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SUPERINTENDENTS' LEADERSHIP IN ALBERTA SCHOOLS: INFLUENCING  
SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT?

by

Arthur J. Aitken

B.Ed., University of Alberta, 1974

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presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION


THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

May 2001

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Educational Leadership

Superintendents' Leadership in Alberta schools: Influencing School Improvement?

Adviser: Donald L. Robson Ph. D. 

Abstract

This study assessed the link between superintendents' leadership and its influence on school improvement practice in small and medium sized Alberta school jurisdictions (student populations fewer than 30 000). Principals' perceptions were used to determine if the superintendent's influence was the same as internal factors such as school council, school culture, school goals, and student needs. In addition this study determined if the superintendents' influence was the same as all of the internal factors when combined. The study used Alberta Education reports to identify school restructuring components that were key to the school reform movement in Alberta in 1994. A review of the literature revealed that Leithwood (1995) had identified the main internal influencing factors in school improvement, thereby providing a basis for the comparison.

Descriptive statistics were used to track the data and to compare the respective influence of all factors. These comparisons were validated using a chi-squared calculation on each influencing factor.

The study found that the superintendent's influence in Alberta schools exceeded each of the internal factors in its impact on school improvement practice in a restructured setting. The study also determined that the superintendent's influence was at least equal to that of all the internal factors combined.



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## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

In 1994, the Government of Alberta announced a major educational restructuring plan designed to overhaul the funding and governance of education in the province of Alberta. The initiative followed other reform efforts in England, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States of America. As in these other systems that had been reformed, much of the preamble and public debate which had preceded the restructuring announcement had focused on the need to establish a fair funding framework, the desire to reduce costs, and the demand to improve results. When making the restructuring announcement the Minister of Education stated:

Over the past two years, Albertans have repeatedly told us that education should be government's top priority and that government should define a basic education and fund it. They said that a fair system of funding for school jurisdictions, administrative cost control, more involvement by parents and a greater focus on results must be key components of our education system of tomorrow. (Government of Alberta, News Release, February 24, 1996)

In an effort to address perceived inequities in financing, the plan called for eliminating local funding of education by introducing a provincially established tax rate. Efficiencies were addressed by reducing the number of school boards from

141 to 61. This was accomplished by regionalizing groups of boards to reduce administration and governance costs. The funding framework included a three-year financing initiative that would reduce the cost of education by 12.4%. Chief amongst governance changes were empowerment initiatives such as the introduction of school councils that were to be given responsibilities in the decision-making process at the school level. Caldwell (1999) refers to this as a "Track 1" change involving the shifting of significant authority, responsibility, and accountability.

Implicit in the restructuring in Alberta was a change in the role of the superintendent. In its announcement the government stated that the selection of a superintendent was to be a joint responsibility of each school board and Alberta Education. The superintendents' contracts were initially intended to be term-specific for no more than three years and most important decisions were intended to be made at the school level. Superintendents, therefore, were directed to delegate decision-making to principals and school councils, but, at the same time, they were still to be held accountable for the performance of their school systems. Three-year education plans that included specific improvement goals for the system were to be filed with the Minister of Education. The superintendents' education plans were to include goals, outcomes, strategies for implementation, and measures to demonstrate the success of the system at the student level.

This study will: (i) examine the impacts of the restructuring on the leadership role of the chief executive officer in the education system four years

following the restructuring legislation, and (ii) will determine what effect the restructuring legislation has had on superintendents' leadership. Specifically, this study will attempt to determine if the superintendent's leadership in the restructured system has a direct impact on improvement efforts in education.

Several reputable authors in the field of educational leadership have addressed restructuring and the emergence of transformational leadership as a key component in an empowered environment. Leithwood (1995) published a series of articles complete with annotated references on the topic of reform in education with particular focus on the United States and Canada. The edited book cites examples of reform efforts in the 1990s and focuses on leadership in the reform process. Reavis (1992) also examined restructured schools, tested some theories, and studied some practical applications of how decisions are made in the empowered setting. He addressed the emergence of transformational leadership as part of the restructuring process. Murphy (1994) reviewed the impact of the reform movement in the state of Kentucky, tracing the movement from its inception in 1990. His research on the changes in superintendents' roles provides a referent base for the superintendent's role in effecting positive change in education. Murphy's research was based on responses from the superintendents in Kentucky who served in the CEO position both before and after the reforming legislation.

Together, these reviews suggest several generalizations about the impact of restructuring on the superintendents' role, particularly with respect to accountability for school improvement—deemed to be an important characteristic

of the Alberta restructured system and a requirement for the superintendent. The Alberta Ministry's policy on Accountability in Education (January 9, 1996) supports this premise.

Alberta Education expects continuous improvement efforts by boards, [and] superintendents ...to help ensure schools are maintaining standards that provide their students with the requisite knowledge, skills and attitudes needed for successful admission to the next level of education or for entry into the world of work. (p. 2)

Leadership theory and change theory have produced volumes of data on the role of leadership in the change process. Schein (1990), Senge (1990), and Fullan (1994) cite numerous examples of how successful reform, particularly at the systemic level, is closely connected to particular leadership behavior. Research on educational change has also recently begun to concentrate on changing schools as organizations (Barth). In these discussions the focus of attention has shifted from individual change to system change, from student achievement measures to broader school outcomes, and from teachers as agents of change to principals as orchestrators of change. For example, Heckman holds, "Improvement of an organization involves restructuring, and restructuring involves the acceptance of new ideas and new ways of behaving" (p. 45). Whereas school leadership has been recognized as a critical element in school improvement and reform, there is an emerging need to study the impact of the new role of superintendent in particular, and its effect on school improvement efforts. In short there have been few studies in the Alberta system



that have attempted to explore the impact of the leadership role of the superintendent as an independent variable in the restructured context. Murphy's (1993a) qualitative research conducted in Kentucky provides one example of this type of research and serves to raise some questions about a renewed form of leadership which may be emerging as a result of restructuring.

Almost all North American systems are dealing with changed governance structures that were implemented in the 1990s. These changes raise questions concerning attitudes emerging from the chief executive officer's leadership in education, and consequently, whether or not superintendents can utilize leadership behaviors that can have an impact on improvement efforts.

### Context

The restructuring initiative in education in Alberta was designed to change the superintendent's relationship with other stakeholders and, subsequently, the role of the superintendent in the governance of the education. Alberta Education Policy 1.8.2 states: "Alberta education believes that major decisions about policies, instructional programs and services and the allocation of funds to support them must be made collaboratively" (p. 9). In the province of Alberta the number of superintendents has been reduced by two-thirds since 1995. The smallest regional division in the province in 1996 counted 2200 students and the largest public system served over 100,000 students. Prior to the change some systems had fewer than 500 students enrolled in their school system. The government has mandated school-based decision-making and has required parents to have meaningful input into the operation of the school through school

councils (Alberta Education Policy 1.8.2, 1995). As well, a school board can no longer directly tax its constituencies for operating and capital revenue. These changes represent a departure from a system that was controlled locally by school boards that had the power to establish tax rates, collect taxes, and direct their superintendents to implement their own educational priorities. This study will, therefore, examine the effect of these change initiatives on the role of the superintendent.

Since the restructuring legislation, it has generally been the responsibility of the superintendent to implement the reform initiatives, but without the support of some key stakeholders. School boards have protested through their provincial organization expressing their discontent at the change in governance. Townsend (1998) found that in many cases principals have been unwilling to accept the responsibility of school-based decision-making, and have demanded opportunities to acquire skills and training through their professional organization. School councils have demonstrated some uncertainty about which decisions to make, and indeed in how to make informed decisions. "School Councils--Next Steps," a report published by Alberta Learning, stated that school council members felt that their input into board affairs did not ultimately have any impact on the decisions that were subsequently made (Alberta Education, 1999, p. 16). The provincial body responsible for administering education—Alberta Learning—also experienced large staff cuts by “downsizing 20% from the 1992/93 base, [and] reducing the staff complement by 170 positions....” (Meeting the

Challenge—A Plan for Education, p. 3). This has resulted in more administrative demands being placed on the superintendents in the system.

In this mandated environment of change the superintendent has been required to implement the new structure, and has also been required to delegate more decisions. Information is needed to assess the net effects of these legislated changes. In the collaborative structure of site-based decision-making it is implied that the superintendent become more vision-oriented and more attuned to supporting a community culture. There is an emerging need to establish whether or not the superintendent is effective in supporting and encouraging school improvement in this mandated restructured context and whether the leadership literature—by Fullan, Leithwood, Sergiovanni and others—provides an effective model for leadership that encourages positive change in the system.

### Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study will be to examine the impact of the superintendent's leadership on school improvement efforts with particular focus on the restructuring movement and its effects. One dependent variable will be defined as the leadership requirements enacted by the restructuring legislation in Alberta in 1994. The government plan, outlined in "Meeting the Challenge—A Plan for Education" (1994), was intended to change many of the roles in education, including those of administrators and superintendents. In an empowered or decentralized setting where leadership has been redefined, the study will focus on a second dependent variable—the extent to which superintendents' leadership may have an influence on change efforts in schools

as compared to other influences. The independent variable will be defined as the improvement efforts of schools that may be attributed to the leadership behavior of the Alberta superintendents and some internal factors.

### Definitions of Terms

Alberta Learning: The government and administration wing of the education system in the province of Alberta, formerly known as Alberta Education.

Restructuring: A refocusing of the education system proclaimed in 1994 in the province of Alberta to ensure that the needs of the students are met. It involves an assurance that the resources and the authority reside where education happens. In announcing the education reform Alberta's Education Minister Halvar Jonson stated: "The education system will focus on students, classrooms and communities. Decisions on how best to meet the needs of students will be made as much as possible at the school level" (p. 1).

Site-based Decision-Making: School-based decision-making is a process, outlined in Alberta Education policy, through which major decisions are made at the school level about policies, instructional programs and services, and how funds are allocated to support them. Alberta Education Policy Statement 1.8.2 (1995) states: " A school and its community shall have the authority and the support to make decisions which directly impact on the education of students and shall be accountable for the results" (p. 1 of 1).

