school systems are designed for both students and adults to learn. Hence, leadership is redefined.

Learning to lead differently requires a shift from role based conceptions to distributive views and requires a set of design principles to guide large scale improvement. Elmore (2000) states:

> The challenge lies in how to . . . construct relatively orderly ways for people to engage in activities that have as their consequences the learning of new ways to think about and do their jobs and how to put these activities in the context of reward structures to stimulate them for do more of what leads to large scale improvement and less of what reinforces the pathologies of the existing structure. (p. 36)

Resistance to change is a factor that cannot be ignored by leaders. It challenges reform movements and innovation. Depending on the leader's approach to dealing with resistance, it can either thwart goals, disrupt action plans, and undermine progress or it can managed to improve professional development, enhance program innovation, and provide rich opportunities for reflection, growth, and renewal (Janas, 1998).

Resistance as a positive force can occur through a three stop process (Janas, 1998) by being aware of resistance, identifying types and sources of resistance, and developing and applying proactive strategies for management of resistance.

In an interview with Larry Cuban, O'Neill (2000) asked, "Do you think schools are too resistant to change or too faddish?" Cuban responded, "Schools are extremely vulnerable to pressures from different constituents." (p. 6) Schools are a reflection to what the public wants. Cuban continued, "When David Tyack and I wrote *Tinkering Toward Utopia,* we used the metaphor of fireflies. We were speaking about the way that changes or reforms so frequently appear, shine brightly for a few moments, and then disappear again". Cuban told O'Neill, "The

innovations that have the best chance of sticking are those that have constituencies that grow around them". (p. 7)

O'Neill continued his interview with Cuban about the effect of social changes on the sustainability of change or reform. Deep-rooted concerns for democracy, for equity, and for preparing students for productive adult lives are a bigger factor influencing reform. Schools are a reflection of society. Examples of social changes that have promoted lasting changes in school include kindergarten and high schools. Kindergarten was the response to the need of society to give children early formal situations so that the child would have a better chance at achieving academic and financial success. The development of the comprehensive high school was a democratic institution that provided diverse opportunities that were embedded into different curriculums.

O'Neill (2000) asserts that the reform efforts that usually are not able to be sustained are those that are proposed by policy makers. He warns that sustainability is tainted when there is a discrepancy between the levels of policy talk (media rhetoric), policy action (programs and implementations adopted), and policy implementation (what occurs in the classroom). He concludes, "Schools reflect cultural, political, social and economic changes of the larger society. The school is not an institution apart – if anything, schools tend to be at the forefront of change in the society".

Davis (2004) contends that because of state and federal regulations and mandates, teachers and leaders feel disempowered. They feel frustrated about procedures that they feel give them no reason to think. They are only reacting to mandates.

Legislators have another point of view. They believe that the new mandates and regulations demand needed controls for management and budget. Davis (2004) suggests that if

educators change their beliefs, they may not feel restricted. Educators should strive to alter their perceptions.

There are several helpful hints for altering perceptions (Davis, 2004). First, is the belief that ordinary practice can be improved. All change is personal, social, and slow. Second, time is required to think. Time enables planning for change and offers increased attention to the complexities of the change situations. Such an approach would reduce the feeling of helplessness. Third, state and federal levels ignore particulars. However, particulars matter. Focus on knowledge, skills, and feelings so there is an increased possibility that this will aid in other's understanding.

Neisler (2000) believes that reform is needed because there is a new mission for public education. There is a new need for high skilled labor for the 21st century. Standards for success are imperative but demanding. If the standards are demanding then reform becomes complex because of the socioculture, economic, and political context that influences education.

According to Sparks (2003), reform is accompanied by actions based on how people see the world. Specifically, leader's actions are based on their own assumptions and mental modes. In order to do something different, we must see something different.

The National Staff Development Council (NSDC) identifies a theory for change by offering the following assumptions for transforming beliefs and practices (Sparks, 2003):

1. Leaders matter. Reform that produces quality teaching in all classrooms requires skillful leadership at the system and school levels. Such leadership is distributed broadly to teachers and others in the school community.
2. Significant change in teaching and learning begins with significant change in what leaders think, say and do. The goal of leadership development, therefore, is

deep understanding, transformational learning at the level of beliefs, and an unrelenting action orientation in the application of this understanding within a context of interpersonal accountability.

3. High quality professional learning for all teachers is crucially important if quality teaching is to occur in every classroom. Such learning is ultimately based in a high performance culture, the creation of which is a major and often neglected role of school leaders.
4. Because cultural and instructional change is intensely interpersonal, it is essential that leadership development efforts include the communication and problem solving skills necessary to promote positive, productive relationships and to sustain the energy and enthusiasm essential in maintaining the momentum of reform.
5. Most of us know more about how to be successful in our work than we regularly practice. Therefore, bridging the "knowing-doing" gap is a significant goal of a leader's professional development.
6. Federal, state and local policies matter. They can lead educators toward powerful or unproductive paths. If effective, policies provide a clear and compelling purpose for change which is grounded in student learning; develop teachers and administrators complex and intelligent behavior; and provide resources to maintain and sustain reform efforts over time. (p. 1-2)

The NSDC intends for these assumptions to guide state and local policies in order to aid in the attainment of the goal of producing high quality professional learning for all educators in all schools by 2007 (Sparks, 2003).

2.2 LEADERSHIP IN EDUCATIONAL REFORM

Harvard Business School professor, John Kotter (1996) suggests that studying the presence and absence of leadership in business organizations are relevant to school systems. School systems require successful planning for the role of the superintendent to be both a manager and a leader. In Kotter's interview with Bencivenga for *School Administrator*, he states, "Management is about coping with complexity. Leadership is about coping with change". (p. 59) Kotter continues to discuss the forces in business that will affect schools. He identifies the forces of globalization, technology, decentralization, and democratization. Kotter particularly states that the complexity of the management-leadership role for school leaders has increased. At the same time, school leaders' role is to help others to recognize that their lives will continue to change in new ways. The role of the new school leaders helps others to grow in order to cope.

The success of change is dependent upon the understanding of the styles of leadership (NASSP, 2004). Views of change are dependent on leadership style. The NASSP support the synthesis of the following styles for successful reform:

1. visionary leader – supports change but is too optimistic and has global assertions
2. technocratic leader – wants quantifiable results but ignores people concerns, short term gains overshadow long term gains
3. sympathetic leader – people focused but ignores quantifiable results and change stalls (p. 21)

Successful leaders of reform set conditions for change. They (a) look outward to diagnose what needs changed, (b) challenge beliefs and assumptions, (c) over time shape change into a vision for sustainability, (d) persist, and (e) include others to build coalitions, create opportunities, work through teams, and to make everyone a hero (NASSP, 2004).

Goleman (2000) reminds us that a leader's job is to get results. He wonders how leadership style affects results. He cites a study by a consulting firm of Hay/McBer which found six leadership styles each with different components of emotional intelligence. Goleman defines emotional intelligence as the ability to manage ourselves and our relationships effectively. Leadership is about achieving results. Goleman (1995) adds that the emotional domain is essential to leadership. The components of the emotional domain include emotional intelligence, self awareness, self regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills.

Goleman's (2000) leadership styles are:

1. coercive leaders – demand immediate compliance
2. authoritative leaders – mobilize people toward a vision
3. affiliative leaders – create emotional bonds and harmony
4. democratic leaders – build consensus through participation
5. pacesetting leaders – expect excellence and self direction
6. coaching leaders – develop people for the future (p. 80)

Goleman strongly contends that the importance of the findings of the study is not the styles themselves but the implications for actions. The study's findings and implications include (a) an understanding of how different leadership styles affect performance and results, (b) an offering of guidance and strong support for when a leader should switch between styles, (c) a validation that each leadership style is embedded in components of emotional intelligence.

Goleman (2000) sites some examples of actions related to style. He suggests that schools which take on every innovation end up being superficial and lack depth and coherence. He indicates that leaders must be aware that this leads to a pacesetter style of leadership in which the leader sets high standards for performance and says "Do as I do, now". He/she is obsessed with

doing things faster and better at the sake of destroying climate. Superintendent Negroni (as cited in Fullan, 2001) states, “Thus pacesetters must learn the difference between competing in a change marathon and developing the capacity and commitment to solve complex problems”.

Having the best ideas is not enough if no one is buying into them. Goleman’s (2000) coercive leader demands compliance and says ,”Do what I tell you”. Short term success is lost to long term bottoming moral. Coupled with Goleman’s authoritarian style of mobilizing people toward a vision with “Count on me”, initial excitement may not be enough to sustain change.

Ultimately Goleman (2000) states, “. . . the research indicates that leaders with the best results do not rely on only one leadership style; they use most of them in any given week – seamlessly and in different measures depending on the business at hand. (p. 79-80)

While blending the styles of leadership whether it is the coercive, the authoritarian, the affilitative, the democratic, the pacesetting or the coaching style (Fullan, 2001), the effective leader of change believes that he/she can learn more from those who are different than him/her or those who disagree with him/her. Fullan states that respecting resistance is essential. “ . . . successful organizations don’t go with only like minded innovators; they deliberatively build on differences. They don’t mind much when other- not just themselves – disturb the equilibrium”. (p. 33)

In Breaking Ranks II: Strategies for Leading High School Reform (2004), the National Association of Secondary School Principals identify leaders of change that possess both strengths and weakness that are required to be identified in order to lead for change. The visionary leaders supports change but is often too optimistic. These leaders make global assertions before analyzing the effects of the change. Technocratic leaders want quantitative results but ignore people’s concerns. Short term gains overshadow long term gains. The

sympathetic leader is people focused but ignores quantitative results therefore change is stalled. Similar to Fullan (2001), NASSP advocates for a synthesis of styles if organizations are to deal with change.

Effective leaders are sensitive to the implementation dip. They understand that it is common to experience a dip in performance and confidence at the onset of change. People often experience a social-psychological fear of change and the fear of the lack of know-how skills. Effective leaders understand the highs and lows of the change process (Fullan, 2001).

Johnson (1998) strongly supports the notion of collaborative leadership as a single style of leadership. She states:

> Collaborative leaders arrive in their new districts with strong values, fresh perspectives, penetrating questions, and useful knowledge about what works in education. But these superintendents also realize what they do not know. The ideas they bring are not prefabricated ideas for change, but rather rough sketches, intended to promote discussion and provoke review. They are subject to other's elaboration and revision in response to the local context.
>
> These superintendents see promise in others and align resources to foster that promise. They use their authority carefully to ensure that people do their jobs, that things are fair, and that children are well served. But they work through difficult problems alongside others, modeling the very interaction they seek to encourage. The promise of school leadership lies not in the individual agency of one, but in the collaborative efforts of many. (p.2)

In the book Breaking Ranks II, effective change is thought to be accomplished by comprehensive reform. The reform sets the right conditions for success. The right conditions require an increase in support through initial approval and implementation stages. The conditions for support extend across the school community, the school board, the superintendent, the teachers and the students. The conditions for success begin with collective thinking and then actions of people. Such a process demands yet another style of leadership identified as collaborative leadership.

Collaborative leaders for reform exist in a complex relationship between learning environments, personalizing school environments, and curriculum/instruction/assessment. Each area overlaps to have an affect on the product of improved student performance.

Similarly, the National Association of Secondary School Principals (2004) states that comprehensive educational reform increases the level of support needed in order to get the right conditions for success. There is approval and active participation in implementation by all district leaders and includes the community, the school board, the teachers, and the students. The creation of the conditions for success begins by thinking and interacting with people. This fundamental for success enables all people that are involved to shape and own change.

Elmore (2000) states that visionary leaders are rare. Usually principals and superintendents practice according to socialized norms. He wonders if principals and superintendents are ready to lead in a changing era of standards based reform. Standards based reform requires a new kind of leader. Neisler (2001) suggests that the role of the principal and the superintendent should change by changing their education/certification and by limiting their dealings with politics. The focus is on curriculum and teaching/learning.

Standards based reform influences the architecture and the policy of America's educational system. In the past there was a locally centralized school bureaucracy. Schools were governed by elected boards. Teachers were thought to have low status. Most teachers were females. The female teachers were isolated under the supervision of male administrators. As district began to expand along with compulsory education and diversity of student population, the weakening of the teachers' professionalism continued. The community of elites had control over boards and administration.

During the 1960's and 1970's the practice of loose coupling infiltrated the American school systems (Elmore, 2000). The practice acknowledges that the technical core of education, decisions of what is taught and evaluated, resides in individual classrooms. Curriculum and instructional judgments were left to individuals. There was not external evaluations. In fact, school leaders acted as buffers for the teachers. They protected teaching from the outside world. Administrators created illusions of management and leadership. Illusions and buffers inhibit reform and therefore cannot characterize a leader of change.

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (2004) suggests the following for principals in order to set the conditions of change:

1. Look outward at the environment to diagnose what needs to be changed rather than trying to impose your idea for change on the system.
2. Challenge beliefs and assumptions by creatively rearranging certain realities to create something new.
3. Shape changes or innovations into a vision over time and then facilitate the sustaining of the dream.
4. Maintain persistence and resist giving up early. (p.22)

Davis (2004) comments in his editorial that teachers and leaders feel disempowered because of state/federal regulations and mandates. They have no reason to think. They are just acting to follow mandates. Teachers and leaders are frustrated because they are feeling that they have been deskilled. Legislators have another point of view. They contend that the regulations now bring proper control to educational management and budget. Neisler (2000) states that teachers need new skills for a new educational mission. The mission is to educate our cross section of children and for their education to connect to their real lives and real needs. Teachers and leaders' new skills should align with the new mission.