School Improvement: The outcome of a process involving specifying goals, strategies, and results to address provincial goals and local goals. School

systems are required to develop three-year plans that state these improvement initiatives.

Leadership for restructuring: Leadership is about learning—recognizing that everyone has the potential and right to work as a leader. Leading is a shared endeavor involving high collaboration and the redistribution of power and authority.

Transformational Leadership: Avolio and Bass (1988) assert that transformational leaders change the system to recreate their environment. Transformational leaders emerge in times of growth, crisis, and reform. Burns (1978) describes reform leadership as exacting and, by its very nature, transformational. Zalenik agrees, "Transformational leaders tend to separate from the environment and create change" (Zalenik, p. 67).

KERA: Kentucky Educational Reform Act (1990). Generally acknowledged as the most comprehensive education reform legislation in the U.S.A. (David, 1993b p. 1).

### Operational Null Hypothesis

The principal's perceptions of outcomes of a school improvement process characterized by the key components of the restructuring expectations are influenced equally by the superintendent's leadership, school culture, student needs, school council input, or school goals.

### Delimitation and Limitations of the study

The study will confine itself to a focus on the population of Alberta superintendents and their leadership staff. The reform legislation in the Province of Alberta in 1994 had the effect of reducing the number of school superintendents to 60. Given the formation of larger jurisdictions, and the subsequent expectation for a renewed form of educational governance, the research will concern itself with the impact of superintendents on schools that are expected to assume responsibility for making more of the decisions that affect the improvement of education—a responsibility that was considered to be the domain of the superintendent prior to the legislation. This approach suggests a collection of data on the leadership of the superintendent to determine to what extent the leadership behavior of the superintendent is responsive to the restructuring enactment and, therefore, instrumental in positively impacting educational change. Further data needs to be gathered to identify factors that motivate staff to make improvement decisions and to determine whether there is a link between those efforts and the influence of the superintendent.

The findings in this study will be particular to the Alberta setting and may only be generalizable to the extent that other mandated restructuring movements parallel the Alberta legislation.

### Significance of the Study

Education in the Province of Alberta was targeted for serious change by the Alberta government. The legislation of 1994 was intended to restructure the financing and the governance of education and create a system that could

experience effective change from the grass roots level. New powers were given to school councils and site-based decision-making was mandated. As a result of the legislation, boards were required to file education plans annually focussing on achievement and efficiencies. Responsibility for curriculum choice was delegated to the school level while teaching methods and selection of resources became a matter involving the teacher and the community through an accountability process with the school council. Education finance was distributed to school boards on a per student basis with the expectation that the money was intended to be passed on to the school level. Spending caps were imposed on administration (Alberta Education, Policy Handbook, 1995).

What effect has all of this change had on the role and influence of the Chief Executive Officer? The superintendent's position in the past was one of high status and was generally the most respected of roles in education. The superintendent had traditionally assumed chief executive powers for the system and was expected to exercise leadership and influence throughout the system. The restructuring movement focuses on decentralized decision-making and empowerment at the school level. The board's role has been redefined to focus on the appropriate distribution of resources and to establish enabling policies. Accountability is instituted through reporting on the results of the education plan—a function that is monitored by Alberta Education officials.

In the wake of the systemic change initiated by government legislation, this study will query whether the kind of leadership manifested by the superintendent is having an effect on education compared to other influencing

factors. This study will also seek to determine if the form of leadership that has emerged as a result of the changes and the new roles in education is proving effective in inspiring and facilitating change.

This research occurs four years following the restructuring of education in the province of Alberta. It is the first attempt to examine the superintendent's influence on school improvement in the restructured Alberta system. A similar study was conducted in the State of Kentucky following reform legislation of 1990. Murphy (1994a) surveyed superintendents in a qualitative study examining the impact of the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) legislation on the superintendency. While Murphy concluded that there is still an important role for the superintendent to play in the education system, he expressed uncertainty as to how the new role ought to be conceptualized. This study will provide more information that may resolve the problem of defining the superintendency and how it is emerging in a restructured environment. It will also serve as a basis for further leadership studies designed to inform administrator preparation programs. It is quite possible that there is a new knowledge base emerging as a result of the numerous restructuring efforts, particularly if effective school improvement initiatives are occurring as a result of particular leadership strategies.



## CHAPTER II

### Review of Related Literature

Wanted: A miracle worker who can do more with less, pacify rival groups, endure chronic second-guessing, tolerate low levels of support, process large volumes of paper and work double shifts (75 nights a year out). He or she will have carte blanche to innovate, but cannot spend much money, replace any personnel, or upset any constituency.

(Evans, 1995)

*“Education Week”*

The closing decades of the twentieth century have ushered in changes to the structure of the education system, to understandings about learning, and to the role and nature of leadership. The reform movement has been central to educational development since the experimental open education models of the 1960s. Since then, educators have explored organizational culture, leadership styles, effective schools models, site-based governance, and other perspectives in an effort to improve school performance. Business and government have developed an intense interest in education in response to public outcries for accountability and to the massive growth in the use of technology. The accountability movement and the technology initiatives, coupled with a funding crisis in education, have placed the Chief Executive Officers of school districts

under immense pressure. In many cases school superintendents have been subject to harsh criticism, and their views have largely been disregarded or, at best, not taken seriously. Indeed, many of the reform initiatives, under the guise of empowerment and shared decision-making, appear to have been designed to reduce or eliminate layers of administration and to minimize the influence of the superintendent's position. Short and Greer (1997) suggested that because superintendents serve at the pleasure of the board they "must support the board's thinking regarding central office direction" (p. 46). They further stated the major players in school districts have not been anxious for schools to have meaningful independence.

As superintendents are faced with this challenging and sometimes hostile climate, questions such as these may be raised: Are there possibilities of a new form of leadership to emerge in the superintendency, or examples that might serve as a foundation upon which to build a new conception of superintendent leadership? Can superintendent leadership be more directly linked to school improvement? If so, are there factors in the restructured educational system that support successful leadership at the superintendent level? These questions are examined through a review of the literature focusing on the external and internal factors influencing the superintendency.

The key focus questions of this literature review are these:

1. What have been the key characteristics of the restructuring movement?

2. What effects have these initiatives had on the superintendent's role in school systems?
3. Does the superintendent have any influence in improving schools?
4. Do competing factors exist that influence school improvement?

### Key Characteristics of the Restructuring Movement

It is noteworthy that the last truly successful change in education that occurred on a large scale was in the 1940's when the "Progressive Period" was ushered in by the pragmatic writing of John Dewey, a noted intellectual who promoted child development and experience-based learning as fundamental considerations in education (Dewey, 1986). This period was noted for innovations such as community schools that were organized around child-centered ideals. These changes were adopted on a large scale and were examples of the attempts to introduce broad-based pedagogical practices in this period. Elmore (1996) reasoned that these changes were likely successful because the elements of the change were distant enough from the core, thereby suggesting that true reform cannot work if there is an attempt to alter the fundamental process of learning significantly. This begs the question of whether or not the current reform efforts can be implemented effectively with the heavy emphasis on large-scale change encompassing curriculum, teaching pedagogy, leadership practice, and decision-making processes. Elmore further expounded that current changes can be successful on a system-wide level if they address the following fundamental principles that have been apparent problems in previously failing reform efforts:

- develop strong external normative structures for reflective practice...that professionals are responsible for looking outward at challenging conceptions of practice, in addition to looking inward at their values and competencies;
- develop organizational structures that intensify and focus, rather than dissipate and scatter the intrinsic motivation to engage in challenging practice;
- create intentional processes for reproduction of successes (models);
- create structures that promote learning of new practices and incentive systems that support them. (p. 5)

These factors, which largely address the function of organizational structure in the successful change process, are silent on the matter of leadership. An examination of reform efforts in the past reveals that leaders often championed the cause of reform in the name of improving schooling and were an integral part of the implementation process. Is this true of the current reform effort?

Following the progressive reforms of the 1940's, education in North America remained stable in the sense that there were no major innovations introduced until the 1960's. There followed a series of significant innovative endeavors that commenced in the mid-1960's and continued through the 1970's in which concepts such as open area, team teaching, and individualization were the key elements. Only a few of the reforms survived from this period, referred to

by Glatthorn (1987) as the era of Romantic Radicalism. The introduction of these liberal concepts in education was parallel with the freedom movement of the young people in North American society. However, starting in the late 1970's several reports emerged about the state of education that cited shortcomings in American Public Schools. According to Farrar, in Jacobsen and Conway (1990) A Nation at Risk (1983) was the most prominent of these reports. Farrar stated,

Risk identified problems and offered recommendations in five areas: stronger curriculum content; increased course requirements and higher standards for students' performance in general; increased time for schooling in longer days and length of the school year; new approaches to attracting, training, and compensating teachers; and better leadership and fiscal support. (Jacobsen & Conway, 1990, p. 8)

In Alberta, too, there were publications that paralleled the trend elsewhere. The Minister's Advisory Council on School Achievement (MACOSA) report (1976) and the Harder report (1979) were two such documents that drew attention to student achievement issues and subsequently triggered off widespread public interest in the quality of education in Alberta. Another Alberta report—the Worth Report (1973)—resulted in the government initiating comprehensive examinations at the grade 12 level after the province had abolished these system-wide tests some ten years earlier. Jacobson and Conway (1990) attribute changes that occurred in this era as being spurred on by the need for economic survival. They suggested that there was a new sense of urgency as these Wave I reformers linked declining student performance to

markets lost to competitors in the Far East and, eventually, to an overall sense of national economic malaise. Ultimately, there was a realization that old practices could not resolve new challenges and the continent moved to the next stage of reform that focussed on teaching and classroom results. The latter part of the 1980s saw public education address the more difficult issues of school structure and governance.

The trend for public demands for better school performance brought about Wave II reforms, marked by State reforms, many of which were political, imposed, and regulatory in nature. The recommendations that emerged from this period were broad and all encompassing. Murphy (1994b) regards these reforms as "the 'excellence' or 'standards-raising' movement of the early-to-late eighties" (p. 1). These reform initiatives were framed by the belief that schooling could be improved if standards were raised, more effective prescriptions and regulations written, and educators, from the boardroom to the classroom, were asked to do more. Superintendents were expected to exercise leadership to implement new standards and to begin to focus on results. In Alberta in 1983, the government introduced provincial achievement tests at the grade three, six, and nine levels following published reports that generated considerable public interest. The thrust of demands on school districts to change shifted back from change initiated from within the organization which focused on individual schools, to a focus on the system organization. A renewed public interest in education, at the same time, brought with it a new focus on accountability for providing effective education. Much of Canada is still immersed in this stage of development that

addresses standards in course requirements, achievement standards, teacher evaluation, and accountability of districts and schools. Indeed, the standards movement with respect to assessment might also be considered as an extension of the Wave II movement. The Wave II reforms, initiated during the mid-to-late 1980's, were reactionary in form and texture, and triggered the series of changes that many education systems in North America implemented—and to which many are still attending. The impetus for Wave II reforms was rooted in “perceived problems with the education establishment, problems with society, problems with the political structure, and problems with current practice” (Pogrow, 1996, p. 657). The prime momentum for change came from the release of *A Nation at Risk*—the 1983 Reagan administration document which reported on the status of American schools. This report caused a great deal of concern, and it prompted a system-wide focus on outcomes in an effort to provide the public with a measurable, demonstrable means of justifying the education system and for being accountable. This shift in focus was designed to restore public confidence in the education system but also had implications for leadership. *A Nation at Risk*, although proven later to be flawed, (Bracey, 1997; Farrar, 1990) was a highly critical report sponsored by the U.S. government, and it ushered in a period of time which produced an explosion of books and reports about American education—all of which were critical of education in general and of leadership in particular. Business models were conceptualized and promoted by theorists such as Deming (1986), an organizational culturist, and Peters and Waterman (1982), who were proponents of effective business management.

Pulliam (1987) comments, "Their belief [was] that which works for the private sector can also be used by public institutions like schools" (p. 229).

Some of the government and business influence in reform has provided focus on the leadership components of education, placing a great deal of pressure and demands on school and school system administration. This has occurred in response to growing demands for change from the public and from the professional press. The National Governor's Association, the Carnegie Forum for the Education Commission of the States, and others have called for sweeping changes in the ways schools are structured and how they deliver their services to children. Hord (1990) stated, "The Carnegie Report supports increased school-based decision-making and accountability" (p. 2). The Carnegie Report, accompanied by the Holmes Group Reports, focussed the second wave changes on lasting educational improvement that centered primarily on teaching. During this era of reform, Green (1987) cited a meeting at which the nation's governors advocated a need for "developing new conceptions of control and leadership at the district level, as well as new conceptions of control and leadership at the local school level" (p. 9). At the same time, Leaders for America's Schools (1987), a report commissioned by the National Commission for Excellence in Education, raised important questions about educational administrators and their role in managing reform efforts in school improvement. These challenges to educational leaders became more intensive and took on new meaning in the 1990's.



According to Fullan (1991), the attempted changes up to the end of the 1980s would be regarded as first-order changes—changes to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of what was currently done, without disturbing the basic organizational features, and without substantially altering the way the children and adults performed their roles. Many systems have now moved onto yet a third wave of reform that is gathering momentum across the continent. Fullan describes the characteristics of third wave as second-order change—change that seeks to alter the fundamental ways in which organizations are coupled which includes new goals, structures, and roles. An example of Fullan's Wave III, or second order change, was an education restructuring movement in the 1990s initiated by the Pampa School Board in a Texas Panhandle community and reported by Reavis and Griffith (1992). The renewed focus on a vision, coupled with a series of commitments based on beliefs, was an illustration of a reform effort involving the public and business. The Pampa project involved “scores of local businessmen and parents united with dozens of volunteer school personnel and board members to make a set of aggressive recommendations that would impact a dozen areas of the Pampa school program” (p. 93).

Cuban (1989) and Sedlak, Wheeler, Pullin, and Cusick (1986) were among the first to describe the new belief system that began to take root as the “restructuring movement.” A decade later Caldwell (1999) reflected on reform efforts and drew the distinction between Track I reform that addressed site-based, decentralized governance and management issues, and Track II reform that shifted the emphasis to a focus on exit outcomes and related learning

matters. According to Leithwood (1995), restructuring started with a challenge to prevailing assumptions. Barth (1991) referred to several new ideas and reforms finding their home under the "big tent" known as restructuring. The movement grew "out of the needs to enhance educational productivity, to overhaul a deteriorating social infrastructure, and to transport education into the post-industrial world" (p. 123). Murphy (1994c) attributed the latest developments to a reaction against top-down regulatory efforts.

Most recent restructuring initiatives have included the common elements such as an emphasis on school-based management, enhanced roles for principals and teachers, empowered parents and students, and other decentralized components. The focus very often has been on systemic change that included a shift from top-down direction to an emerging form of leadership at the school level.

Murphy (1993) stated that the school restructuring movement was becoming a clearinghouse for a wide assortment of improvement activities. He cited the following leadership, learning, and accountability initiatives as characteristics of restructuring:

1. expanded opportunities for parents to play a more vital role in the education of their children, especially through proposals to enhance parental voice and choice;
2. decentralized control over education from the state through the district to the individual school community;

3. professionalized teaching, both at the state and federal levels and at each individual school site;
4. replacement of the behavioral underpinnings of learning and teaching with constructivist principles; and
5. infusion of more market-sensitive measures of accountability into the schooling process, while de-emphasizing historically entrenched bureaucratic controls. (p. 1)

Fullan (1994) tried to capture the diffuse nature of the restructuring movement and suggested that there is a paradox existent in the restructuring ideas:

The present is a combination of bifurcation and confusion. The former is represented on the one hand by centralists who see greater top-down regulation, accountability, and control of the educational establishment as the answer. This includes, by the way, strategies such as local management of schools that attempt to place more power in the hands of local interests outside the school. The other hand of bifurcation is represented by the reconstructionists who see greater control by school-based teachers and other educators as the basic solution. (p. 2)

Cox and deFrees in Fullan (1994), reporting on their work in the state of Maine, also indicated that there is no single recipe for restructuring but, in attempting to describe restructuring, they cited these common elements as the essence of successful change:

- getting clear on the focus of change;

- making change organizational and systemic;
- managing the on-going change process; and
- deploying state restructuring grant funds to spur change. (pp. 60-61)

Reavis and Griffith (1992) described restructuring as “a complex change in the culture, organizational assumptions, leadership, curriculum, instructional approach, and accountability of the school” (p. 2). More specifically, in terms of implications on leadership, Reavis and Griffith considered restructuring to be decision-making at the level closest to the issue to be resolved. This meant wider participation in a number of areas that have traditionally been reserved as the prerogative of central office administrators. The authors identified seven common elements of restructuring in an attempt to capture a nationwide consensus on this initiative:

1. site-based decision making in the critical areas of budget, staff development, curriculum and instruction, and personnel;
2. a shift to a market-driven orientation, usually on the basis of parent choice of school;
3. an increase in, and shift in, the focus of technology use, from simple drill, to an integrated instructional package;
4. a shift in instructional emphasis to conform more closely to new understandings of human cognition;

5. a shift in curriculum from an emphasis on coverage of a wide range of topics to an emphasis on understanding and assisting students in constructing their own meaning;
6. a shift in hierarchies within teaching, reflecting differing levels of responsibilities with various sizes of student groups; and
7. a change in accountability toward more performance-oriented/real-life assessments of students. (pp. 2-3)

Central to this perspective on school improvement are the following assumptions about school reform that Murphy (1990) cited:

Educational problems are attributable more to the failure of the system of schooling than to the shortcomings of individual educators; empowerment [of students, teachers, and parents] is a more effective tool than prescription; and bottom-up, school-based solution strategies will lead to more satisfying results than will top-down, mandated ones. (p. 30)

The demands for school improvement accompanied the restructuring movement while available funds for education were decreasing. The lack of funding issue further exacerbated the public pressure on superintendents and their boards of education for change and subsequent accountability. Global forecasts predicted that this pressure was likely to continue through the rest of the 1990s.

While most North American research seemed to support the idea that schools needed to be reformed and improved, there was no consensus on how this should have been accomplished. Since the early and mid 1990's, this has

posed both a problem and an opportunity for North America's school superintendents. Since there was no agreed-upon path or formula for national school reform, solutions have been sought, developed or chosen at the local level and, in many cases this has created opportunities for business and communities to exercise a more direct influence on change initiatives.

Negroni (1990) described the third wave of educational reform as the era of collaborative partnerships, where governments and business interests were now clearly involved. Negroni stated:

To date business and education have failed to work constructively together. There has been and continues to be mistrust on both sides; however, as business opens its eyes and sees how much they need a strong educational process, the walls come tumbling down. American industry faces a most critical challenge in the coming century. (p. 8)

Superintendents were hearing from business interests that schools were not producing graduates with relevant skills and that the majority of students were at risk of not being able to perform in tomorrow's workplace. The Chairman of the 1989-90 U.S. Chamber of Commerce and Chief Executive Officer of Bell South Corp., stated in Murphy (1990):

If our young people don't have the skills necessary for the kinds of jobs existing in the year 2000, then both our domestic and foreign customers for our products and services will look elsewhere in the world, and the American economy will suffer. (p. 50)

Businesses, consequently, saw no alternative but to enter into a new discourse with public schools to form alliances and partnerships that will lead to meeting their needs. According to Negroni (1990):

The state of American business and its needs plus the changing attitudes of parents and teachers...are the ingredients for this new approach to school improvement. This new approach is one that has multiple players, multiple purposes, and multiple structures. It requires significant and dramatic changes in our present power structure and role definition. (p. 8)

Moffett (1994) reported that business interests in Great Britain, reflecting dissatisfaction at the pace at which reform is moving, have been openly encouraging privatization, thereby making education more efficient by subjecting it to market forces, and implying that the local district office is not necessary. An advertisement appearing in the May 1991 edition of Harper's Magazine read:

A well-established practice from the business world could do wonders—management by exception.... Deregulate and decentralize. Encourage teachers to design and implement cooperatives or collaboratives. Give principals the authority to run schools without the red tape. Permit parents to choose the public school their children attend. In short, permit schools—some of them at least—to be market sensitive. (page number unavailable)

All of the external forces that impacted reform into the 1990s essentially had the effect of bringing immense pressure to bear on system leadership. Accountability, response to business interests, the demands for empowerment,

and governments' reluctance to provide enough funding required the superintendent to search for ways to implement reform and to do it in ways that addressed the key student achievement issues.