Davis (2004) continues his editorial by stating that educators' are acting on their own perception of the world and a change in their belief system is needed. He recommends hints for altering:

1. Ordinary practice can be altered. Institutional change is personal, slow and social. If the challenge is seen as a social problem only, then a solution is restricted and final. Instead, decisions about policy and practice can be fostered through deliberation. The goal then is to act in large and small actions.
2. Time is needed to think. Time enables planning for needed changes. Time offers increased attention that is needed for complex analysis of the situations. Time allows for preparation of change thus the reduction of feelings of powerlessness.
3. Federal and state mandates ignore particulars. Therefore, change is misunderstood. Attention to particulars (i.e. knowledge, skills,feelings) influences change efforts.

Davis (2004) advises leaders to think about the importance of their decisions.

Attention to decision-making assists in reducing leader frustrations fosters alterations of perceptions which leads to altered behavior, and helps leaders to rediscover their personal power.

Kotter (2002) in his interview with *School Administrator* states that central to dealing with today's realities is networking through relationships from both within and from outside. He states, "One of the problems that people get themselves into is that their networks are too narrow. They do not reach out to different kinds of people who are strong enough" (p. 60).

William Taylor (1999) has had discussions with Ronald Heifetz, the director of the Leadership Education Project at Harvard's John F. Kennedy's School of Government, about leaders of the future. Heifetz has shared with Taylor that he believes that the real heroism of leadership involves the person having the courage to face several realities at one time and then to properly interrogate them as such:

1. What are our core values and are there gaps between those values and our behavior?
2. What are the skills and talents of schools and are there gaps between those talents and the expectations put upon us?

What opportunities does the future hold and are there gaps between those opportunities and our ability to capitalize on them? (p. 134)

2.3 THE SUPERINTENDENT IN EDUCATIONAL REFORM

The public school leaders' mission is to create a democratic future society with ideals that can move our nation forward. Houston (2001) asserts that our school systems have not failed in their attempt to do this. Systems are gradually improving but the conditions around the systems are changing. The superintendent of educational reform operates within these changing conditions.

His/hers mission is to assist with a shift from a reform effort that views children's learning coming from the external to one that is internally motivated. Current school reform views reform by fixing individual parts of education. Houston contends that since education is human, the solution for superintendents is to realize that the parts are related.

Houston (2001) stated that the current problem is the current view of the position of the superintendent. First, he/she is faced with unrealistic expectations and is expected to be all and know all. Second, there is centralized responsibility for education. Similar to Johnson's (1997) collaborative leadership, a shift to a distributive leadership model is required. Third, there is accountability without authority. Lastly, current training for future superintendents do not prepare them for a futuristic model for leading.

The challenges of the superintendent of the 21st century can be categorized by the demanding D's (Houston, 2001). The shift in population and generational divides by baby boomers and baby busts change demographics and increases diversity. The divide between the haves and the have-nots divide and devalue our children. When tests scores are a substitute for real learning, there is a deemphasis on education. With the introduction of vouchers and charter schools and the increase in home schooling, education has been deregulated. Competition in educational dollars will be a way of life.

Power will be pushed from centralized to decentralized places. This devolution has pushed site-based management movements. The increase in the choices for attaining information through media creates the issue of demassification. However, with such a variety of choices, people have fewer common experiences. This poses a threat by eroding the common ground necessary for democracy. Finally, technology replaces old institutions. Schooling in the future will not be a place. Schooling in the future will be a process that can occur beyond the school

door. This phenomenon called disintermediation, challenges schools of the future with the issue of how to maintain civic virtue.

Houston (2001) offers his thoughts to future superintendents:

1. As a service broker and an ensurer of equity, the task will be to determine which service is needed, how to provide the service, and then to make sure that every child benefits from that service.
2. Find ways to lead by sharing power and by engaging members of the organization and the community in the process of leading.
3. Focus on creating learning for students that is both individualized and connected to interests yet inclusive of broader societal contextual issues.
4. Understand the learning is no longer a place. (p. 430-431)

In other words, a successful superintendent is a master at processes that support connection, communication, collaboration, community building, child advocacy, and curricular choices.

According to Houston (2001), characteristics of future superintendents include:

1. being a great communicator
2. being an outstanding facilitator and persuader
3. being able to sell ideas
4. having the ability to operate in paradoxes without black and white thinking
5. knowledge of pressures
6. being a reflective practitioner
7. being a problem solver (p. 432)

The dilemma for the superintendent of the future is further explained by

Cuban (1998), "Every superintendent faces at different points in his or her career a struggle over identity: Am I primarily a manager, a politician, or an instructional leaders?" (p. 56). He contends that each role is valuable but each competes with each other's value. Superintendents are faced with a perpetual task of dealing with these conflicting demands.

In the past, superintendents were expected to lead curriculum and instruction. That expectation remains, however, the role of the superintendent within the approach has changed. Educational reform has shifted the focus to instructional teams. The superintendent is now expected to lead teachers and principals in their aligning of curriculum and in raising academic standards (Cuban, 1998).

In the past there was an attempt to divorce schooling from politics. Superintendents were expected to use their knowledge and skills for dealing with politics. This expectation remains; however, superintendents today rely on their skill, too, to negotiate with politics. Cuban (1998) asserts "They figure out ways to build coalitions for their schools at budget time or during crisis. Such organizational politics aim to improve a district's image, implement desired program, or secure new resources" (p. 56).

The new mission for school leaders is to educate across the sections of all children and to connect their education to their real 21st century life. Leaders will need new skills to do this (Neisler, 2000). Gross (1999 in Neisler) advocates a change in the role of superintendents. He suggests that superintendents earn a Ph. D. with a mastery in foreign language and scholarly content outside of education, that superintendents are politically skillful, that the superintendent role in curriculum, teaching and learning be in a collaborative culture.

In his study of school districts that were implementing districtwide reform efforts in order to increase student achievement, Green (2000) indicates that roles and responsibilities are

required to change in order to have a new view of education. ". . .the new role of the superintendent is one of creating an environment in which district personnel can establish and achieve a shared vision". (p.739) He indicates that this can be accomplished through participatory decision making that allows people to take risks and be creative. Delegation was not enough, trust was paramount.

Green (2000) adds that another change in the role of superintendents was in communication. Everyone operates in a learning community environment. In order to create this environment of openness, superintendents were required to give up control. This, in turn, re-cultured the school environment. Green states, "In one district, a superintendent validated this possibility when he voiced the idea that one has to give up authority to get influence and power". (p.740)

King (2002) asserts that the superintendent's role has expanded to include teaching and learning and professional development. He agrees with Green (2000) that today's leaders' role operates differently than in the past. Today's superintendents have essential tasks in the areas of leading learning, developing leadership capacity, creating conditions for professional learning, using data to inform decisions, and using resources creatively.

Today's superintendents do their work differently than those before them. They participate in collaborative, professional development activities. They understand that their new role requires them to develop a broad knowledge base for curriculum, instruction, and assessment. At the same time, superintendents realize that leadership rests within the whole community and not with a single individual in a formal position of authority. Distributive leadership provides opportunities for leadership for all. Roles can include coach, facilitator, or coach in order to address the purpose of the work. Expanding roles occurs when superintendents

develop communities with opportunities. Superintendents provide time for leaders to reflect on practices and additionally model their belief in continuous professional learning. (King, 2002)

Ezarik (2003) explored ways in which superintendents could expand their own professional development. Stephen Daeschner, superintendent of Jefferson County Public School District in Louisville, is developing his skills as part of a superintendent network involved in the Wallace-Reader's Digest Funds for Leadership in Educational Achievement in Districts (LEAD). The goal is to improve student learning by reforming leadership practices. He models his own learning about honing questioning skills by taking opposing views of his administrators in order to see how convincing they are of their stance. He states, "Everyone understands that they can argue with the superintendent. In the end, the right decision comes out." The outcome is that all leaders come to appreciate considering a situation from all angles.

Eric Smith, superintendent of Anne Arundel County Schools in Annapolis, Md. and participant in the LEAD initiative agrees with the importance of leaders' professional development. He states, "Districts conducive to leadership have professional development supports in place" (Ezarik, 2003, p. 20). Larry Leverett, superintendent of Plainfield Public School in NJ, agrees with Smith and adds that employees see the superintendent as the lead learner and model leader.

Ezarik (2003) continues to remind us that Smith believes that through professional development, superintendents will also learn how to encourage other administrators to hone their skills. Smith reports that it is the superintendent's role to find time and places for this kind of encouragement to occur. Smith states, "A lot of this is creating a school system, that keeps [its] eyes open for future talent, then providing opportunities for these people to be engaged and involved" (Ezarik, 2003, p. 21).

The superintendent, as a professional development leader, has the responsibility of not only creating opportunities for people but to influence the content and the process of the conversations occurring within those opportunities (Sparks, 2003). Sparks (2003) states the following:

> Consequently, conversation focused on values, intentions, and assumptions are likely to have the greatest effect on the quality of professional learning. Goals that stretch organization out of their comfort zones, assumptions offered in the spirit of dialogue, and breakthrough ideas found in literature of education and other fields provide the substance of such interactions.

Sparks (2003) continues to express the importance of leadership development. He warns school districts of the future that in the past leadership development has often times been neglected. If school leaders are going to create schools where all students and teachers learn and perform at high levels, then professional development cannot be ignored.

Professional development can initiates change in both structure and culture. Such change often ignites emotions. To deal with emotions, it is important for school leaders to have developed their communication and problem solving skills in order to positively support individual relationships and to guide efforts. Even though No Child Left Behind has pushed districts into worthwhile professional development around literacy and math, professional development is also required to support emotional needs. To sustain improvements of students' learning in literacy and math, leaders will need professional development to support the emotionally laden interpersonal demands of leadership (Sparks, 2003).

Sparks (2001) addresses the need for standards as a means of ensuring high levels of learning for all students via high level learning for school leaders. He believes that standards provide benchmarks for reform's progress. The National Staff Development Council (NSDC) standards provide benchmarks for which school systems and schools can compare their reform efforts with their plans for improving. Content standards define what is learned. Process standards define how learning occurs. Context standards describe where learning occurs. There are standards the school leaders should know and be able to do.

Hirsh (2001), like Sparks, advocates for a new vision of staff development for school leaders. Staff development begins with the end in mind with the focus being on the student. Three key questions include: (a) What are all students expected to know and be able to do?, (b) What must leaders know and be able to do?, (c) Where must staff development focus to meet both goals? Hirsch contends that standards help to answer these questions. She (2003) states, "Teaching and leadership standards provide insight about the knowledge and skills teachers and administrators need to support high levels of student learning".

2.4 SUMMARY

Today's leaders cannot respond to education as they have in the past. The past goal of education was universal access. That goal was met because schools became available to every child. Superintendents were leaders of spaces and places. Universal access in no longer enough (Houston, 2004). In an era of standards based reform, school leaders and school systems are held accountable for the production of student learning at a higher proficiency level.

Leaders cannot just implement changes. Today's leaders strive for improvement which is comprised of challenge and support. Challenge and support is needed to address the underlying issue – changing systems and the way leaders do their work within an overhauled system. Current reform efforts accompanied by standards for students and leaders demand a new kind of leader (Elmore, 2000).

Hirsh (2003) agrees with Elmore. Because not all students are achieving the results that we want and because the government has assured the public that no child would be left behind, attempts must be made to reform education. Some attempts have been made with smaller class sizes, charter schools and high stakes testing. The question still lingers. Does this affect the child's learning at the classroom level? Hirsch contends that all leaders must have skills in order to support all students need to meet high standards.

Houston (2004) asserts that a new generation of leaders is needed. The new leader of the future comes with a different understanding of the job and with different skills for the job. School leaders need to be retooled. Retooling can occur in two ways. First, recruit new leaders with the needed mindset and skills. Or secondly, retrain existing leaders.

Retraining existing leaders require a new set of tools in order to change the system to work in new ways. Leadership standards of professional development can provide the skill building needed for a new system for learning for new or for existing school leaders (Houston, 2004).

Specifically, superintendents of reform have a new role. Cuban (1998) states:

> Superintendents need to have the following: a practical understanding of these dilemmas; a willingness to teach school boards, staff and community the complexities of the value of conflicts that they and

> their districts face; a clear cause-effect model of how they will influence other to do what has to be done; explicit criteria for what will constitute success as a superintendent, and finally, the determination to counter the passion of so many policymakers, foundation officers, and corporate leaders seeking short term solutions (that evaporate in a few' years) for long term dilemmas. (p.56)

Changes in K-12 education will require different skill sets needed by leaders in order to bring vision to reality. Brown and McLenighan (2005) identify competencies needed by 21st century leaders. There are 10 categories: leadership and management, data managers, technology, diverse learners, positive school culture, global knowledge, honesty and openness, school governance, support teacher leaders, and professional development.

If indeed we are expecting new and existing leaders to be retooled to meet today's educational challenges, professional development can no longer be seen as a luxury or an add on. Professional development is a requirement for retooling. As Brown and McLenighan (2005) state (2005):

> Responsibility for professional development no longer can be delegated to specialists. Professional development needs to be integrated into the life of the learning community. In learning communities with effective leaders, professional development is viewed as essential, and teachers and school administrators know and apply best practices to overcome barriers to student learning.