#### Effects of initiatives on the superintendent

A recurring theme in the reform efforts from an international perspective, whether it is business-based or driven by legislation, has been the reduction in administration and the subsequent disenfranchisement of the superintendent. Chubb (1992) reported that the grant-maintained schools initiative in Great Britain introduced in the Education Reform Act of 1988, which has initiated change at the national level, was an example of a government virtually eliminating the school boards and the bureaucracies that accompanied them. The Kentucky Education Reform Act, cited in Murphy (1992), is a further example of a government seizing the initiative to reform education through legislation. The 1994 legislation in Alberta also mandated reform by changing the governance structure and the roles and responsibilities within the system. The Alberta enactment included downsizing and budget reductions. This restructuring was to be accompanied by school board plans to demonstrate school improvement initiatives. (Alberta Education, 1994).

The varying responses of local districts to the external pressures for reform from state legislatures, regulatory agencies, and local constituencies offer a key to understanding the changing role of the superintendent. The superintendent, although stripped of much of the traditional power that formerly accompanied the office, is still being held accountable for the results of the



system's reform efforts. Those superintendents who have been immersed in the systemic reform efforts have been trying to guide their systems through the change process and help others understand the new roles of all stakeholders in the restructuring movement. These new demands on the superintendent have raised the issue of what skills and competencies are required to be a successful leader in a restructuring school setting. Many argued that the previous notions of leadership theory were inadequate to support the new conception of leadership in leading reform.

Hord (1990) in her paper, Images of the Superintendents' Leadership, discussed the theories that have been used to historically describe leadership behavior. She classified these traditional leadership theories as "trait, situational, organizational, power, contingency, ethical reflection, social ethical practice, and vision theories" (p. 5). Stogdill (1948) and Halpin (1959) championed the cause, which ascribed the dimensions of initiating structure and consideration to leadership behavior. Sergiovanni (1988), Bennis (1985), and Schein (1990) were leading advocates in the area of leadership styles prior to the current reform movement. Most of their theories emphasized leadership as a technique, which has had the effect of causing it to be understood in terms of lists of skills and competencies. Expertise had been important in the traditional educational systems of the past, but the preoccupation with leadership as a primarily technical skill seemed misplaced and inadequate to serve the new restructured systems and the current mood of radical and systemic change.

One attempt to understand leadership in an era of systemic change was derived by Floden (1995). His work was concerned with a system's ability or capacity to deal with reform, and he stressed the importance of the alignment and coordination of policies in the change process. He claimed that well-designed policies make the goals and directions clear and also reduce the number of conflicting messages. He also focused on the need for teachers to acquire the knowledge necessary to support the directions of the change, claiming "...educators may understand that they are being encouraged to help their students become articulate, flexible, problem solvers, yet be unable to make the corresponding changes in practice. Capacity building, therefore, is a key component to systemic reform" (p. 20). Clearly, when Floden and others referred to capacity building, there was an underlying implication that leaders would provide the structure and help to create the culture necessary for building the capacity for change. Floden states, "The complexity of capacity-building too often remains invisible to policy makers and participants alike. A unidimensional strategy may increase some areas of knowledge but may not foster other changes needed to promote and sustain reform" (p. 20).

Lambert (1998) stressed that leadership capacity needed to be built at the school level because there is an expectation that school improvements are the responsibility of educators. In defining leadership as a reciprocal process "that enables participants in a community to construct meaning toward a shared purpose," Lambert stated that leadership is a learning process that involves these assumptions:

- Leadership is not a trait; leadership and leader are not the same.
- Leadership is about learning that leads to constructive change.
- Everyone has the potential and right to work as a leader.
- Leading is a shared endeavor, the foundation for the democratization of schools.
- Leadership requires the redistribution of power and authority.

Fullan (1998) emphasized that the new restructured environment requires effective leaders to work on relationship issues and to foster a different way of working together to make a difference to teaching and learning. He advocated that an investment in the collaborative culture in a school system that focuses on student learning and associated improvements in instructional practices needs “courageous” leadership.

Yee (1998) suggested that the most important leadership competency is the desire to continue learning with staff, students, and community members. “It was important for students and staff members to see me learning to work comfortably with technology as a model for their own learning” (p. 59).

The capacity-building referred to by Floden (1995), the constructive leadership discussed by Lambert (1998), and the empowerment examined by Murphy (1994c), Fullan (1994, 1998), and others, gives cause to examine the role and expectations of the chief executive officer of the school system in the new restructured education system. In light of the restructuring initiatives and the consequent implications for new forms of leadership, the role of the

superintendency and the factors that influence this CEO function in the educational structure seem far removed from previous concepts.

### New roles and responsibilities

In the traditional models of organization, the superintendent was expected to follow some clear expectations, set directions, and carry out specified functions. The leadership component of schooling has occupied a high profile throughout these waves of reform and the accompanying discussions. Stogdill (1948) claimed the functions of the traditional leader were planning, organizing, staffing, developing, coordinating, reporting, and budgeting. This functional approach provided the basis for many other leadership theories. Some prescribed systematic rules; others advocated a range of “styles” to be applied situationally. Some were based on business models like those advanced by Deming (1986) and Peters (1982), and others have been based on educational systems like those promoted by Sergiovanni (1987) and Schein (1990). Reavis and Griffith (1992) claimed that “while these roles are important to the maintenance of the organization, they do not look beyond the current system” (p. 21).

Another way to view traditional superintendent functions is to classify the responsibilities associated with the components of the position—executive, manager, public relations, and educator. Again, Reavis and Griffith (1992) stressed that this view reflects a program perspective, and emphasizes maintenance as the predominant leadership function. The clear implication is that

these leadership qualities are insufficient to address change on a large-scale basis.

Cutting across the emerging themes of the reform movement is the development of new roles and responsibilities for the various educational stakeholders. Within a context of changing roles for the superintendent, questions regarding the leadership skills required to successfully lead as superintendents and other school officials need to be posed while coping with school systems that are undergoing massive changes.

Reavis and Griffith (1992) described the new roles from a beliefs perspective:

Restructuring in the 1990s means learning new roles by administrators, teachers, students, parents, and members of the community at large. [It means]... a complete change in the structure of the organization and the underlying beliefs that have given rise to that organization. (p. 2)

Conceptually, and to a lesser extent, empirically, our understanding of what these changes mean for students, teachers, parents, and principals is evolving. Murphy, in Leithwood (1995), suggested that while we understand the meaning of these changing roles for other stakeholders, there was a need for more reflection regarding the new role for superintendents, "... but our knowledge of the role of educators in the central office being transformed through restructuring initiatives is considerably less robust" (p. 118). Murphy, in search of some empirical grounding to provide information about the new superintendent role, conducted a study using feedback from 78 superintendents who were

occupying positions in Kentucky following the Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990 (KERA) "which has been regarded as the most sweeping legislative change in the reform movement" (Murphy, 1994b, p. 360).

The Kentucky superintendents saw district office staff abandoning their traditional, bureaucratic, control mind-set in favor of a service orientation. In implementing the KERA reforms there had been a complete shift away from top-down directives which some had associated with the traditional form of leadership. Woven throughout the responses of the superintendents in Murphy's study were three themes that captured the evolution in their roles since the passage of KERA. Murphy reported in Leithwood (1995) that these superintendents were orchestrating from the background, enhancing participation, and managing reform. Said one, "I am spending more time maximizing input and shared decision-making rather than trying to sell others on centrally-generated directions" (p. 124).

Murphy noted that they were learning to lead from the background rather than from the apex of the organization. They saw themselves as managing more by consensus than by command, and as facilitating rather than controlling. These leaders generally shared the belief that the role of superintendent in Kentucky had become more complex because of the restructuring initiatives of 1990, and that they had more responsibility, not less. Of particular importance was the added responsibility to see that KERA was on track.

A recurring impact of KERA in the Kentucky study was the perceived need to develop a community of learners.

Many of the superintendents in this study see their roles changing ... from managers to developers of a community of professionals. It is most evident in two clusters of activity: nurturing the involvement of others in shaping district operations and promoting shared decision-making. (Murphy, 1994b, p. 360)

Superintendents were able to identify the advantages of more collaborative decision-making as, "the development of closer working relationships with schools, the devolution of responsibility and accountability to those closest to the learner, and a new respect and appreciation for others growing out of cooperative work" (Murphy, 1994b, p. 364). Most superintendents in the study confirmed that the new leadership role was less hierarchically grounded. The leadership style they saw taking root is one that is "less directive and more open to collaborative efforts"; offers "looser control"; highlights delegation and devolution; and is more concerned with the development of others than with the promotion of self. "In short, they describe an empowering rather than controlling style of administration" (Murphy, 1994b, p. 364).

The policy, financial, and monitoring dimensions of the superintendent's role were all enhanced by the restructuring movement in Kentucky as each of these functions became much more of a collaborative effort. The time invested in these processes to ensure appropriate consultation seemed to result in a more satisfying result, but required much more effort.

One topic that received considerable attention, and on which there was a clear division of opinion, was that of the superintendent's role in the educational

program. The difference in these responses was an indication of reluctance by some to understand the empowerment component of new leadership. The choice of education program was an area that was considered to be a traditional responsibility of the superintendent but this choice was moving to the school level.