Just as teachers and principals need effective professional development, superintendents need professional development in order to deepen their skills, to further understand their community, and to support needs for student learning. A superintendent has the responsibility to take an active role as the lead learner.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

In light of the dynamic context in which superintendents assume their current roles, they are being asked to do things that they have not done in the past. This change requires a new kind of leader. As superintendents lead in new kinds of ways, professional development will be required to support such role changes. The NSDC assumes that if school leaders successfully implement the NSDC standards, then there will be an increase in high quality professional development. This, in turn, leads to an increase in high quality teaching and increased student achievement. This research explores several superintendents' perceptions about their redefined roles. Additionally, the study will identify what supports are needed to support their new roles and from where the support comes.

3.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The complexities of society and the impact from school reform movements are influential and present issues that face school leaders. Elmore (2004) contends that the current theme of reform is targeted at student performance. This shifts the past focus of the federal and state level's of involvement in education from distribution of input in the form of money to output in

the form of test scores (p. 2). Elmore (2000) believes that this reform represents a shift between policy and practice (p. 4).

School leaders are expected to improve all students' learning. As the instructional leader, the superintendent (Wallace, 1996) is expected to lead learning within this context of change. In lieu of the changing context, this study addresses the problem of how the role of the superintendent is redefined.

3.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research is being conducted to answer the following questions:

1. What does the current literature say about the key variables that define the changing role of the superintendent in an era of reform?
2. How do superintendents perceive their redefined role in the context of school reform?
3. What supports do superintendents need to effectively function in their redefined role?
4. Where do superintendents get support that will enable them to be successful in the redefined role?

3.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

As I reviewed the literature, I found an increase in recent years to reference of the role of the superintendent as the leader of change. The purpose of my study is to add to the growing

literature about the redefined role of the superintendent in light of the changing context due to current educational reform.

3.4 METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

This study is a rich, descriptive, narrative qualitative study that occurs in a natural setting. In other words, behavior is studied as it occurs naturally. McMillan (2000) reminds us of the two reasons for conducting this kind of research: (a) "Behavior is best understood as it occurs without external constraints or control", and (b) "The situational context is very important in understanding the behavior" (p. 253).

This researcher's type of study is phenomenology. It focuses on human experiences and participants' voice. McMillan (2000) indicates that participants in a phenomenological study are chosen because of their experiences and because they are willing to share their thoughts and perspectives about those experiences. He summarizes a phenomenology type of qualitative study by stating: (a) The purpose is to understand the essence of experience; (b) The data collection is interviews; (c) The data analysis is statements, meanings, themes, and general descriptions; and (d) The reporting of results is the description of the essence of the experience from the participants' perspective (p.269).

Thomas (2003) contends that qualitative research is a collection of information and an interpretation of information about some phenomenon without the concern for measuring amounts. According to Merriam (1988) ". . . qualitative research assumes that there are multiple realities- that the world is not an objective thing out there but a function of personal interaction

and perception. It is a highly subjective phenomenon in need of interpreting rather than measuring" (p. 17).

Denzin & Lincoln (as cited in Thomas, 2003) agrees and additionally asserts:

> Qualitative research is multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of it, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings that people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied and collection of a variety of empirical materials – case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual text – that describes routine and problematic moments and meanings in people's lives. (p.2)

Merriam (1988) describes the characteristics of qualitative research as:

1. The focus of the research is quality (nature, essence).
2. The philosophical roots are phenomenology and symbolic interaction.
3. The associated phrases are fieldwork, ethnographic, naturalist, grounded, or subjective.
4. The goal of the investigation is understanding, description, discovery, hypothesis or generating.
5. The design characteristics are flexible, evolving, and emergent.
6. The setting is natural and familiar.
7. The sample is small, random, and theoretical.

8. The data collection is by the researcher's primary instrument of interview and observation.
9. The mode of analysis is inductive (by researcher).
10. The findings are comprehensive, holistic, and expansive.

This study is aimed first at analyzing and interpreting superintendent responses to actions as identified by the Innovation Configurations (IC) Map. IC maps are a means of measuring the quality and the fidelity of the identified actions as identified by the NSDC Standards. The NSDC (2003) indicates that IC maps can be used to measure the degree to which individuals are reaching the ideal outcome intended by the standards. The IC map ultimately provides information for implementing new actions.

This researcher attended the Forum for Western Pennsylvania School Superintendents on Dec. 1, 2005. The Forum is a program of the School Leadership Collaborative that supports superintendents' professional development by providing an arena to keep western Pennsylvania superintendents updated on emerging educational leadership issues. The Forum is funded by The Danforth Foundation, The Grable Foundation, Howard Heinz Endowment, Richard King Mellon Foundation, and Hilda M. Willis Foundation. In the fall of 1996, The School Leadership Collaborative identified 50 superintendent nominations for participation in the Forum. Guidelines for continued membership have been established. An Advisory Committee oversees the membership of the Forum. The Forum meets twice a year for theme related experiences provided through guest speakers, presentations, discussion groups, and other sharing opportunities. Additionally, a multi- year long thematic initiative is created and superintendents are encouraged to participate. As a member of the Forum, superintendents are provided opportunities for professional development on current and critical issues of public education.

Additionally, another outcome of Forum membership is the benefit for superintendents in western Pennsylvania to create networks to share knowledge and expertise.

The credibility of a research study is based on validity and reliability. McMillan (2000) defines credibility "…as the extent to which the data, data analysis, and conclusions are believable and trustworthy" (p. 272). An analytical approach to enhance credibility is triangulation. Triangulation compares the findings of different techniques. In other words, different methods at different times with different samples are used. If the results are the same, then the study is thought to be credible (McMillan, 2000).

McMillan (2000) defines reliability as "extent to which has been recorded is what actually occurred" (p. 272). Reliability is augmented by a researcher's notes, tape recorders, photographs, participant's quotes and literal descriptions.

To check internal validity, a researcher should ask him/herself if his/her interpretations and categories match reality. It is crucial to possess the awareness that any changes to the researcher can affect the internal validity. In other words, since the researcher is the medium through which data is interpreted, any bias can threaten validity and ultimately credibility. Internal validity can be strengthened through triangulation (McMillan, 2000).

Since the purpose of qualitative studies is to increase an understanding of a phenomenon, generalizability is often weak. Thus, external validity in qualitative studies is often referred to as translatability and comparability. McMillan (2000) states, "The emphasis is on how well the data, categories, analysis, and patterns are described and how well other researchers can understand the findings so that they can be used in other settings" (p.275).

3.5 DATA COLLECTION

The purpose of my attendance at the Forum was to speak with those superintendents about my study and to ask for their completion of a self assessment survey. The assessment tool used was the NSDC IC map of the 3 context standards of learning communities, leadership, and resources (Appendix A). Participation was voluntary. This researcher asked that responses be returned by the end of the Superintendents Forum or shortly there after (Appendix B).

Of the 50 members of the Forum, 20 members voluntarily completed and returned the self assessment survey to me. Because some superintendents did not attend the entire Forum or because some attended on days other then the day I spoke, 11 letters were sent to additional Forum superintendents explaining my research and asking for their voluntary participation. Four of the 11 completed and returned the self assessment survey.

The data from the responses appeared to this researcher to be categorizing the superintendents into 3 groups. There were natural gaps in the data that indicated the natural break between the groups' responses, and thus the grouping. Random superintendents from each group were identified as potential interview candidates.

Ten superintendents were contacted by phone. In some cases the contact was directly with the superintendent and in other cases, the contact was through the superintendent's secretary. During the phone contact, the superintendents and secretaries were reminded of the purpose of the study and how the superintendents were chosen to be contacted. The superintendents were asked, directly (or through their secretary) if they would continue their involvement in the study by participating in a semi-structured interview which would be audio taped. If the superintendent agreed, a convenient date, time, and location were arranged for the upcoming semi-structured interview. Nine of the superintendents arranged a time for the

interview. In one district, contact was through the superintendent's secretary. Neither the secretary nor the superintendent has followed up to my initial call to request consideration of an interview.

The interviews were taped in order to verify the data and used as markers for major and minor themes. During the semi-structured interview, this researcher took minimal field notes in order to conduct a conversation with the superintendents. However, immediately after each interview is completed, this researcher journaled her thoughts about the interview.

The questions for the semi-structured interview were chosen for their flexibility and for the purpose of finding any patterns or themes in these targeted superintendents' thinking about their role (Appendix C).

Patton (as cited in Merriam, 1988) explains:

> We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe. . . . We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe behaviors that took place at some previous point in time. We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer. We cannot observe how people organize the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world – we have to ask people questions about those things. The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective" (p. 72).

Thomas (2003) adds that interviews are meant for the researcher to orally ask participants question face to face. However, with the advent of technology, some researchers conduct their

interviews on-line. Others find that telephone interviews are more practical if, indeed, a simultaneous video transmission is possible for simulating a face to face interview.

Merriam (1988) describes the types of interviews as highly structured, less structured/semi-structured, and unstructured. In highly structured interviews, the questions and the sequence of asking them is set. There is no flexibility. This type of interview is comparable to taking an oral survey with a large population. In semi-structured interviews, the questions guide the conversation. The order of the questions is not important. In fact, the semi-structured interview gives the interviewer flexibility to respond to the immediate situation, to the respondent's view, and to new ideas that emerge from the conversation. McMillan (2000) agrees with Merriam in that semi-structured interview questions are open-ended but have intent for soliciting individual responses. At the same time, semi-structured interview questions allow for probing, follow-up, and clarification. McMillan states that this type of interview is most common in educational research. Merriam continues to state that the unstructured interview is when the researcher knows very little about the topic and is in an exploratory mode. In fact, one goal of the unstructured interview is to learn more for the purpose of conducting subsequent interviews.

According to Thomas (2003), a researcher may construct the approach to the questions in a variety of ways. The loose-question approach is meant to illicit broad responses. Participants have unlimited freedom with their responses and hence has the capability of exposing the diversity in beliefs. The tight-question approach limits participants' response options. The response-guided approach begins with a prepared question with follow-up questions intended to investigate in more detail the response to the first question. The converging-question response is a combination of the advantages of the loose and tight question approach. The questions begin

broadly to get a sense of the participants' thinking and then crafts further questions that are narrower in order to further delve into the broad question.

This researcher believes that there is a compatible and purposeful relationship with a semi-structured interview and the loose question approach. Such an approach is advantageous in eliciting the participants' interpretations and beliefs. It will allow this researcher to gather data that indicates the degree of diversity in interpretations and beliefs across the targeted group of superintendents.

McMillan (2000) offers advice to interviewers. He states, "The ideal role of the interviewer is to act as a neutral medium through which information is transmitted" (p. 167). To reduce potential error during information transmission, McMillan suggests being aware of any possibility of pre-existing bias that might influence what is heard and recorded. Next, contamination might occur if the interviewer has knowledge of facets of the study or the subjects. Also, interviewer characteristics could influence results. McMillan suggests that in some cases, it might be beneficial for interviewers to be trained in establishing positive rapport with subjects.

As a graduate student, a school administrator, a former Instructional Support teacher, and former kindergarten teacher, this researcher, as the interviewer, has had interpersonal skill experience with listening, probing, recording, and interviewing. Nonetheless, this researcher practiced interviewing and taping responses with a professional educator prior to the study's interviews. This researcher believed that audio taping the interview was crucial for it allowed her to focus attention on the verbal communication with the superintendents through the questioning instead of focusing on recording responses. At the same time, the tape preserved the responses for analysis.

After the completion of the interviews, this researcher transcribed the audiotapes.

Along with any random notes taken during or immediately after the interview by this researcher, all information was used for data analysis. This researcher searched for common themes and patterns in the responses.

3.6 PILOT TEST RESULTS

As previously mentioned, this researcher practiced interviewing and taping with another educator. This was advantageous for it (a) gave the researcher a sense of time required to answer the proposed interview questions, (b) indicated that the individual questions might not illicit answers pertinent to the study, (c) permitted practice using a tape recorder, (d) permitted practice asking questions in a loose question format with clarifying and probing follow-up for clarification or further understanding, and (e) allowed for reflection between the researcher and the pilot interviewer about how to improve the interview and the actual data collection. Because of this researcher's interview practice session, interview questions were edited and a plan was devised for setting up the introduction on the tape prior to a superintendent's live interview.

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

The data collection used for inquiry was content analysis. Content analysis involves searching through communication for the purpose of answering the questions the researcher brings to the

study. Research utilizing content analysis can focus narrowly at an individual(s) and it can search for likenesses and differences (Thomas, 2003).

Thomas (2003) describes a typical content analysis procedure as:

- The question – or set of questions – that the analysis is supposed to answer is specific.
- Likely sources of answers are identified and accessed.
- Key words and phrases are generated to guide the search.
- The researcher applies key words and phrases in exploring the resources.
- Other resources (books, periodicals, web sites) are skimmed for pertinent information pertinent to guide the analysis.
- Useful information is recorded for each question.

Content analysis began by transcribing and reviewing the audio tapes. As the transcripts were scanned, aspects were highlighted. Then, patterns of similarity were sought and placed into a data file. Next, the patterns were reviewed and a coding system was devised to create an organizational framework. Glesne (1999) states, "Coding is a progressive process of sorting and defining and sorting those scraps of collected data (i.e. observation notes, interview transcripts, memos, documents, and notes from relevant literature) that are applicable to your research purpose" (p. 135).