Public pressure on superintendents and their boards of education for accountability is likely to increase while the third wave continues to establish itself. However, while most North Americans agree that schools need to be reformed and improved, there is no consensus on how this should be accomplished. This poses both a problem and an opportunity for school superintendents. Since there is no agreed-upon path or formula for national school reform, solutions may well be developed or chosen at the local level.

It seems to be widely acknowledged that the restructuring agenda can be pursued without concern for the role of district office personnel, which presents many superintendents with a dilemma. Many reformers believe that the district offices and their chief executive officers are a major cause of the problems with schooling, and that they should therefore be relegated to the sidelines of the reform playing field. Chubb (1988) stated, "Strategists in this group generally argue that superintendents are (and will be) unwilling to make needed changes, because in so doing they will relinquish their entrenched control over education" (p. 31). So it is that superintendents have been often conspicuously excluded from discussions of educational improvement via school restructuring. Leithwood (1995) stated:



The task of restructuring is to create flatter organizations in order to push decisions down to the level of those with the best information. Our attention is directed, ...to the model efforts of large, rapidly changing, private-sector companies, and we are admonished to emulate their example. (p. 317)

Leithwood (1995) urged caution regarding empowerment initiatives. He reminded reformers that the internal environment of school districts in which CEO's plan, direction-set, and the like, are "driven by a set of regularities and conditions that severely limit the range of initiatives available to even the most creative teacher or principal" (p. 317). He challenged the structure of the reform movement and claimed that reformers lost sight of the fundamental function of education: "Teaching kids is not the same as manufacturing Clorax bleach, microchips, painkillers, or automobile tires" (p. 318). Implicit in these statements was the need for the superintendent to recognize the human limitations when seeking school improvement initiatives, and he talked of "emotional management" as well as rational leadership.

Leithwood (1995) considered changes in leadership skills from the political perspective. He cited the need to understand the internal environment of school districts to successfully implement restructuring, school-based decision making, and teacher empowerment. Leithwood criticized the advocates of reform who assumed that schools and districts were heavily bureaucratized, centralized, and managed from the top down. He expressed the view that there is some danger in basing reform on "borrowed" models. In explaining the two faces of the CEO's

politics Leithwood offered that the superintendent often needs to balance the school improvement plans with political concessions with the external demands often taking precedence. He commented that, "... the largely explicit politics of the school district's external environment register legitimate demands to have its invariably diverse and often conflicting values reflected in the goals and plans for education programs in the district" (p. 319).

He contrasted these values with those of the internal system claiming that government directives, the business voice, and pressure from special interest groups are often in direct conflict with the beliefs about learning and the preferred goals of individual teachers and schools. The superintendent in the restructured school system is expected to be responsive to all of these divergent needs. Lambert (1998) cited the need for "high collaborative, highly responsive" leaders to listen to all stakeholders in formulating the vision and implementing the school improvement plans. Leithwood (1995) expanded on his dual political forces ideas:

The second face includes the usually much subtler politics of the school district's internal environment and its power to insist that at least any plans likely to be realized in practice have to be "do-able" within the framework of some very hard-to-change organizational regularities and the need for considerable judgment to be exercised by those who actually do the teaching. (p. 319)

Leithwood (1995) proceeded to link these change efforts with how superintendents have planned, envisioned, and direction-set for their districts in the past, and to the challenge of adjusting to the new reforms.

The first difference [in the reformed environment] is due to the permeability, indeed vulnerability, of school districts to "turbulence in the external environment" (a euphemism for chaos, favored by organizational learning theorists). This turbulence requires the CEO to work at transforming ... politics into education. The second difference is due to the characteristic nature of school districts' internal environments and requires the CEO to work at transforming "small p" or micro politics into education. This is an altogether subtler, less visible, and less well understood aspect of what CEOs do. When it is done right, some think of it as transformational leadership. (p. 317)

In contrast to Leithwood's expressed doubts about the potential for effective school improvement in these circumstances and in light of the continuing forces of reform and the new emerging leadership skills, Estes (1988) cited possibilities for change with optimism.

... in the executive leader's role, successful schools will become decentralized units; principals and teachers will work collegially to meet the challenges; goal-setting, personnel selection, allocation of resources and staff development will move from central office to the school ... superintendents will require professional skill in exercising influence over

these administrative components: the principal, the work structure, the school culture, technology and student outcomes. (p. 28)

### Superintendent's Influence in Improving Schools

It is true that decentralization transfers influence from the district office to the school site, but evidence continues to accumulate indicating that the superintendent can play an important part in successful implementation of nearly all widely discussed reform initiatives, including parental choice, and site-based decision-making. Carnoy and McDonnell (1990) stressed that as superintendents initiate these new functions they can play a vital role in reshaping the culture of the system, by fostering the development of belief statements that are to be shared district-wide.

Demands for restructuring education suggest the need for developing new conceptions of control and leadership at the district level. Blumberg and Blumberg (1984) clearly anticipated the turbulence in school system leadership and they summarize the dilemma in identifying the superintendent's role. They raise the question of the influence of the superintendent on schools.

What we are witnessing ... is part of a continuing struggle ... to establish a workable concept of what the superintendency is all about. This struggle, at its roots, involves questions of power distribution, expertise, deep-seated values, fiscal management, and ultimately ... the character of a school system in American society. (p. 24)

More than a decade later Townsend (1998), in his study of reform conditions in the province of Alberta, found that superintendents were

experiencing this same struggle regarding power distribution in a system where reform has been mandated. He said, "Some disaffected superintendents have experienced difficulties brought on by enforced regionalization and a few others continue to have a problem reconciling their own beliefs about the value and purpose of public education with those of the government" (p. 33).

Given the new role of the superintendent and the subsequent evolution of a new conception of leadership, some researchers have searched for options for the superintendency and the district office in the future. Murphy (1994a) considered some possibilities. "First" he stated, "central offices and their chief executive officers might become extinct in a similar manner to the grant-maintained schools project in Great Britain. Second, district personnel—and central office operations—might ride out the current storm of reform efforts largely unscathed" (p.48). His third possibility involved the superintendency undergoing a metamorphosis, "a dynamic change in the nature and function of the role" (p. 48). Cunningham's (1990) discussion about superintendents as commissioners of well being was a good example of this option, but she reported that there is little evidence that would support this notion.

A final possibility for the future of the superintendent's role, according to Murphy (1994b), was that the superintendency and other district roles would be overhauled consistent with the tenets of educational restructuring, especially those principles that are shaping the evolution of new roles for teachers, students, and principals. "The fourth alternative—restructuring the roles of district office personnel to support school improvement efforts—offered the most

promise of success in advancing the quality, equity, and choice values of transformational reform initiatives" (p. 357).

The insights from the superintendents in Murphy's 1993 study provided some initial clues about how district offices are restructuring operations and services to facilitate better education. They offered some guidance to policy-makers and educators who are interested in pursuing the fourth alternative—nurturing the transformation of central office operations and the role of the superintendent to promote restructuring of education at the school site.

Few studies in the 1990s have focused on the effects of leadership practice on improvement activities in schools. One study, by Griffin and Chance (1994), successfully established a link between a school's effectiveness and the superintendent by focussing on the school as a small part in a much larger system. Basing the focus on principals' perceptions, Griffin and Chance concluded that there are three basic themes that emerge that provide a portrait of a superintendent in a school district with effective schools. One theme addresses matters of vision building, another focuses on the provision of supports, and the third is rooted in the communication of beliefs. These conclusions were supported by an earlier exploratory study of 12 instructionally effective districts in California completed by Murphy and Hallinger (1988). They found that the superintendents in these districts were "generally key actors in setting school system goals, in selecting district-wide staff development activities, in pressing for district-school goal coordination...." (p. 178). The goal setting theme of the effective superintendent is widely supported. For example, the American

Association of School Administrators advocates the vision orientation of the role of executive leader. Evans (1993) reinforced this and raised the issue of collaborative skills in leadership practice:

Superintendents must have a vision for the public school within the context of American society in the 21st century. [They] must be able to lead board members, staff, and the community toward that vision of the future through consensus-building activities. The education of America's most precious asset, its children, must be led by the very best of the educational profession. It is this group's responsibility to lead the effort to regain for children and education the priority of the nation's resources. (p. 20)

Evans (1993) strongly suggested that superintendents need to understand and respond to their own fundamental convictions if they are to successfully foster innovation. "Clarifying their own assumptions," according to Evans, "helps leaders develop biases for action—general operating principles, not rigid rules—for shaping change." Based on organizational research and his own work with restructuring, he identified five key components of leadership for change. They were fostering innovation, participation, communication, recognition, and confrontation. Evans states "Each relates to measures recommended in many leadership theories. In calling them 'biases,' I emphasize that they are not techniques but guidelines for action that are rooted in a leader's fundamental convictions" (p. 22).

Much of the recent work on the effects of leadership has cited the tenets of transformational leadership when discussing the fundamental characteristic of best practice. Reavis and Griffith (1992) described the two kinds of motivational drives that leaders tap—transactional and transformational. The former has been implicit in the traditional model of school leadership, and supplements transmissional leadership, which is essentially “telling” people what to do. Transactional leadership includes utilizing incentives such as salary, titles, promotion, and other tangible forms of recognition in order to accomplish the superintendent’s goals. The two primary dimensions of transactional leadership according to Bass (1985) are contingent reward, and management by exception. The transformational and transactional leadership model (Bass, 1985) offers a range of leader behaviors that have been shown to promote change and desired outcomes outside of educational settings (Bass, 1985; Waldman, Bass, & Einstein, 1987). Silins (1994) completed some research applying the model to an educational setting and found that the transformational construct provided the most promise as a predictor of enhanced school outcomes. Reavis and Griffith (1992) also supported these conclusions regarding the role of the transformational approach as opposed to the transactional, “...while this motivational approach may have been effective in traditional organizations, it will not produce the level of employee commitment required to achieve success in today’s society” (p. 24).