Glesne (1999) states the following:

> It is progressive in that you first develop, out of the data, major code clumps by which to sort the data. Then you code the contents of each major code clump, thereby breaking down the major code into numerous subcodes. Eventually, you can place the various data clumps in a

meaningful sequence that contributes to the chapters or sections of your manuscript. (p. 135)

The data continued to be analyzed according to the patterns and the codes which ultimately led to the development of categories and ultimately the development of major and minor themes. This researcher defined major themes as having 5 or more responses and minor themes as having less then 5 responses. Developing categories and themes involve looking for reoccurring regularities within the data (Merriam, 1988). Lincoln and Guba (as cited in Merriam, 1988) suggests guidelines for developing categories: (a) the number of people who mention something or its frequency indicates importance, (b) one's audience defines importance, (c) some categories stand out because of the uniqueness and should be included, (d) certain categories may reveal "areas of inquiry not otherwise recognized" or "provide a unique leverage on an otherwise common problem" (p. 95).

3.8 RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

Once the data has been organized, sorted into categories and analyzed by major and minor themes, this researcher began to make inferences and hypothesis. At this step the data analysis, there is movement toward the development of theory in order to explain the meaning of the data. Merriam (1988) contends, "Thinking about one's data – *theorizing* - is a step toward developing theory that explains some aspect of educational practice and allows one to draw inferences about future activity" (p. 141).

4.0 FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to discover how superintendents perceive their role in the context of school reform, what supports are needed for such roles, and where these supports are found. This chapter includes a profile of the superintendent's current school district as reported by the superintendent and summary data in relation to the research/interview questions. A profile of each superintendent was self-reported by each superintendent (Appendix D). Data reported was collected by this researcher's through the use of a semi-structured interview.

4.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

As this researcher conducted the semi-structured interviews with nine superintendents, she attempted to answer the research questions directly and indirectly through the use of her interview questions (Appendix C).

The research questions answered through the semi-structured interview process are:

1. How do superintendents perceive their redefined role in the context of school reform?
2. What supports do superintendents need to effectively function in their redefined role?
3. Where do superintendents get supports that will enable them to be successful in their redefined role?

4.2 SELF REPORTED SCHOOL DISTRICT PROFILES

School District A

The Superintendent of School District A described the district as one of the most rapidly growing districts in the county. There are 4232 students in grades K-12. There are 3 elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. A new upper elementary building is going to be built with a projected date of opening in 2008.

This district was once known as a rural district but now it is suburban with the population being upper middle class. There are less than 2% of students on free and reduced lunches and over 90% of the students attend college. The district has a good reputation for high academics.

School District B

The superintendent of School District B described the district as a district that has always been historically in the newspapers and in some controversial mode. From the time of its merger in 1972 until now, there was only one superintendent that got his contract renewed and he got fired or was asked to go in the first year of his second contract. This is a blue collar mentality school district that is looking for leadership. They look for school leadership even by, at times, cleaning house.

With recent continuity with leadership, the district has managed to stay out of the newspapers with controversial issues. Board meetings are now less political and meeting last for less than 45 minutes. They have raised taxes a couple of years without major complaints.

Now the baby boomers are getting ready to retire. Hence, the superintendent, before his/her retirement, will have hired approximately 300 of the 410 teachers within the district. There currently are 5500 students which is a 100 student population decline since the arrival of this superintendent. The projection is that in 10 years, there will be an additional decline of 1000 students. This superintendent is not sure why there is such a projected decline but feels it will be influenced by the selling of the homes.

This superintendent reported that much of the district's focus is on special education and the struggles with No Child Left Behind and PSSA scores.

School District C

The superintendent of School District C described the district as having 4800 students with a declining enrollment. Over the next 5 years, the expected decline is 400 students. In the 1970's and 1980's there were 8000-9000 students. Split schedule were required. Now there are 7 elementary schools with the plans of closing 2 soon. This district is a middle income kind of a district – blue collar. Median income is $48,000. Average teacher salary is $61,000. Right now they are negotiating a controversial contract. The population is not very diverse – 96% Caucasian – white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant/Catholic. The school community has a tremendous amount of pride. It is not unusual for several generations of one family to remain in the district.

School District D

The superintendent of School District D described the district as having 4300 students. The budget is $39,000,000. There are three elementary schools with grades K-6 (very junior high like), a middle school grades 7-9, and a senior high grades 10-12. The population across the

3 elementary schools represents socio-economic diversity. At the senior high there is an art collection of over 200 pieces. Students select the pieces. This started out as a vision of a few teachers that thought that the district needed more culture. They encouraged a few associate artists to loan the school district paintings. Reasonable prices were negotiated and now students interact with the pieces on a daily basis.

Another signature of the district is that the senior high students have their own laptops. Ten years ago the technology initiative began in the junior high and shortly after some renovations; it was expanded to the senior high. The junior high became too expensive to support so it has been discontinued.

This district has an aid ratio of .5 so in mid level of wealth.

This district has a history of joining in partnerships with foundations. One of the partnerships focuses on creativity. There are several well-known television and athletic personalities from the town that support the school district. There is additionally close relationships with local businesses and hospitals. There is a tremendous tax base.

There is a strong emphasis in this district on the arts but at the same time, they attempt to balance athletics and academics. These are their three A's (arts, athletics, academics).

School District E

The superintendent of School District E described the district as having a student population of 3500. There are 3 elementary buildings, one middle school (grades 6-8), and one high school (1150 student population). The district is made up of a rural township out along a highway and a city/borough. The student population is diverse because of the mixture of the farm areas and the professionals in the city. Low income numbers are approximately 40%.

There is 8% minority student population. The school district encompasses approximately 52 square miles. From one end of the district to the other it is about 20 miles. There is lots of involvement with the parents and the community. The PSSA scores are high. One elementary school has been nominated for a Blue Ribbon.

School District F

The superintendent of School District F described his/her new district as having 4600 students. There is diversity, not racial or ethnic, but socioeconomic. There are pockets of poverty and there are pockets of elite wealth. The district was created as a result of several consolidations. There is 7% free and reduced lunches. One building is over 30%. However, the district strives to make resources available for all. For example, there is a literacy center in town for the purpose of preparing students for kindergarten. This district has all day kindergarten.

School District G

The superintendent of School District G described the district as having three boroughs. The name of the district is different than the name of the high school and that, at times, confuses outsiders. The taxpayers are very loyal to the community and the school district. They take a lot of pride in the community and school's history. They are also very family oriented. There is an approximate total student population of 3,000 within 3 elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. No longer is the district known for grievances and the need for discipline. Currently, the data shows that the students are well rounded both academically and athletically.

School District H

The superintendent of School District H described the district as a school district with approximately 3600 students. There are only 4 buildings. The district has done a lot of consolidation over the past few years. There is a projected population increase so the district has just embarked on a 30 million dollar renovation project. It is projected that there will be an increase of over 1000 students of the next 7-8 years. There are 1600 new houses on the books. It is a diverse, stable community. There is a solid tax base. This strong community understands its identity. In other words, the community understands who they are and therefore have clear expectations. They have high expectations for education. In fact, the community likes teachers and many teachers and administrators live within the community. Families tend to grow up here and stay here. The community and parents are involved within the schools. The facilities tend to be the place where community gathers.

School District I

The superintendent of School District I described the district as having 2200 students. There are 2 governmental entities that the district serves. The population is decreasing. Since 1971, the district has lost 900 students. The district is landlocked and has a high senior citizen population. At one time the district‘s image was one of high academic achievement and one of the most affluent districts in the county. This has changed because of the declining socio-economic pattern. Once there was a big research facility in the district. Even as those employees became more highly paid, they moved to higher rent districts. Neighboring districts grew. However, the district has been and still is a very child centered district.

4.3 REVIEW OF THE INTERVIEW RESPONSES

Research Question

How do superintendents perceive their redefined role in the context of school reform?

MAJOR THEME #1: A Change in Role

All nine superintendents indicated that their role, in the context of school reform, has changed. Superintendent A reported that superintendents of the past were expected to know everything and every detail. He/she stated, "It was like the Vince Lombardi style of leadership where you will do what I say and that if you were one of those people that were given a directive and you better carry it out and the superintendent had all the answers. I did the goals for the district". Superintendent D stated that superintendents used to do business like his dad, "You do this because I told you so and don't ask me any questions. I am king and you better be jumping to my command". He/she continued to report that the nature of education has to change by empowering people. Superintendent C asserted that today, "the road to the Superintendents office goes through the principal's office". Superintendent B pointed out that in the past superintendents did everything because there were no specialized positions. Because of this, superintendents rarely spent time with students and curriculum. Superintendent H reported his/her belief that people expect superintendents to be experts in all. That is why the role has be come a hands-on role. Superintendent G added that the past role was more managerial with a focus on efficiency and discipline. Now it is about curriculum and instruction. Superintendent F indicated roles may change because of gender. Female superintendents are in a minority. They bring a different point of view in which they understand education all the way through. He/she indicated that all of today/s superintendents must do more than managing. They must lead

through teams because superintendents cannot be all things to all people. Superintendent E reported, "As a superintendent, it is not about you. It is about the people under you – teachers and kids". According to Superintendent H, the superintendents role has changed because he/she must create leadership at all levels. This is required because of new demands. This will require different thinking.

MAJOR THEME #2: A Philosophy of Collaboration

A theme common to all of the nine superintendents interviewed was the belief in a need for superintendents to embrace a collaborative philosophy. Superintendent C talked about the culture when he recently arrived at his district. He/she described it as "multiple camps fighting like cats and dogs". Since his arrival, he has attempted to mend the fragmented relationships through all inclusive team meetings. Superintendent D added, "I think the fundamental nature of education has to change so that we empower people who are in the classrooms to drive decisions '. Superintendent E agreed but went on to say that collaboration and the role of the superintendent changes with the Board. "You know some Boards that come in expect the superintendent to be the leader and take care of things and then there are other times when the Boards are elected and they want to micromanage and then your role becomes one of trying to contain that and control that and you get them together." He/she suggested that the role of the superintendent was one of negotiator and peacemaker. Superintendent H stated, "For a long time this was sort of an isolated buck stops here kind of operation. To some extent it still is but my responsibility is to understand that being a superintendent is much more than educational issues. It is an organization in totality…. So sometimes I think the Boards are starting to understand the broader role of the superintendent and their role. The development of relationships is very, very

clear and relationships are important". Superintendent A described his/her school district as a flat organization. He asked, "Do you really value your employees, value the people that you surround yourself with and try to get people on the same page? It's not how I feel but it's more of a flat organization where people can make contributions and have a relationship that is such that people are not afraid to disagree or offer other ideas". Superintendent B agreed, "It's a team effort. A superintendent cannot do it all and for the superintendent that tries to do everything him or herself will probable fail. So, they have to really on good people". Superintendent G indicated his/her belief in the importance of having good people around you and at the same time building relationships with students, staff, Board and administration. Superintendent I concurred that roles change with Boards. However, it is all about relationships for "everyone has their specialty as superintendents. Personnel have been my favorite part of the job. People think you need to be an expert in all parts of the job." He/she indicated that he/she cannot be an expert but "there is nothing I have not touched" he/she stated. "I believe that if you are going to direct someone's work and you are going to evaluate someone's work, you have to be able, you have to know what their work is". Superintendent F commented on the difficulty of superintendents "seeing themselves as all things to all people". He/she added support for teambuilding, "That's where building the team, you know, getting the right people on the bus, surrounding yourself with the best that report back and keep you in the loop at all times. The communication piece is huge".

MAJOR THEME #3: Financial Leadership

Eight of nine superintendents stated their concern about shrinking resources. Property tax reform movements will require them to be more resourceful. Superintendent C strongly

identified shrinking resources and property tax relief as factors that have influenced the superintendent's role. He/she stated, "Everything is not created equal. But shrinking resources helps you to prioritize your thinking in terms of education". According to Superintendent D, the impact of financial resources and the degree of creativity is not new. He/she had to do that in his/her prior school. Such a role was dependent on the community. In his/her current district, he/she strongly asserted the importance of being creative by partnering with community sources. Tax reform was the concern of Superintendent E because of his older community. He/she chose to place a strong emphasis on public relations to address this concern. Overall creativity for financial responsibility was not addressed. Superintendent F related financial leadership and creativity to finding ways to support his/her resources of staff and materials through funding. Because this is her/her first few months with the district, no more specifics were available at this time. Superintendent A cited voiced concern about tax reform and referendums. He/she felt that attention toward resources will take attention away from programs. He/she did not mention any specific, creative means to address the concern. Superintendent H indicated that his/her role is influenced by resources because it forces him/her to continuously assess curriculum priorities. Superintendent B stated, "Be mindful of curriculum leadership but it must be balanced with financial leadership". Superintendent I place financial creativity as a priority. For example, he/she stated, "Anytime you want to make something systemic, my opinion is that you have to have a line item for it. So, you know, if there is any extraneous money that we can divert out of federal funds to staff development, for example, we do that first…".

MAJOR THEME #4: Professional Growth

Six of nine superintendents identified professional growth as influencing the change in their role. Superintendent A stated, "As a leader of a district, we have to model the importance of professional development. In the old days, superintendents were not found at In-service. Now they show interest and participate with everyone else. If you hope to have some of your ideas sustained over time, you've got to be actively engaged in part of it to encourage, to motivate, to inspire others to do that." Superintendent C reported, "You really have to see yourself as constantly someone who is learning about him or herself and you learn about what Socrates said – Know thyself. You have to know yourself and what you are strong at and you have to know your limitations." He/she continued by reporting that superintendents set up opportunities for administrators and teachers to learn in order to make the school district a better place. Superintendent B indicated that he/she is at the end of his/her career so he/she is not taking graduate courses but reported active involvement in book discussions and outside workshops. He/she stated, "So, I try to be involved, you know. It's not just personal development for just me, but it is my leadership that provided professional development for others". Superintendent G emphasized the importance of modeling professional development but at the same time, the follow through of sharing professional development experiences. He/she indicated that it is powerful when superintendents share experiences from learning communities and bring them back to the school district. "I am really trying to promote that – connecting our administrators and our faculty to that same discussion and then it becomes a matter of teachers discussing and connecting those dots. Those teachers are speaking it. If they talk with a teacher in another district whose superintendent is proposing the same dialogue, you begin to build on that synergy and it begins to happen". As a life-long learner, Superintendent D

talked about the concept of change. He/she indicated that in an era of reform, schools are pressured to make changes. Change is hard for some people. Pressure along with professional development support is crucial for effective, successful change. Superintendent I emphasized the importance of professional development because he/she believes that she needs to know everything. "I think you always have to be open to new things and wanting to learn." However, learning does take place through both individual and group experiences such as personal reading and learning teams.