Sergiovanni (1988) favored the transformational approach as a much more powerful form of motivator for effective change. He referred to leaders and



subordinates engaging each other in such a way that their purpose becomes fused, thus enabling the leader to “pull” rather than “push.” A superintendent then is challenged to execute the managerial component of the Chief Executive Officer role while at the same time working on the collaborative and team-building aspects of the job. A study carried out by Hickcox (1991) found that 10 effective superintendents spent, on the average, five hours per day in meetings, suggesting that this was an indicator of the collaborative nature of transformational leadership. Hickcox observed that “a CEO’s life appears to be a long series of overwhelmingly interpersonal negotiations and compromises punctuated with occasional episodes of planning and goal setting” (p. 5). As often as not the superintendent’s work is done in collaboration with many others. So while Cuban (1989), for example, emphasized and asserted a “managerial imperative” for superintendents, this imperative is enacted in a highly political context, and can be transformational in nature.

Leithwood’s (1995) discussion about transformational leadership theory was an attempt to understand the work of exceptional superintendents. It is apparent that in an age of reform the collaborative nature of transformational leadership, coupled with the need to build visions and share the decision-making processes, makes it desirable, if not imperative that superintendents adopt transformational strategies if they are to succeed in influencing change at the school level.

Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, and Fetter (1990), in Leithwood (1995), captured most of the practices currently associated with transformational

leadership in six dimensions adapted to research on the superintendent. He particularly focused on the leadership challenges in restructured school systems.

- identifying and articulating a vision
- providing an appropriate model
- fostering the acceptance of group goals
- realizing high performance expectations
- providing individualized support
- providing intellectual stimulation (p. 336).

Leithwood used these constructs for his study of effective superintendents. He also refuted the studies in the previous decade that focussed on the effective schools literature. "When it comes to effective superintendents," claims Leithwood (1995) "there is nothing analogous to the superficially well-developed correlates of effective schools." But he regarded Podsakoff et al. (1990), Murphy (1995), and Wills and Peterson (1995) as offering clues to principles of effective school district leadership. He cited the importance of some of the team-building ideas that need to accompany leadership in restructured settings. Common elements include "commitment to increasingly expert individual and group problem-solving processes; and commitment to keeping foremost, in political deliberations, the consequences for students of those decisions taken" (p. 336). He further advocated a commitment to the professional growth of school and district staff, and taking responsibility for continuous efforts to design the district organization to make full use of staff

capacities. Leithwood believed that these efforts ought to be rooted in school improvement initiatives.

According to Leithwood (1995) CEOs should also take responsibility for continuous efforts to establish, review, and clarify the central directions to be taken by the district organization, in collaboration with the entire community of legitimate stakeholders. He saw this process as a way to constantly check that partners are supportive and committed to the school goals. He believes that "These principles begin to explain the basis on which effective CEOs transform politics into education, and how superintendents can positively influence their schools" (p. 337).

Clearly, many superintendents in the Murphy (1994b) study viewed the school improvement legislation as a useful lever for change in their districts, especially the smaller districts. However, unless a set of clearly defined outcomes for change is provided, differing interpretations, comfort issues, local political interests, or other more manageable strategies may lead to a detour around improvement efforts.

Perhaps one of the most instructive lessons to learn from the 1992 10-year study conducted by the American School Administrators' Association (ASAA) (Negrone, 1990) was how superintendents prioritized the performance areas of the superintendency. Superintendents (especially in larger districts) showed much more interest in executive leadership rather than outright management. They indicated that the establishment of organizational climate was an important part of their responsibilities, along with providing the very best

curriculum and instruction programs. They said that management tasks concerning budget, finance, and facilities were important, but should not be the highest priority.

Superintendents of small districts felt more pressed to perform management tasks on a daily basis simply because they didn't have the staff to do it for them as did the large system superintendents. Superintendents in larger districts leaned much more toward executive leadership. In the ASAA report, *Global Competitiveness: Economic Imperatives for School Reform*, Negroni (1990) stated, "The existence of thousands of very small districts may well be a problem in the future, as superintendents are constantly overwhelmed with day-to-day management tasks and do not have time for leadership in strategic planning, curriculum, and instruction" (p. 19). The study suggested that it followed that it was quite possible that the leadership of American schools could be greatly improved by the consolidation of thousands of small school districts. The results of the ASAA study supported this from the perspective that the superintendents of large systems were more likely to be involved matters that pertain to students and learning from a system-wide perspective. It also advocated that fewer administrators would need to be prepared for the superintendency, and additional resources could be expended by local districts and states in preparing and certifying executives.

Murphy (1994b) concluded:

... there is almost no support ... for the view that superintendents will evolve into stewards of a radically expanded and more complex social

enterprise. There is also little support for the belief that superintendents are riding out the restructuring movement unaffected by the vortex of activity that surrounds them. Finally, there is little evidence that, even in a somewhat anti-central administration environment, superintendents are being pushed off the main stage of school leadership and management. Rather, it appears that new roles are emerging ... these roles are being played out with varying degrees of alacrity and reluctance. (p. 369)

In this restructured setting superintendents then are challenged to execute their role in a way that supports school growth and change around a shared vision. In an increasingly complex school organization, the school is charged with the responsibility to respond to the need to improve. In the province of Alberta, Alberta Education policy requires schools to build school plans in collaboration with the community, the school jurisdiction, and Alberta Learning (1995). When considering the extent to which the superintendent can positively impact these improvement initiatives, other factors that effect school improvement need to be considered.

There have been numerous studies that have concluded that the principal's influence is the greatest determinant of the success of school improvement programs—for example, Fullan (1988) and Hord (1990). However, recent work by Lambert (1998) suggests that leadership at the school level is not the sole domain of the principal but, rather, the challenge is to build leadership capacity in a school. Lambert has concluded that in an empowered setting leadership may emerge from a variety of sources depending on the capacity of

the organization to encourage the members to take on leadership responsibilities.

Research by Leithwood, Jantzi, Silins, and Dart (1992) suggested many factors enter into effect when the impact of leadership on school improvement is considered. Leithwood and Jantzi (1990) indicate that "school leadership is mediated in its effects on school and student outcomes by in-school processes such as school goals, school culture, and teachers" (p. 279). In summary, these studies concluded, "there is evidence to suggest ... educational leadership has a significant indirect influence on school outcomes in the context of reform" (p. 278). Silins (1992) concluded "One implication is that direct impact of leadership on school and student outcomes was found to be insignificant, whereas the mediated effect was quite significant" (p. 332). Smylie and Crowson (1993) similarly concluded that in restructured school settings the leadership influence on a school's performance and improvement effort is a product of numerous factors, and that leadership is played out in many different ways: "...in schools with greater shared decision making—a component of empowerment—principals are accountable for the integrity of the shared governance processes" (p. 67).

In these broad-based spheres of leadership influence in restructured settings research is challenged to determine how the leadership of appointed leaders is moderated and affected by other factors present in the school. Silins (1992) concluded, "...a more fundamental problem may exist if the model of leadership for school reform does not take into account processes within schools

that operate to mediate the impact of school leadership on school outcomes" (p. 333).

## CHAPTER III

### The Survey Design

The purpose of the study was to determine whether or not the leadership of Alberta superintendents has had an effect on schools implementing improvement practices—an expectation in the restructured setting enacted in 1994. The population was drawn from Alberta public school superintendents and from their principals. Determinations that there is a connection between superintendents' leadership practices and school improvement efforts are described in the context of the relationship to the leadership expectations outlined in the Alberta restructuring legislation. Conclusions have been drawn regarding the influence of the superintendent's leadership on school improvement efforts in restructured settings using a model constructed based on internal influencing factors identified by Leithwood (1995), and the leadership components of the Alberta reconstruction movement.

This study employed basic descriptive statistics by way of cross-tabulations and frequency counts to observe the relationships between the restructured leadership practice and influencing factors on school improvement decisions. Chi-squared tests were applied to determine significance. A model was developed representing the required leadership components of the role of the superintendent in the restructured Alberta setting. These restructured components were embedded in the 38-question survey. The leadership components were subsequently matched with the influencing factors selected by



survey respondents. Silins (1992) similarly tested her model of transformational and transactional leadership by observing the relationship between leadership practice and leadership characteristics.

Figure 1. Influence on improvement practice by restructuring component.

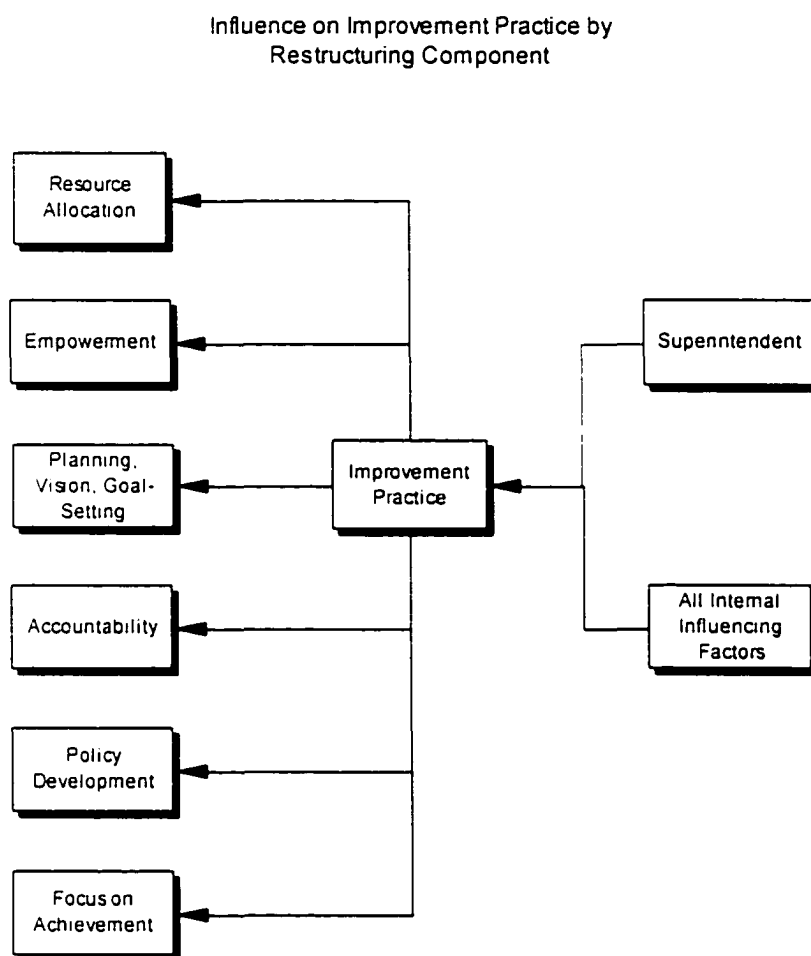


Figure 1. The restructuring components on the left of the model are linked to the school improvement practice. On the right, the superintendent's influence over that practice is compared to the influence of other internal factors.