MAJOR THEME #5: Futuristic Thinking

Six of nine superintendents identified futuristic thinking as an influence on a superintendent's role. Some referred to this as visionary leadership. Superintendent A talked about the relationship of visionary leadership to learning communities and how such a relationship is the key to sustaining any future changes. He/she stated," You could be the strongest leader in the world, following all the principles but if you do not have followers, you'll never lead into the future. You need to have the followers first and you get the followers by establishing a professional learning community in the school district." Visionary leaders inspire others and together they build a shared vision. Through the mechanism of professional learning communities, visions can be realized. Superintendent C agreed, "So, I think when you are a principal, as a leader, or in the central office, certainly as a superintendent, as a leader you really have to express clearly what the vision is and then be able to get everyone to see that vision also. They have to buy into it." He/she continued to suggest that to be successful in the future, a visionary leader must also be creative, be resourceful, and be an outstanding communicator. Superintendent E reported, "You've got to have a vision as to where you want to go and what

your beliefs are". He/she compared the role of a superintendent to that of a jockey. "It's almost like the superintendent's the jockey and it's the horses under you that matter. Head them in the right direction and don't screw them up for one thing. It's giving support and I think sometimes a superintendent has to be a little bit of a boat rocker. You have to push and shove in a good way." Superintendent F reported on the need for a visionary framework set up by the Board and the superintendent. At the same time the mission and vision must be communicated at all times. They are words that can easily be understood, memorized, and posted. Superintendent F stated, "The superintendent is really expected to be visionary, the leader, the person that keeps the ship going, sailing in the right direction and if I do not go through professional development, I do not keep myself on top of things out there in education. Then the system becomes stagnant and everyone goes off in different directions and it is hard to pull people back to the focus that needs to be there." He/she continued to say, "Once you set that (vision), then you are kind of guiding to make sure that everything goes in that direction". Superintendent H emphasized the impact of the district's culture on the vision. His/her prior district's vision was focused on survival for the future. His/her present district's vision is more developmental. He/she stated, "The role here is much more futuristic, much more thinking about where the organization ought to be, having the time and luxury of intellectually, and in some ways, examining large amounts of data and deciding where kids should be". Superintendent D described the need for future superintendents to be visionary leaders who use data and at the same time balance high stake tests with what is really important to the education of the students of the district.

MAJOR THEME #6: Use of Data

Six of the nine superintendents identified the need for superintendent to utilize data. Superintendent C expressed the importance of building learning communities through the use of data. He/she stated that it was the superintendents role to "set up opportunities for administrators and teachers to learn, constantly thinking about learning, how we make this a better place by studying data, not just the past but other data". Superintendent I stressed the importance of moving districts by the use of learning teams. He/she provides support for creating and sustaining opportunities for building learning teams to come together to work with data. "They meet on a monthly basis and sometimes meet with other buildings. They are meeting around data. We are spending a lot more time with data than with anything else. One of the principals has them looking at spreadsheets and looking at individual students strands on the PSSA…" Superintendent B emphasized the importance of understanding data to move instruction. He/she gave an example of teachers looking at PSSA data. He/she reported that it was the superintendent's job to provide tools, resources, and time to allow teachers to grow with the data in order to move the organization forward. Superintendent D strongly reported the importance of a superintendent understanding and utilizing data because he/she is being held accountable. "I think you have to look at the results and figure out what you are going to measure and then come up with a system to again measure and work through other data to get to what you think is important. I think we are just beginning to scratch the surface of these correlations." He/she continued to state that the role of the superintendent has had a big change in that the role demands knowing, "how to use data to drive instruction and how we balance these high stake tests with what is really important in education". At the same time, Superintendent D expressed the importance of the superintendent supporting giving teachers time and support to talk about

and analyze data. Superintendent E reported on the factors that influenced change in the superintendent's role. He/she stated that mandates from the State have influence. Particularly the PSSA data and how it has an effect on the community. "I think you have to sell your district with PSSA. People in the communities see the results. They compare districts. They want to know why is a neighborhood district getting these kinds of results and then they have the same expectations for you". Superintendent H agreed with the influence of data on market forces. With the huge amounts of data available, a superintendent tries to use it to create good educational experiences for students. However, he/she stated, "I really think that we are getting to the point where market forces (as the result of data) are changing who we are and how we think about things".

MAJOR THEME #7: Building Relationships

According to five of the nine superintendents, relationship building is part of a superintendent' role. Superintendent G reported on the importance of a superintendent modeling relationship building. He/she told a story about a difficult situation with students when they decided to conduct a walkout. If it had not been for the prior relationship that he/she had with students, the issue would not have been so quickly resolved. He/she stated, "They (students) were difficult but the relationships had to be developed and they had to be relationships of trust…" Superintendent G continued to discuss the importance of relationships with universities and PTO's.

Superintendent A strongly spoke of the importance of valuing the employees by having a relationship with them in which they felt their contributions were valued and where people were not afraid to disagree. Superintendent B indicated that Superintendents build relationships by

being actively involved with what teachers do. "I want to have first hand knowledge of what they do so I can provide that leadership but let them grow and do their jobs at the same time".

Both Superintendent H and Superintendent I emphasized the importance of having relationships with teachers through conversations about education and even about issues other than education.

MAJOR THEME #8: Knowledge of Politics

Five of nine superintendents reported that knowledge of politics is crucial to the redefined role of the superintendent. Superintendent D reflected over the course of his educational career and pointed out that there has always been the "politics of education". At one point in his/her career as a superintendent he/she realized the impact of the "political machine I would have to wrestle with". The impetus behind the wrestling is what changes. In the redefined role, the superintendent wrestles with PA legislators. "I would be militant about our Pennsylvania legislators and their abrogation of their fundamental democratic principles to provide a free and appropriate educational program. We should unseat the majority of the Pennsylvania legislators because they are missing the boat completely and when I saw in the Post Gazette yesterday where Scranton claims he wants to put more money in the things that really work in education (cyber charter schools, private academies, giving choice) because it makes the public school model competitive, I am sorry. It is awful." He/she continued to state, "If the whole referendum thing becomes a reality, then people like you will have to decide if they really want to be a superintendent". Superintendent D strongly emphasized that politics has changed the role of the superintendents and there is a need to swing back to the fundamentals of education. "The whole system needs to be repaired and everything I am hearing is going in the

wrong direction". Superintendent E agreed that politics have influenced the role of the superintendent. The impact from political moves to initiate and implement state mandates affects educational systems through such efforts as tax reform initiatives, PSSA and accountability efforts, and competition. "The superintendents will spend a big part of their day just trying to sell issues on the referendum so it will pass".

Superintendent H reported that the role is ever changing because of legislation and public policy. He/she stated, "No Child Left Behind scores amongst, you know, when you get to this level and you find out all the junk you have to do in terms of paper. It is just astounding what needs to be done. It's the bureaucracy." He continued to state district's struggles with lack of support at Harrisburg. He/she asked, "Will they serve educational institutions well?" ". Superintendent C indicated that the tax reform influence would make the role of the superintendent that of political leader. "I think the role, as it is today, will continue to change because of reforms. I fear, my greatest fear, is that we become like Ohio. The superintendents in Ohio will tell you that they spend an enormous amount of time politicking for the next referendum". Superintendent B stated that this is the fascinating part of the job, ". . . so you really need to know how to navigate those political waters. At the same time, know how to maintain your integrity as a superintendent

In summary, the data indicates that the superintendents perceive their redefined role in the context of school reform as changing. He/she can be characterized as a collaborator and a financial leader. He/she also believes in professional growth, is visionary, uses data, builds relationships, and is politically informed.

Minor Themes:

As superintendents reported on how they perceive their redefined role, minor themes (less than 5 responses) emerged. The themes include:

- needing a hands-on approach
- dealing with global competition
- ability to understand tax reform constraints
- understanding of No Child Left Behind
- educating and managing the Board
- being an educational leader
- having knowledge of standards
- having adeptness with technology
- dealing with social/emotional issues
- creating synergy
- taking risks
- understanding and building culture
- marketing the district through public relations
- dealing with school violence
- influenced by media
- assuming other leadership roles outside of the superitendency
- having knowledge of labor relations
- giving people the tools to do their jobs
- hiring as a priority
- being catalyst for change

- coaching

Summary

Superintendents interviewed reported that their role as a superintendent is being redefined. Their role is changing. Today's superintendent does not have to know every detail of an issue. He/she does not lead in a top down organizational structure. The framework for today's structure is based on the belief that it is crucial to empower others. Superintendents become learners themselves and become more hands on in dealing with issues. There is less emphasis on management and more emphasis on students, instruction, and curriculum. The superintendent in this era of reform is required to think differently than superintendents of the past.

Today's superintendent believes in collaboration. He/she is inclusive. He/she builds teams to provide a structure for looking at the total organization. To be effective, it is crucial that the impact reaches the classroom level by empowering teachers. Such an approach can be influenced by the Board. Thus, on-going collaboration at all levels of the organization is a prerequisite for success.

A superintendent's leadership role is influenced by finances. The degree of financial impact is dependent on the community. Challenges that face the superintendents of the future include shrinking resources and the impact of tax reform. Superintendents in an era of reform will be called upon to be financially creative in order to bring balance financial resources that support instruction.

A superintendent's in an era of reform is being pressured to change. He/she will need to be supported. Professional development provides support. Other ways to support professional

growth include being actively involved with the total organization so that any changes can be sustained, providing leadership for others to grow, and creating learning communities to build synergy. A superintendent of the future will find that professional growth is important for getting to better know one's self.

Superintendents in an era of reform are futuristic thinkers. They need to have the ability to move all followers in the same direction. At times, they even "rock the boat" with the approach to their thinking. However, balance is required. This can be accomplished by analyzing data to inform decisions and actions.

Reform era superintendents understand the importance of having teams analyze and understand data in order to move instruction. The superintendent's role is to provide the tools (resources and time) to support team efforts. When data are understood, leaders are then held accountable for taking action. Data have an impact on the outside perception of the district. If positive, data can help to "sell" a district.

The role of the superintendent of the future includes being a relationship builder. This includes actively getting to know and understand students and employees at a personal and professional level. It also means reaching out to others beyond the school setting. The superintendent of the future searches for ways to relate to parents, community members, and businesses.

Politics have always had some degree of influence on the superintendent's role. However, the superintendent in this era of reform is faced with increased political pressures. His/her role is becoming more of a political leader than an instructional leader. At the same time, superintendents must face these challenges with integrity. Harrisburg does not support a

superintendent in the ways he/she believes they need to be supported. Several superintendents believe that they need to help to repair the system.

Superintendents perceive that their redefined role will force them to face familiar and new challenges. The challenges of this redefined role will require them to think and act differently than they had in the past.

Research Question;

What supports do superintendents need to effectively function in their redefined role?

MAJOR THEME #1: Literary Resources and Research

Seven of nine superintendents identified the utilization of current literary resources and research as a major theme. Superintendent B indicated that he/she is at the end of his/her career so he/she is not out taking graduate courses. However, he/she stressed the importance of sharing what is learned through personal and collective reading and research. He/she indicated that a group of superintendents in Allegheny County read the book The World is Flat. He/she felt that their discussions about this book supported their thinking and planning for the future. Superintendent D reported that he/she constantly reads such literary sources as Edutopia, Educational Leadership, ASCD yearbooks, and books by Fullan and Moore. Such reading supports his/her futuristic thinking. He/she often takes his/her reflections from the readings to roundtable discussions. Superintendent F cited some recent literary sources that he/she just used to generate discussions with the administrative team: Business Week, Educational Leadership, School Administrator, Good to Great, The Red Pencil. Superintendent G reported the impact of reading and discussing the book, The World is Flat. Superintendent I reported on the importance

of a superintendent to do research and to read. He/she extends this priority expectation to the administrators and teachers. He/she noted the importance of having focused themes. Sources for this district included Who Moved My Cheese and Good to Great. Superintendent A stressed the importance of creating learning communities to share best practices. He/she reported, "Learning community to me implies collective wisdom. It's looking at research together. You are not the expert but learning right along with everyone else." Superintendent H indicated the importance of utilizing literary resources as a mechanism for addressing change. "I think the only thing you can try to do is to get as much information as you can regarding how dramatically the world is changing".

MAJOR THEME #2: Surrounded by Good, Competent People

Five of nine superintendents expressed that, in order to be successful, it is important for superintendents to surround themselves with good, competent, people. Superintendent C indicated how he/she values and needs to be surrounded by a competent team. He/she is constantly thinking and often will bring back his/her list of thoughts to the team. He/she stated, "I talk to my inner circle and say this is what I heard about this. What do you think about that for us? And then they begin thinking. What is that old saying? 'None of us is a smart as all of us and we are all in the soup together' They (the team) have some really good ideas". Superintendent B reported on how the development of his/her competent central office team evolved. He/she noted that it did take some time to place people in the right position. The Board and the Superintendent redesigned the central office team with changes in personnel: Business Manager, Director of Human Resources, Director of Pupil Services, Director of Special Education, principals. With the goal of surrounding the superintendent with competent people,

this school district moved away from being the district that was always in the newspaper with controversial issues. Superintendent B stated, "So, it has been pretty quiet and we have had great success". Superintendent D concurred, "A critical element of support is staff. We have tried over time to hire competent people would be collegial and open. It is a really big challenge because you might go with the old guard people that would have done business like my dad". Superintendent I stressed the importance of having good people around him/her. He/she reported that it is important for him/her to have his/her hands in everything but there are people on the teams that are specialized. Superintendent I reported that he/she is a "big picture" thinker and his/her assistant is a "detail" person. Because of this complementary relationship, he/she is supported because competent people around him/her assist in the successful completion of a concept, initiative, or any action. Superintendent A expressed the importance of keeping current by relying on other's knowledge. "It has been extremely valuable working in this school district and surrounding myself with really highly competent people who are, for example, involved in doctoral programs with you and they are stimulating me in terms of really bringing a lot of things back to the district that are current about what is going on with leadership right now".

MAJOR THEME #3: Own Professional Development

Five of nine superintendents reported that they seek opportunities for their own professional development. Superintendent C stated, "The best professional development for me as a superintendent or an assistant superintendent is when I was given opportunities to be with other assistant superintendents and superintendents". He/she continued, "It's kind of a lonely job being a superintendent….What an awesome experience it is to be with veteran school leaders who are highly successful, and to be around them, to ask them questions, to listen to them

speak". Superintendent E reported that he/she prepares him/herself for change by reading and then sharing what he/she learned. He/she compared professional development in the educational field to professional development in the business world. He/she asserted,, "If you look at the investment you have in people and one of the things where we have missed the boat, industry knows that you have got to update your people constantly. . . We have got to do a better job. There are so many, so much research coming out today…pressure to keep up to find new and better ways of doing things….you are either going forward or backwards because if you are standing still…you do not progress". Superintendent A inferred that professional development needs to have a plan that is based on district and personal needs. Superintendent G believes that his/her professional development is supported and enhanced when he/she teaches others. Superintendent H emphasized the importance of his/her continuous search for information to answer questions. Through his/her own professional development, his/her questions about change can be answered.

In summary, the data indicates that superintendents need literary resources and research, to be surrounded by competent people, and their own professional development to effectively function in their redefined role.

Minor Themes:

There were several minor (less than 5 responses) themes that identified the kinds of supports Superintendents believe they need. These included:

- local and national workshops
- network supports
- mentor supports

- Board support
- Union support
- Technology

Summary

Superintendents need support to be effective in their redefined role. Literary resources and research, other competent people, and professional development tend to provide support.

Literary resources and research include, but are not limited to, reading books and magazines. Support is attained when the knowledge gained is discussed with others. Individual wisdom is augmented by collective wisdom. Literary resources and research discussed with others can be a mechanism to support superintendent's understanding of change.

A collective approach is effective when those involved are surrounded by competent people. Superintendents of reform utilize competent people as a mechanism for sharing expertise because it enables the superintendent to gain a "big picture" perspective.

Being a superintendent could be a lonely job. Superintendent's who operate in isolation often find comfort in the status quo. In order for the superintendent of the future to effectively face the challenges of reform, he/she will be required to expand their knowledge and growth by engaging with others and by listening to them. A superintendent's redefined role and his/her understanding of change can be supported by their sustained and focused professional development.

Research Question

Where do superintendents get support in order to be successful in their redefined role?

MAJOR THEME #1: The Forum

Participation in the Western Pennsylvania Forum for Superintendents was strongly recommended by 6 of the 9 superintendents. Superintendent A indicated that superintendents need to be "on the cutting edge" and the Forum captures that need. Superintendent C reported on the Forum, "What an awesome experience that is to be with veteran school leaders who are highly successful, and to be around them, to ask them questions, to listen to them speak". Superintendent D reported how he/she keeps current by attending the Forum, "The greatest probable thing I do outside of here is the Pitt Forum, the Superintendent's Forum. That's to me the most thought provoking professional development that I experienced". Superintendent F identified the Forum as a mechanism for support. He/she indicated that there had been discussion at a recent Forum meeting about the need for the Forum to evolve with the needs of superintendents. "I think there are some good leadership programs out there, some good academies, but I also think we keep on reinventing the same thing". He/she continued, "We talked about that at Pitt not too long ago because they were asking which way, how might our Forum, might need to change or our advisory council might need to change. We all said that we need a continuous support system out there. We need to know that there is somebody that we can call that's connected to this and we never have really developed that. I think that new superintendents are sitting in that chair and are at a loss. They do not know where to go for help". Superintendent G and Superintendent I both identified the Forum as the place where they get support but neither identified the specifics of the support.

MAJOR THEME #2: The Allegheny Intermediate Unit (AIU)

Five of the nine superintendent mentioned AIU as a location where superintendents can get support. Superintendent A, Superintendent H and Superintendent I all mentioned the AIU as a place where superintendents do things together. Superintendent A stated, "We meet once a month as superintendents. We go on a retreat. We look at professional development as a major focus. I would say that this is my major way of staying current". Superintendent C reported, "You know, it is kind of a lonely job being a superintendent. Most people do not understand what it is really like. To me the best professional development is the monthly superintendent meeting at the IU". Superintendent F agreed, "They (superintendents) don't know where to go for help. You know, it takes you so long and you probably make so many mistakes by the time you find out how and there's somebody that could have been a great contact for me. There really needs to be strong mentoring programs but you have to connect new superintendents with the best superintendents. . ." He/she continued to indicate that the AIU with its 42 superintendents is a place to begin.

In summary, the data indicates that superintendents get support for their redefined role from the Western Pennsylvania Forum for Superintendents and the Allegheny Intermediate Unit.

Minor Themes

Minor themes (less than 5 responses) for where superintendents find support for their changing role include:

- American Association of School Administration
- Work with cross district teams
- Superintendent Retreats

- Colleagues
- Colleges/Universities
- Literature
- Grants/Endowments
- On-site consultants
- Mentors
- Board members
- Personal strong work ethic
- Conferences
- Pennsylvania School Boards Association
- An environment of high powered people
- Family
- Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators
- Children
- Outside organizations
- Books/study talks
- Guest lecturer
- Teaching at universities or on line
- Teacher Retreats

Superintendents find support for their redefined roles in locations that support the capacity for them to learn and operate in a collaborative setting. Such places include the Forum

and the Allegheny Intermediate Unit. Both provide a venue that superintendent's of the future will need in order to understand and to face the challenges of educational reform.

4.4 SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

RESEARCH QUESTION

How do Superintendents perceive their redefined role?

Nine superintendents identified characteristics/identifiers in their redefined role. The redefined role of the superintendent includes the following major (5 or more responses) themes and minor (less than 5 responses) themes.

Characteristic/Identifier/Descriptors	**Number of Superintendents/Which**
Major Themes	
Changed role	9 of 9 identifies/A,B,C,D,E,F,G,H,I,
Philosophy of Collaboration	9 of 9 identified/A,B,C,D,E,F,G,H,I,
Financial Leader	8 of 9 identified/A,B,C,D,E,F,H,I,
Model of Professional Growth	6 of 9 identified/A,B,C,D,G,I
Utilizes Data	6 of 9 identified/B,C,D,E,H,I
Visionary/futuristic Thinker	6 of 9 identified/A,C,D,E,F,H,
Builder of Relationships	5 of 9 identified/A,B,F,G,H
Educated in Politics	5 of 9 identified/B,C,D,E,H

Minor Themes

Educator and Manager of Board	4 of 9 identified/C,E,G,I
Hands-On Leader	4 of 9 identified/B,D,F,I
Educated on NCLB	4 of 9 identified/B,C,D,H
Culture builder	3 of 9 identified/D,E,G
Educational Leader	3 of 9 identified/B,F,G
Hiring as a Priority	3 of 9 identified/B,G,H
Tool Giver	3 of 9 identified/B,C,E
Knowledge in Labor Relations	3 of 9 identified/B,C,D

Other minor (1 or 2 responses) themes included the Superintendent in the redefined role as:

- a coach
- a catalyst for change
- a leader who assumes other leadership roles outside of the superintendency
- a media influencer
- a school violence leader
- a marketer/public relations leader
- a tradition follower
- a risk taker
- a creator of synergy
- a handler of social and emotional issues
- an expert in technology

- an expert in standards
- a dealer with global competition
- a role model for behavior

RESEARCH QUESTION

What supports do superintendents need to effectively function in their redefined role?

Nine superintendents identified what sources of support are needed for their role . The major (5 or more responses) themes for resources for supports were:

Kind or Resource of Support	**Number of Superintendents/Who**
Major Themes	
Current literary resources and research	7 of 9 identified/A,B,D,E,G,H,I
Surrounded with competent team	5 of 9 identified/A,B,C,D,I
Sought opportunities for own professional development and growth	5 of 9 identified/A,C,E,G,H
Minor themes	
Networking	4 of 9 identified/D,E,F,G
Mentors	3 of 9 identified/B,F,G

Other minor (1 or 2 responses) themes of support included:

- technology

- relationships
- community
- heroes
- leadership programs
- teachers/unions
- opportunities to be with other superintendents
- outside special groups
- School Boards
- Local and national workshops
- Financial resources

RESEARCH QUESTION

Where do Superintendents get support in order to be successful in their redefined role?

Nine superintendents identified locations of supports. Many locations involved relationships with other people. The major (5 or more responses) themes for locations for support were:

Where to Find Support	**Number of Superintendents/Who**
Major Themes	
Western PA Superintendent's Forum	6 of 9 identified/A,C,D,F,G,I

Allegheny Intermediate Unit	5 of 9 identified/A,C,F,H,I

Minor Themes

Working with cross district teams	4 of 9 identified/C,D,F,I
Superintendent Retreats	3 of 9 identified/A,G,H
Colleagues	3 of 9 identified/B,E,G
Colleges/Universities	3 of 9 identified/D,F,G
Literature	3 of 9 identified/D,E,H
Grants/endowments	3 of 9 identified/A,H,I

Other Minor (1 or 2 responses) themes for locations/sources of support include:

- American Association of School Administrators
- On-site consultants
- Board Members
- Personal strong work ethic
- Conferences
- Pennsylvania School Boards Association
- Being around an environment of high powered people
- Family
- Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators
- Children
- Outside organizations
- Book/study groups within and outside district

- Guest lecturing
- Teaching at universities/on-line
- Teacher retreats
- Mentors

4.5 SUMMARY

This chapter includes a profile of each district as reported by superintendents during an interview. Their self reported superintendent profile is included in the appendix. Data related to the research questions were collected during the interview process. The data were reviewed and analyzed. Major and minor themes were identified for each of the research questions. Major themes were defined as having responses from 5 or more superintendents. Minor themes were defined as having less than 5 superintendent's responses.

5.0 REFLECTIVE LEARNING, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study is to add to the growing literature about the redefined role of the superintendent in light of the changing context due to current educational reform. My interest was in the literature written about the key elements that define a superintendent's role. Additionally, this researcher was interested in understanding how superintendents perceive their redefined role, what supports are needed for this role, and where these supports are found.

Fifty superintendents at the Forum were invited to respond to a self-assessment survey, IC Maps. IC Maps were developed by the NSDC to assess the quality and fidelity of the context standards of learning communities, leadership, and resources. Twenty-four responded by completing and returning the survey. There were natural breaks in the data. The breaks in the data appeared to this researcher to naturally categorized the superintendents into three groups. Random superintendents from each group were identified as potential candidates. Ten potential candidates were contacted to arrange a convenient time and place to continue the study by conducting semi-structured interviews. Nine interviews were conducted. One superintendent did not respond to the phone contact or the follow-up letter contact requesting his/her participation in the interview.

This researcher's type of study is phenomenology. This type of study was chosen because it allows the researcher to focus on human experiences and participants' voice.

Participants in such a study share their experiences and also their perspective on those experiences (McMillan, 2000).

Qualitative methods of research were used for this study. Such methods produced a rich, narrative qualitative study which studied behavior that occurred naturally. McMillan (2000) reminds us that this kind of method can be used for two reasons, (a) "Behavior is best understood as it occurs without external restraints or control" and (b) "The situational context is very important in understanding the behavior" (p. 235).

Additionally, qualitative research approach enabled this researcher to gather data in such a manner as described by Merriam (1988), "…qualitative research assumes that there are multiple realities – that the world is not an objective thing out there but a function of personal interaction and perception. It is a highly subjective phenomenon in need of interpreting rather then measuring" (p. 17).

Questions for the semi-structured interview were developed to guide the direction of the interview and to generate responses and discussion focused on the research questions. A field test was initially conducted with an assistant superintendent for the purpose of practicing interviewing techniques such as active listening, non-judgmental conversation, and echoed responses. Several changes were made after the field test for the purpose of attempting to generate more precise and targeted responses.

This researcher maintained a journal throughout the interview process. Journaling occurred immediately after each interview for the purpose of capturing immediate reflections of this researcher's interview experience with each superintendent.

The following overview addresses this researcher's questions about the redefined role of the superintendent.

5.1 OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Overview of Research Question #1: What are the key variables that define the changing role of the superintendent in an era of reform?