Cross-tabulation procedures were employed to first examine the relationships between the subset of dependent variables related to influencing factors on school improvement efforts, and the subset of dependent variables that reflect the restructured leadership components in the survey. Second, the cross-tabulations were used to identify connections between and among the sub-sets of restructured leadership components and the sub-sets of influencing factors on the school improvement initiatives. The superintendent's leadership was offered to respondents as one of five influencing factors on school improvement practice. Cross-tabulation observations provided the basis for descriptions of the overall relationships between two sets of variables, taking into account the relationships of the variables within each set as well as the relationships between the whole sets.

Determining the chi-squared coefficients between the two sets of dependent variables tested the incremental contribution of superintendent leadership above or below that of other criteria in achieving school improvement, and also above or below all other factors collectively. A path model, similar to that employed by Keeves (1986) provides a means to demonstrate commonality between the blocks of sub-variables in the analysis. This model illustrates the relationship between the components of restructuring leadership and the factors that influence school improvement practice.

A document review provided the data for identifying goals, the superintendents' leadership initiatives, and the school improvement plans. The summary of school jurisdiction plans show that each Alberta Superintendent

developed goals, outcomes, and measures to improve teaching and learning. Further, the Alberta Learning Results Report (1999) revealed the key accomplishments across the Alberta system. This information provided evidence of school improvement initiatives throughout the province. For example, all provincial superintendents developed student achievement goals in 1998/1999 to respond to the provincial standards. The Annual Alberta Learning Report revealed that Alberta students were meeting the high standards and that they did well on provincial achievement tests and diploma examinations; and that furthermore, they exceeded national and international assessment standards. Other measures showed high levels of success in the goals related to teaching quality, education funding, and education management.

A survey method was used to collect the comparative data for this study. The survey proved useful as a way to capture specific school practices, which were perceived to relate to components of leadership, thereby providing empirical validation for the links that are identified in the document review and subsequently in the model described in Figure 1. The two approaches—the document review and the survey—provided the basis for a form of simultaneous triangulation (Cresswell, 1994).

#### Operational Definition of Variables

The dependent variables were operationally defined by clustering items from the survey to reflect their conceptual underlying links to leadership. Items in the survey were categorized into sub-scales representing the six hypothesized components of leadership in restructured systems in Alberta. The survey

included thirteen items relating to empowerment, seven on accountability issues, six on goal setting, four on each of policy development, a focus on student achievement, and the allocation of resources. To verify the validity of the items forming these clusters, five experienced school personnel were given a survey containing 38 questions and asked to categorize each item into the six components. The six-construct model was tested by observing how the pilot-principal's responses distributed across the sub-variables.

The survey also contained items that operationally define the five dependent sub-variables that influence school improvement initiatives. This categorical scale was developed on the basis of the four internal school factors that influence school improvement decisions suggested by Leithwood, Janzi, Silins, and Dart (1992)—the culture of the school, student-driven needs, school council's recommendations and directives, and school goals. The superintendent's influence is introduced as a further influencing alternative among these factors.

### Hypotheses

Null:

*The principal's perceptions of outcomes of a school improvement process, characterized by the key components of the restructuring expectations, are influenced equally by the superintendent's leadership, school culture, student needs, parent council input, or school goals.*

Alternative:

*The principal's perceptions of outcomes of a school improvement process, characterized by the key components of the restructuring expectations, are*

*influenced equally by the superintendent's leadership, and the total of school culture, student needs, parent council input, and school goals.*

These hypotheses imply a two-tailed null hypothesis where the non-parametric chi-square analysis based on the raw data is used. Chi-squared tests will determine the significance.

Null Hypothesis:

$$H_0: R^2P.SA - R^2P.A = 0$$

Alternative hypothesis:

$$H_1: R^2P.SA - \Sigma R^2P.A = 0$$

Reject  $H_0$  if  $p < .01$

Do not reject  $H_0$  if  $p > .01$

Reject  $H_1$  if  $p < .05$

Do not reject  $H_1$  if  $p > .05$

$R^2P.SA$  indicates the proportion of school improvement practices (P) accounted for by both superintendent's leadership (S) and other mediated variables (A), and  $R^2P.A$  indicates the proportion of outcomes accounted for by each of the other factors alone.

The chi-square statistic is an index employed to find the significance of differences between portions of subjects that fall into different categories, by comparing observed and expected frequencies. The approach to determining chi-squared employs two significance tests. Linear-by-linear association and likelihood ratio calculations will produce a two-sided significance result determining whether or not there is any overall significance in the relationship between the sets of variables.

Ary, Jacobs, and Razaviah (1985) state that there are assumptions that must be met if valid assumptions are to be made.

1. Observations must be independent. (Subjects in this study were independently selected by a stratified method.)
2. The categories must be mutually exclusive. (In each table observations only appear in one category.)
3. The observations are measured as frequencies.
4. Expected frequencies must not be too small. (Expected frequencies are greater than 5 in every cell in the tables and the degrees of freedom always exceed 1.) (p.180)
5. The observed values of chi-square with 1 *df* must be corrected for continuity to use the table of critical values of  $\chi^2$  (df in this study always exceed 1.)

For this study, statistical significance was to be determined by an  $\alpha$ —.01 for the null. In selecting the *apriori* probability for the null, the less common level of significance ( $p < .01$ ) was used in preference to the less stringent level ( $p < .05$ ) because the principals in the study were selected from fewer than 40 school systems—stratified to select a sample of those principals who have served with the same superintendent since restructuring, suggesting a close relationship between the two. Superintendents of large jurisdictions were not included in the study thereby enhancing the likelihood of the superintendent's influence.

For the alternative hypothesis an alpha level of .01 was chosen—*post priori*—acknowledging that a more stringent criteria would be more appropriate in

the event that the superintendent's influence equaled or approached that of all other influencing factors combined.

The survey was constructed to directly address the variables while maintaining simplicity such that the subjects of the study were able to respond easily to the question cues. The intention was to control the number of questions so that fifteen to twenty minutes were all that was required to complete the survey. Furthermore, all of the subjects were given an opportunity to respond to an electronic version of the survey as a further convenience. Respondents were provided with an *html* version of the questionnaire and a return email address as a means to respond to the survey. A hard copy was available for those who preferred a traditional method of responding. The convenience of email and its advantage of personal contact, coupled with the small number of subjects and the interest in the topic, contributed to a reasonable return rate of 38% in this study.

### Population and Sample

The sampling process used in this study is referred to by Keeves (1990) as a simple stratified two-stage sample design. The names of the superintendents are considered public information and were therefore readily available. This researcher has been associated with superintendents' organizations in the Province of Alberta for the past ten years. This association provided a collegial base from which to work.

All of the superintendent population of school systems not classified as large (30 000 or more students) who had served for the past four years were

selected for the survey. This resulted in a base of fewer than 54 superintendents who serve mid-sized and small jurisdictions. When the four-year experience factor was introduced the number of eligible superintendents for the study did not exceed 40. A visit to the Alberta Learning website revealed that each of the responding jurisdictions had filed three-year plans addressing the Alberta Learning required goals for school improvement. The population of experienced principals from each responding superintendent's staff determined the target survey population. A one-third response to the survey provided a statistically sound sample and one that can be deemed generalizable.

### Instrumentation

The survey used was a self-designed instrument partially based on responses on a numerical rating scale to leadership cues, and partially structured to select the most influential factor in relation to the response to the cue. Alberta's restructuring legislation (1994) and Leithwood (1995) provided the model for establishing the survey questions. Questions were coded according to the leadership category to which they relate. The restructuring accountability legislation in Alberta established policies regarding planning, assessing, improving, and reporting across a broad spectrum of performance measures. (Alberta Education Policy Handbook 1995). Further Alberta Education policy also identified empowerment, policy development, and deployment of resources as key components of school organization. Leithwood's model of leadership in restructured school systems associated leadership practice with vision, empowerment, collaboration, and communication. This study only concerned



itself with the Alberta Learning restructuring leadership components of the superintendent's role. The expectation that Alberta Superintendents exhibit consultative and collaborative leadership was stated clearly in the restructuring documentation, i.e., "They make most of their decisions through extensive consultation and interaction with other partners in education" (Roles and Responsibilities in Education: A position paper 1994). Leithwood's leadership model further supported the Alberta Education leadership constructs for the study in its links to collaboration. Alberta Learning Policies 2.1.1 and 3.1.1 addressed the planning processes for school jurisdictions requiring that they incorporate directions for change and improvement to education. A summary of the Alberta Education restructuring leadership practices researched in this study follows:

1. Fair Allocation of Resources

- Ensuring that per student funding is spent on instruction

2. Empowerment

- Site based decision-making

- Formation of school councils

- New roles and responsibilities

3. Policy Development

- Guiding and enabling policies

4. Planning

- Developing the three-year plan

- Setting annual goals

5. Measuring achievement and reporting it to the public

## 6. Accountability

The survey questions reflected predictive validity by using a summary of the jurisdictions' three-year education plans to identify the extent to which superintendents were meeting the requirements of the reporting and accountability legislation. The three-year plan summary (1995-1998) identified the extent to which the superintendent determined system improvement initiatives. Principals were surveyed to determine the extent to which they were engaged in school improvement endeavors and how they perceived the superintendent's influence on those improvement projects relative to other internal influences. The questions directly addressed matters of the distribution of resources, empowerment, planning (including vision and goal setting), policy development, focus on achievement, and accountability.