Literature indicates that there are several variables that influence the redefinition of the role of the superintendent. Houston (2001) calls these redefining variables the demanding D's. The demanding D's that redefine a superintendent's role are:

1. deregulation – homeschooling, vouchers, privatization
2. decentralization – engagement between the organization and the community to share power
3. demassification – increased number of choices of how people spend their time reduces then number of common experiences that people have
4. disintermediation – the technology phenomenon
5. demographics – shifting of populations
6. diversity – generational, cultural, ethnical divides
7. devolution – site-based management movement

During an interview with O'Neill (2000), Larry Cuban indicated that social demands and change define a superintendent's role. In fact, Cuban contends that schools are a reflection of what the public wants. This includes the desire to prepare students to have productive adult lives, concerns for democracy, and concerns for equity.

Peterson and Barnett (2005) identify role fragmentation caused by politics and conflict as variables of influence. Such influences expect superintendents' roles to become blended to meet the needs of the current political and social demands. Neisler (2000) agreed but from a standards

perspective. He indicates that reform, such as the standards movement, influences roles because of the complexity of the socioculture, economic, and political context in which education exists. According to Elmore (2000), variables of influence include the standards movement because it shifts the relationship between policy and practice. Such a shift influences changes in leadership roles. Green (2001) contends that because of the standards movement, a new view of education is required and calls for a change in personnel, governance, and instruction. Such a change requires a change in roles and relationships.

Kotter (1996) identified globalization, technology, decentralization, and democratization as influential factors on leadership roles. In fact, he contends that because of these factors, roles are being defined in complex ways.

Davis (2004) supports Kotter's belief about the complexity of leadership roles. Davis asserts that while there are outside influential factors on leadership roles, leaders do tend to react according to their perceptions and their belief systems. In some instances, this causes conflict.

Guskey (2000) reminds us that when change is required, participant's levels of concern and levels of use are influential variables. Such variables cannot be ignored when redefining a leadership role.

According to Houston (2001), a superintendent's role is complex because he/she operates within complex and changing conditions. An influential variable in redefining the role is the conflict with the current view of the position itself. First, there are unrealistic expectations that the superintendent show know all and be all. Second, responsibility is centralized. Third, there is accountability without authority. Last, training for superintendents does not meet the needs for the superintendent of the future.

Sparks (2003) contends that leadership development is required to positively influence the role of the superintendent. He indicates that such professional development would also initiate change in both structure and culture. Brown and McLenighan (2005) assert that a variable that will define and retool the role of a superintendent of the future will be his/her own professional development.

This researcher wonders about the current political view of education.

Is the current complex educational context influenced by politicians having expectations of high achievement for all students along with unclear means of accountability?

Is there a context of educational fear because of the view that educational reform is originating in policy instead of practice?

Are educators being asked to change their belief system for the sake of accountability?

Is policy being written for the purpose of student achievement or educational management?

This researcher wonders about those variables that define the role of the superintendent that could potentially create opportunities for tension and conflict.

Is there a context to support the collaboration needed for decentralization, demassification, and devolution?

Overview of Research Question #2: How do superintendents perceive their redefined role in the context of school reform?

After the conclusion of the interviews, the data indicated that all 9 superintendents interviewed agreed with the literature that their role has changed. However, there were a

multitude of perceptions with respect to of how the role is changing and how it is being redefined.

All superintendents' responses reflected their differing past/present personal and professional context. Seven major themes appeared: a philosophy of collaboration, financial leader, model of professional growth, utilizes data, visionary (futuristic thinking), builder of relationships, and educated in politics. Collaboration and financial leadership clearly were the most significant major themes. A variety of 21 minor controllable and uncontrollable themes were recorded. Controllable influences included such minor themes as a hands-on approach, understanding of tax reform, adeptness at technology, and knowledge of labor relations. Uncontrollable influences included such themes as global competition, social and emotional issues, school violence, and the media.

A philosophy of collaboration was common to all superintendents. It appears to this researcher that the philosophy began as a belief and then was enhanced and supported by such venues as the Forum. Superintendent A indicated that he/she used to make all the decisions him/herself. Now, it is too complicated and he/she relies on other's expertise to help in his/her decision-making. This researcher contends that because of the complex changes forced upon superintendents, Superintendent A realized that to meet expectations of his/her job, he/she realized the value of collaboration. The Forum offered one means for collaboration and networking. Superintendent I stressed his/her belief in inviting others to the district to help assess the district and to plan for continuous growth. During his/her 35 years with the same district, he/she has always relied on others for guidance in his/her position. Yet, he/she thinks he/she still has to know a little about everything. Superintendent is the only female of the five mentioned superintendents.

This researcher wonders if she believes she needs to be collaborative to know all because she is a female or because of the complexity of reform and accountability.

Is the value of collaboration a personal belief, a result of attending collaborative experiences such as the Forum, and/or simply a means to attempt to answer to accountability context? In other words, does the belief in a philosophy of collaboration depend on the context?

This researcher wonders if, at times, characteristics of context have any impact on the role and responsibilities of a superintendent as long as he/she is collaborative.

Can the tension of change be minimized by redefining the role of others??

Will superintendents of educational reform lead through teams?

Is the likelihood of a superintendent to be collaborative influenced by both his/her personal and professional past and present context?

Much to this researcher's surprise, being an educational leader was identified as a minor theme. One interpretation is that educational leadership is an assumed role responsibility. The major themes identified reflect the belief that educational leadership occurs because of superintendent's skill in collaboration and in financial leadership. Another interpretation is that a superintendent becomes an educational leader by taking a different path. It is a path through other people and is influenced by context.

This researcher wonders about a superintendent's need for professional growth.

Will a superintendent in an era of reform need a new skill set to remain the lead learner?

Will he/she need to be retooled for the ever changing context?

Superintendents B,C,D, and I all had classroom and administrative experiences before assuming the role of the superintendent. Superintendent A and G's background is with guidance. Such career paths embrace collaboration and relationship building.

This researcher wonders if backgrounds and career paths influence a superintendent's belief in how his/her role changes.

Is the new role of the superintendent to help others to accept change and to support other's growth during change?

Is the superintendent's role based on helping others to understand the complex context and then at the same time offer support to achieve at high levels within that complex context?

Five superintendents (A,B,C,D,I) had four major themes in common: role is changing, collaboration, financial leader, and professional growth. These are superintendents whose district profile has very little in common. Their own self reported profile did, however, indicate three of the five superintendents began their career in a district that was less financially secure than their current district. One superintendent started in an affluent district but always looked for additional means to be financially creative. The other superintendent has had his/her entire career in one distinct that had always struggled with financial support.

This researcher wonders if a superintendent's past experiences with financial creativity influences how a superintendent perceives his/her role in an era of reform.

And, this researcher is curious how recent legislature for school funding will impact the role in financial creativity.

Will the definition of resources be redefined in an era of financial/funding reform?

How will a need for financial creativity impact a superintendent's role in labor relations?

Overview of Research Question #3: What supports do superintendents need to effectively function in their redefined role?

As the role of the superintendent changes, he/she will need support to effectively function in his/her context. Superintendents were quick to identify a multitude of kinds of supports. Major supports included current literary sources/research, the need to surround one's self with competent people in a team-like context, and opportunities for professional growth. Minor themes having 3 or 4 responses included having networks and mentors. Several supports identified were reported by only one superintendent. These single responses included outside special groups, leadership programs with universities, heroes or role models, community, creative thinkers.

During the interview, several superintendents enthusiastically shared some literary sources that they found insightful and/or ones that they had already shared with their district teams. One superintendent contacted this researcher several days later to share a title of a book that he/she though might be a resource for this researcher's own professional growth.

This researcher's most significant finding is that these major and minor themes are founded on attaining a wide variety of support to develop one's self individually and collectively alongside others.

This researcher wonders about how such responses about needed support are related to previous findings about the superintendent's redefined role and the need for collaboration.

Will the role of a superintendent in an era of reform and the role of others who surround him/her be redefined together?

Will an organizational structure look differently in order to provide for support?

How will a collaborative environment be sustained so that supports remain effective?

Two superintendents are new to their district. Superintendent C is in his/her first year of his/her first superintendency. His/her career path was through public education. Superintendent F has been a superintendent in his/her current district for just a few months. He/she had been a superintendent in another district for 4 years. His/her career path took him/her outside of public education temporarily. There were no responses common to these two superintendents.

This researcher wonders about the impact of context on these two superintendents.

Does a first year superintendent need different kinds of supports?

Are supports defined by career paths?

Overview of Research Question #4: Where do superintendents get support that will enable them to be successful in their redefined role?

Superintendents reported that they could find their supports from a variety of resources. Two major themes emerged. Six of the nine superintendents indicated that they find support through participation in the Forum. Five of nine superintendents reported that they find support through the Allegheny Intermediate Unit. Minor themes included working across other districts, grants/endowments, superintendent retreats, colleagues, colleges, and literature. Many minor responses were given by only one superintendent. This included on-site consultants, personal strong work ethic, Pennsylvania State Board Association, being in an environment with high powered people, family, study groups, community, being a guest lecturer, and teacher retreats.

This researcher wonders why all superintendents did not identify the Forum or the Intermediate Unit as a source for support.

Are superintendents reporting that they need more support throughout the year in addition to the two collaborative experiences offered at the Forum during the fall and the spring?

Are superintendents inferring that they need what the literature is telling us – effective professional development is embedded and sustained?

Both female superintendents, Superintendent F and I, along with the Superintendent C, the first year superintendent, had common responses of the Forum, the Allegheny Intermediate Unit, and cross district teams. Female Superintendent F is in her first year at her current district.

This researcher wonders if a new context influences where one gets support.

Does environmental context drive the source of support?

Does a superintendent's longevity influence the source of support?

Superintendents I, H, and A all identified their role being redefined as a financial leader. They also identified grants as a place for support to enable them to be successful in their defined role.

This researcher wonders about financial creativity.

Will the need for the superintendent in an era of reform to be financially savvy interfere with his/her need to be an instructional leader?

Will searching for alternative outside funding place school districts into a competitive relationship?

How will districts remain collaborative in a financially competitive relationship?

How can districts partner to support each other in the common challenge of finding support for redefined roles?

5.2 REFLECTIVE LEARNING

Immediately after each interview, this researcher reflected on each conversation by recording additional findings and questions in a journal.

The initial interview conversation was an exchange of professional courtesies with an explanation for the purpose of the visit. As time went on, the interview became more conversational with the initial emphasis and exchange of information on each other's families and backgrounds.

As the time together continued with standardized interview questions, it became clear to this researcher that the past role of the superintendent existed in a context of isolation. Superintendents are no longer working in isolation. There is a collective approach to the change. In order for superintendents to effectively maneuver through change, they acknowledge a need for ongoing professional growth.

This researcher discussed the pre-assessment survey results with each superintendent and asked for their comments. No superintendent was surprised with the survey results. Each eagerly gave rationale for the results. Many of the comments alluded that context drove their survey responses. In other words, their answers reflected who they are and what they belief along with influences from the physical context where they personally and professionally exist.

This researcher found it interesting that two NSDC context standards align with the findings of the study. The learning community standard is characterized by a philosophy of collaboration. Resources can be discovered by a creative financial leader.

Superintendents agreed that as they are maneuvering though change they will need support. It appeared to this researcher that support is described in a variety of ways and from a variety of sources. This researcher is not convinced that the details of where the support comes from are crucial as long as it is offered, sustained, and found to be effective.

While findings from this research have caused this researcher to become reflective, the findings have also uncovered more questions. This researcher has come to know that the influences on a superintendent's role are within a complex context that is full of tension. At times, superintendents are being asked to effective lead within a given context that might cause personal conflict yet they are held accountable to internal and external expectations.

This researcher wonders if the superintendent in an era of reform is required to fluctuate between leadership styles, beliefs, and supports in order to meet context needs. In other words, is his/her role fluid? Does this fluctuation create a role that is not only redefined but it is a role that is constantly being redefined? Does this frequent change create tension?

5.3 IMPLICATION FOR FURTHER STUDY

This researcher is concerned about a shortage of well prepared superintendents for the future. This concern is magnified by the potential that change may occur even faster than what is being experienced today. Will this tension from a rapid pace of change cause fewer people to aspire to

the superintendency? What implications does this have for universities who are training future superintendents? What will it take to attract effective people to the superintendency? How will they be sustained in their career? What kinds of professional development will be required? How can superintendents deal with the tensions cited above and still have a balanced personal and professionally healthy life? This researcher recommends the above questions as questions to be answered by further research.

5.4 CONCLUSION

During the research process, there was a time that this researcher believed that the role of the superintendent was not being redefined. After more data analysis, conversations with others, more reading, and personal reflection, this researcher had a significant discovery that changed his/her belief. Because of his/her findings, this researcher now concludes that the role of a superintendent in an era of reform is constantly being redefined and evolves through his/her context. There is a universal context for all superintendents that is characterized by change, collaboration, and financial leadership. Yet, at any given moment, this universal context interplays with personal beliefs/values, personal context, professional growth, types of support, and uncontrollable internal/external influences (Appendix F). The interplay is fluid pending changes in demands. Gaps, that at times can be full of tension, occur between a superintendent's beliefs, behavior, and skill vs. influences and demands. A superintendent's role in an era of reform can be described as the "Gap Closer".

As context drives the constant redefinition of the role of the superintendents, the Gap Closer's need for continuous professional development will be crucial. Sparks (2003) reminds us that transformations require professional development to bridge the knowing-doing gap. Taylor (1999), in his discussion with Heifetz, Harvard's Director of the Leadership Education Project, reminds us about gaps that challenge leaders: gaps between core values and behavior, gaps between talents and expectations, gaps between opportunities and abilities to capitalize on them. Professional development for the Gap Closer will support his/her growth as he/she faces several fluid, contextual realities at one time. The courage to face such challenges will create the real heroism for the Gap Closer.

APPENDIX A

NATIONAL STAFF DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL (NSDC) STANDARDS

Context Standards

Learning Communities: Staff development that improves the learning of all students organizes adults into learning communities whose goals are aligned with those of the school and district.

Leadership: Staff development that improves the learning of all students requires skillful school and district leaders who guide continuous instructional improvement.

Resources: Staff development that improves the learning of all students requires resources to support adult learning and collaboration.

Process Standards

Data-driven: Staff development that improves the learning of all students uses disaggregated data to determine adult learning priorities, monitors progress, and helps sustain continuous improvement.

Evaluation: Staff development that improves the learning of all students uses multiple sources of information to guide improvement and demonstrate impact.

Research-based: Staff development that improves the learning of all students prepares educators to apply research to decision making.

Design: Staff development that improves the learning of all students uses learning strategies appropriate to the intended goal.

Learning: Staff development that improves the learning of all students applies knowledge about human learning and change.

Collaboration: Staff development that improves the learning of all students provides educators with the knowledge and skills to collaborate.

Content Standards:

Equity: Staff development that improves the learning of all students prepares educators to understand and appreciate all students, create safe, orderly, and supportive learning environments, and hold high expectations for their academic achievement.

Quality Teaching: Staff development that improves the learning of all students deepens educators' content knowledge, provides them with research-based instructional strategies to assist students in meeting rigorous academic standards, and prepares them to use various types of classroom assessments appropriately.

Family Involvement: Staff development that improves the learning of all students provides educators with knowledge and skills to involve families and other stakeholders appropriately.

APPENDIX B

LETTER OF INVITATION TO POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS

December 1, 2005

Dear Superintendents:

I am currently enrolled at the University of Pittsburgh. I have recently received my Superintendents Letter of Eligibility. I am now in the process of conducting my research for my dissertation. The topic I am studying is the redefined role of the superintendent. I am interested in knowing how you perceive your role changing. In other words, how do you see your role redefined in lieu of the current context of educational reform?

Enclosed is an instrument designed by the National Staff Development Council (NSDC). The NSDC has created innovation configurations (IC) for the purpose of adding clarity to their standards by identifying descriptive actions of role groups within a school system. IC maps measure quality and fidelity of the NSDC standards. IC maps can be used as a tool to preassess NSDC standards and then to initiate visionary actions.

Your voluntary self assessment would give me insight into what you perceive your changing role with respect to the three context standards of learning communities, leadership, and resources. During the month of December, I will be contacting a several superintendents to arrange a follow-up semi-structured interview. The interview would be conveniently arranged to meet your schedule and will be at a location convenient for you. The interview would last no more than 60-90 minutes. Confidentiality will be maintained and there are no risks associated with this study. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you may terminate your participation at any time.

Please consider completing this self assessment survey during your attendance at this Superintendents Forum. Before you leave tomorrow, submit your completed survey by returning it in the provided envelope to Dr. Sue Goodwin. If you are unable to complete the self assessment survey before you leave the Forum, a stamped, self addressed envelop is enclosed in order for you to mail your response back to me before Dec. 9, 2005.

In advance, thank you for taking time to complete this survey. If you have any questions, I can be contacted at home at 724-935-4631, at work at Wexford Elementary School in the Pine-Richland School District at 724-935-4631, or by email at yhawkins@pinerichland.org.

Sincerely,

Yvonne L, Hawkins

Principal, Wexford Elementary School

Pine-Richland School District

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How many years have you been a Superintendent? What was your career path before you became a Superintendent?
2. How many students are enrolled in your district? How would you characterize your district?
3. As you reflect on your role as Superintendent, how has your role changed over the last (number of years as Superintendent – see question #1) years? What has influenced these changes?
4. How have you prepared yourself for the changes in your role?
5. What is your district's belief about professional development? Based on that belief, what is the purpose of professional development?
6. Do you pursue your own professional development? How is your professional development supported?
7. How has your own professional development impacted your practice and contributed to any role changes?
8. Does your personal growth have a systemic affect? How?

9. Your pre-assessment survey indicated a ranking of the content standards of learning communities, leadership, and resources. What is your response to the pre-assessment data? Tell me how issues and/ or your experiences around learning communities, leadership, and resources have had an impact on any changes in your role?

APPENDIX D

SELF-REPORTED SUPERINTENDENT PROFILE

Superintendent A

- Bachelors Degree from a university in Ohio
- Masters Degree in Guidance
- High school science teacher for one year in Ohio with a little guidance on the side
- Ohio middle school teacher
- Full time guidance counselor for 3 years
- Coordinator of Pupil Services in a PA district for 5 years
- Assistant Superintendent in another PA district for 6 years
- Superintendent in that same district from 1982-2000
- Superintendent in another district since 2000

Superintendent B

- Bachelors and Masters Degree in Elementary Education
- Letter of Eligibility from Bank Street College
- Doctorate in 1985

- Central Office position
- Elementary teacher for 8 years in same district
- Elementary principal for 5-6 years
- Junior High principal in same district
- Elementary principal in another district
- Central Office position in the same district in charge of elementary education (not an assistant superintendent)
- Acting Superintendent in that district for 1 year
- Assistant Superintendent in another district for 1-2 years
- Superintendent in a rural school district
- Superintendent in another district for 9 years

Superintendent C

- Dual certification in elementary and secondary English
- Teacher for 10 years – 5 elementary and 5 high school
- Elementary principal for 7 years
- Assistant High School principal in local high school for 2 years
- Assistant Superintendent in that district for 5 years
- Doctorate and 3 years in higher education
- Superintendent in neighboring district for 2 years

Superintendent D

- Potter Country – grew up there

- Undergraduate degree from a Pennsylvania State School
- Teacher
- Masters at a local university
- Superintendent in another county – the poorest in PA
- Superintendent for 1-2 years in a small, rural, political district
- Superintendent in current district for 12 years

Superintendent E

- Bachelors Degree from Penn State in 1966 in Social Studies
- Teacher
- Masters Degree from Indiana University
- Principal's certification and Letter of Eligibility from Duquesne University
- Director of Alternative Education, Assistant Principal, Director of Secondary Education, Director of Personnel in this district
- Superintendent for the last 9 years

Superintendent F

- Ohio native
- Assistant superintendent and then superintendent (7 years) in Ohio system
- Assistant superintendent in another, more diverse, urban, Ohio school district
- Director of School Reform initiatives in this urban, Ohio school district for 6 years
- Director of School Reform in the state of Ohio
- Liaison to Washington, DC

- Superintendent of a school district in Allegheny County for 4 years
- Superintendent in another Allegheny County school district beginning January, 2006

Superintendent G

- High school social studies teacher and secondary gifted teacher
- Masters Equivalency in education with other interests in political science and guidance
- Masters Degree in curriculum
- MBA for the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs from the University of Pittsburgh
- Principal and curriculum supervisor certified
- Curriculum supervisor where taught
- Ph.D. and Letter of Eligibility while curriculum supervisor
- Superintendent for 7 years
- Superintendent in another district for 5 years
- 34 total years in education in only 2 districts

Superintendent H

- Classroom teacher in another school district
- Reading specialist and reading supervisor in the same district
- Coordinator of federal programs in the same district
- Director of Special Education in the same district
- Assistant Superintendent in the same district
- Superintendent in the same district for last 3 years

Superintendent I

- Same school district for 35 years
- Home economics teacher for 13 years
- Middle School assistant principal for 5 years
- Middle School principal
- Curriculum Coordinator
- Assistant Superintendent for 7years
- Superintendent the last 11 years

APPENDIX E

FINDINGS

E.1 HOW DO SUPERINTENDENTS PERCEIVE THEIR REDEFINED ROLE?

	SA	SB	SC	SD	SE	SF	SG	SH	SI
Philosophy of collaboration	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Financial leadership	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Visionary/Futuristic leadership	X		X	X	X	X		X	
Models professional growth	X	X	X	X			X		X
Educates and manages the Board			X		X		X		X
Uses data		X	X	X	X			X	X
Builds relationships	X	X				X	X	X	
Knowledge of politics		X	X	X	X			X	
Educational leader		X				X	X		
Hands-on		X		X		X			X
Understands tax reform	X		X		X			X	
Knowledge of NCLB		X	X	X				X	
Models behavior	X						X		
Deals with global competition								X	
Knowledge of standards		X							X
Adept to technology									X
Deals with social/emotional issues									X
Creates synergy							X		
Risk-taker							X		
Honors tradition							X		
Understands and builds culture				X	X		X		
Markets the district/public relations					X		X		
School violence					X				
Media influences				X					
Assume other leadership positions		X					X		
Knowledge of labor relations		X	X	X					
Gives people tools to do job		X	X		X				
Hiring is a priority		X					X	X	
Catalyst for change					X	X			
Coach							X		

Note. S = Superintendent; X = attribute fulfilled

E.2 WHAT SUPPORTS DO SUPERINTENDENTS NEED TO EFFECTIVELY FUNCTION IN THEIR REDEFINED ROLE?

	SA	SB	SC	SD	SE	SF	SG	SH	SI
Current literary resources	X	X			X		X	X	X
Local and national workshops	X	X							
Competent team	X	X	X	X					X
own professional development	X		X		X		X		X
Financial resources	X								
Mentors		X				X	X		
Board support		X						X	
Outside special groups		X							
Opportunities to be with other superintendents			X						
Netowrking				X	X	X	X		
Teacher/union support					X			X	
Leadership programs						X			
Heroes							X		
Community							X		
Relationships							X		X
Technology							X		X

Note. S = Superintendent; X = attribute fulfilled

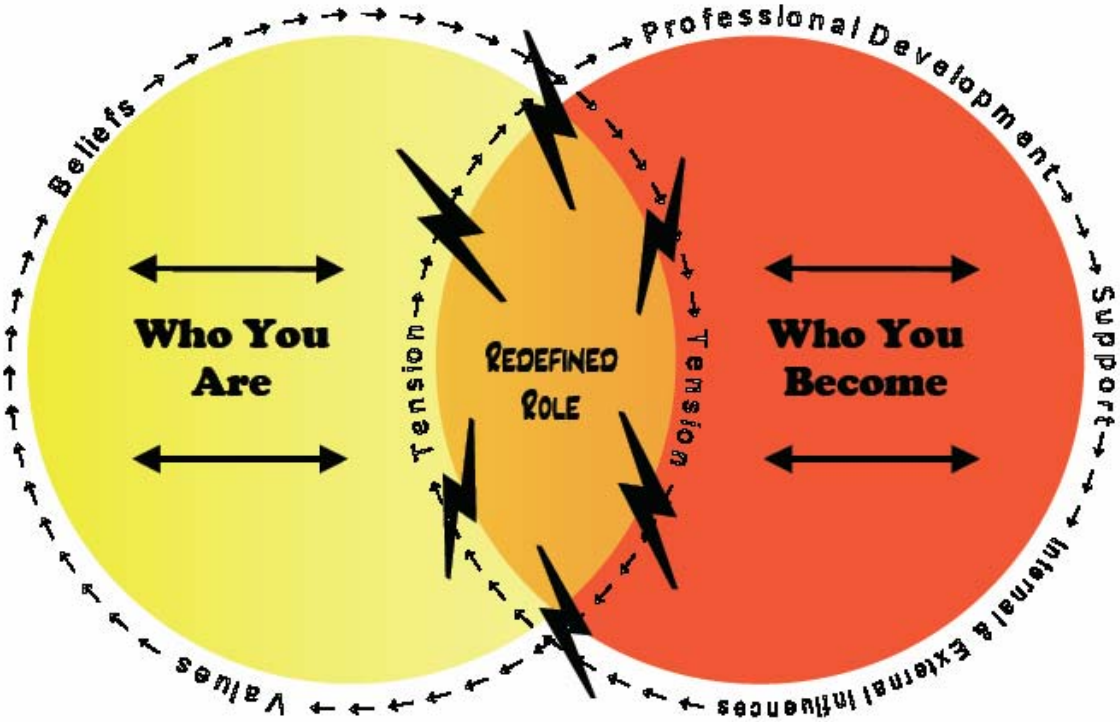
E.3 WHERE DO SUPERINTENDENTS GET SUPPORT IN ORDER TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN THEIR REDEFINED ROLE?

	SA	SB	SC	SD	SE	SF	SG	SH	SI
Grants/endowments	X							X	X
Forum	X		X	X		X	X		X
American Association of School Administration	X		X						
Intermediate unit	X		X			X		X	X
Superintendent retreats	X						X	X	
On-site consultants	X								
Mentors		X							
Board members		X					X		
Personal strong work ethic		X							
Conferences		X				X			
Pennsylvania School Boards Association		X							
Colleagues		X			X		X		
Being in an environment of high-powered people		X							
Working on cross-district teams			X	X	X				X
Family			X						
Colleges				X		X	X		
Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators				X					
Literature				X	X			X	
Children						X	X		
Outside organizations						X			X
Book talk/study groups							X		
Being guest lecturers							X		
Teaching at universities/on-line							X		
Teacher retreats									X

Note. S = Superintendent; X = attribute fulfilled

APPENDIX F

CONTEXT IMPACT ON THE SUPERINTENDENT'S ROLE



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