The responses were tabulated to determine whether school improvement was occurring chiefly because of the superintendent's leadership or because of internal school factors such as school goals, student needs, the school culture, or parent council input. Further examination of the data determined which component of the restructured leadership could be attributed to school improvement practice, and to the superintendent's influence or to that of other factors. A concept of the influence of the superintendent's leadership compared to that of other internal school factors emerged from the analysis of documents and surveys.

One former principal and four practicing principals were asked to pilot the survey and to validate the classification of the questions. The past experience of

the principal's perspective of the restructured governance helped to attest to the validity of the survey. The fact that these piloting principals were not associated with the study provided perspectives of informed, objective, and unbiased critics of the research tool.

Table 1.

Variables, Research Questions, and Survey Items

Variable	Research questions	Survey items
Dependent variable #1: Restructuring regulations		Questions identify the link between improvement practice and influencing factors:
Dependent variable #1a: Allocation of resources	The maximum available resources have been allocated equitably to the schools.	The process for distributing resources meets the new requirements.
	New budgeting procedures have been implemented.	Changes in budgeting procedures reflect goals.
Dependent variable #1b: Empowerment	Procedures for site based decisions are implemented.	Delegation of important decisions.
	Parents and teachers have been given opportunities to be participants in the operation of schools.	School councils are instituted and are recognized as participants.

Variable	Research questions	Survey items
Dependent variable #1c: Planning, vision, and goal-setting	System-wide long-term plans are developed.	Three-year plans reflect strategies and measures to implement the vision.
	A vision is formulated.	Goal setting processes include the appropriate stakeholder involvement.
	Annual goals are established.	
Dependent variable #1d: Policy development	School district policies are designed to guide and enable.	Policy development is a collaborative process.
		Policies are enabling in nature.
Dependent variable #1e Focus on achievement	There is an emphasis on student achievement.	Student learning is regarded as the driving force behind all decisions.
Dependent variable #1f: Accountability	The school system is accountable.	New roles and responsibilities are established.
		Results are reported to the public.
		System goals support Alberta Education initiatives.
Independent variable #1 Staff efforts at implementing school improvement	Is there an effort to implement school improvement practices?	Factors influencing improvement efforts.
Dependent Variable #2a Superintendent leadership	Are school improvement efforts made chiefly as a result of the leadership of the superintendent?	
Dependent Variable #2b Other mediating factors	Are school improvement efforts made chiefly as a result of the emergence of other factors?	

## CHAPTER IV

### Results

#### Survey Response

Fifty-four of 61 districts in the province of Alberta were contacted and asked to participate in the study if their district met the criterion for eligibility. The criterion for eligibility was that the superintendent had been serving in that capacity continuously since January 01, 1995—the inception of restructuring. Fifteen districts agreed that their eligible principals, who had also been serving continually during the same period since restructuring, could be approached and asked to participate as subjects in the study. This represented 42% of districts who met the criteria for the study. Of the 169 principals from the 15 participating districts in the province of Alberta who were surveyed, 61 (38%) returned their surveys. The responding principals indicated their category of school (elementary, junior, or senior high), and size of school (fewer than 200 students, or more than 200 students), and responded to the cues in the survey.

Cues in the survey were derived from the six leadership components of the restructuring legislation. The principals then responded to 38 question cues that required them to identify to what extent the practice stated in the question was being successfully practiced in the school. Second, the respondent was asked to select the influencing factor—given a choice of five factors—most responsible for each particular practice in the school.

Of the 61 who responded, 2 surveys were discarded as the sequencing of the responses was incorrect because of a printing problem, leaving 59 returns at a response rate of 38%. Blank cells in the response were counted as no-response and had an effect on the overall calculations but were not always reported.

A data analysis of the 59 responses showed the balance of small and larger schools. Table 2 shows the number of responding schools compared to the overall balance of schools in Alberta jurisdictions. This table suggests that the distribution or proportion of small public schools in the study compared to larger schools differs slightly from that of the rest of the province. In particular, proportionately more of the larger schools and fewer of the smaller schools responded to the survey.

Table 2

Size of Participating Schools

Size	No. schools in study	Alberta schools
No response	1	
Fewer than 200	6 (10%)	654 (38%)
200 and more	52 (88%)	1049 (62%)
Total	59	1703

Similarly, Table 3 shows the number of each type of school responding to the survey. Again the provincial distribution is represented to compare the sample balance with that of the rest of Alberta.

Table 3  
No. of Schools by Type in 15 Responding Districts

School type	No. Responses by school type	%	Alberta schools by type	Provincial %
No response	1			
Elementary	24	41	260	26
Junior High	5	9	33	3
Senior High	6	10	35	3
Grade 1-9	14	23	365	36
Grade 7-12	4	7	109	11
Grade 1-12	5	9	138	14
Other			25	2
Total	59		965	

Table 3 indicates that elementary schools combined with Grade 1–9 schools account for 64% of responding schools compared to the province-wide number of schools of this type—62%. Details regarding these demographics for responding schools are represented in Appendices A and B. Appendix A includes a list of the responding schools in the study sample with their size and type included. Appendix B is a summary of the jurisdictions participating in the study.

#### Frequency of Practice

Principals were asked initially to respond to each cue by indicating the extent to which the practice represented in the cue occurs in the school. The "sometimes" and "frequently" categories of responses have been grouped together and treated as a true response. Table 4 shows an overwhelming tendency for principals to report that restructuring practices are being

implemented in their schools. More than 92% of the possible responses are positive.

Table 4

Frequency of Implementing Restructuring Practice

Restructuring practice	Frequency	%
No response <sup>a</sup>	47	2
False	117	5
True	2078	93
Total	2242	

Note.

<sup>a</sup>Respondent left cell blank.

Restructuring Components

Of the 117 instances reported in Table 4 where improvement practice was not indicated, empowerment was the underlying component most often associated with the negative response. Similarly in those responses where the principal identified the improvement practice as a true reflection of the school, the empowerment component again most frequently was associated with that condition. Table 5 represents the distribution of responses that align the schools' improvement practice with the restructuring variable that underpinned the cues in the survey. The percentage of true responses indicates that allocation of resources is least often associated with a positive response whereas the focus on achievement questions received the largest proportion of positive responses.



Table 5  
Restructuring Characteristic and Frequency of Practice—% of True Responses

Restructuring characteristic	False	True	Total	% of true responses
Allocation of resources	21	211	236	89
Empowerment	39	711	765	93
Planning, vision, goal-setting	16	330	353	93
Policy development	12	219	235	93
Focus on achievement	3	228	235	97
Accountability	26	379	413	92
Total	117	2078	2237	

Note. Blank responses not reported

### Influencing Factors

When reviewed as a whole—regardless of true or false responses—the superintendent's influence is perceived to be the greatest compared to the others. In fact, the superintendent's influence accounts for 48% of the attributing influence. Table 6 shows 1064 of the 2238 possible responses identifying the superintendent as having the most influence on the restructuring behavior. The critical value of  $\chi^2_{01}$  is 6.635 for 1 degree of freedom. Since the value of 1.00 is smaller than 6.635 it is not statistically significant. This means that the differences between expected and observed frequencies are not beyond what would be expected by chance so we are led to accept  $H_1$  and conclude that there is no difference between the superintendent's influence and that of all the internal factors when combined.

Table 6  
Frequency of Influencing Factors in All Responses

	No Response	Supt.	Internal Factors	Total	$\chi^2$
Frequency	55	1064	1119	2238	1.00
Expected		1091.5	1091.5		
%	2	48	24		

Note. Chi-square reading of 1.00 for 1 degree of freedom at the alpha level .01 is less than 6.6 in the Chi-square critical values

$\chi^2 (1, N = 2) = 1.00, p < .01$  (post priori)

The restructuring components of leadership represented in Table 5 are further analyzed in Table 7 to show the breakdown by influencing factor. It is also noticeable when examining Table 7 that the superintendent and school culture account for 72% of the influence that school principals cite when the restructuring behavior is implemented—when responding positively. Furthermore, this differs only marginally from the relationship between improvement practice and positive and negative responses together where the influence of the superintendent is at 48% as reported in Table 6. All other influencing factors account for 52% of responses.

Table 7  
Influencing Factors on Positive Responses

Influencing Factor	Positive Response	Total	%
No response	17	55	
Superintendent	982	1064	47
School Culture	513	536	25
Student Needs	149	159	7
School Council	132	133	6
School Goals	285	290	14
	2078	2237	

Each of the influencing factors is further broken down and represented from the perspective of the restructuring leadership components in Table 8. The influence of the superintendent accounts for the most responses in each leadership component with the exception of empowerment where the school culture accounts for most of the influence. Table 8 also shows that in both empowerment aspects of the school and matters where the focus is on achievement, the internal factors, when considered as one source of influence, outweigh the superintendent's influence by a wide margin. At the other end of the scale, even when considered in total, the internal influencing factors are not near the level of influence that is the superintendent in allocating resources and developing policy.

Table 8

Superintendent's Influence compared to others by Restructuring Characteristic.

Restructuring characteristic	Supt.	Internal influencing factors				Total internal	Total supt. and internal
		School culture	Student needs	School council	School goals		
Allocation of resources	130	28	22	2	26	78	211*
Empowerment	217	256	37	104	93	490	711
Planning, vision, goal-setting	174	67	20	5	61	153	330
Policy development	158	32	6	4	16	58	219*
Focus on achievement	84	51	34	6	51	142	228*
Accountability	219	79	30	11	38	158	379*
	982	513	149	132	285	1079	2078

Note. \* = Total includes the blank responses

Table 9 shows that the link between policy development and the superintendent's influence is stronger than with each other restructuring components at 72%. The superintendent also accounts for more than 50% of the influence within each of the planning, accountability, and allocation of resources components.

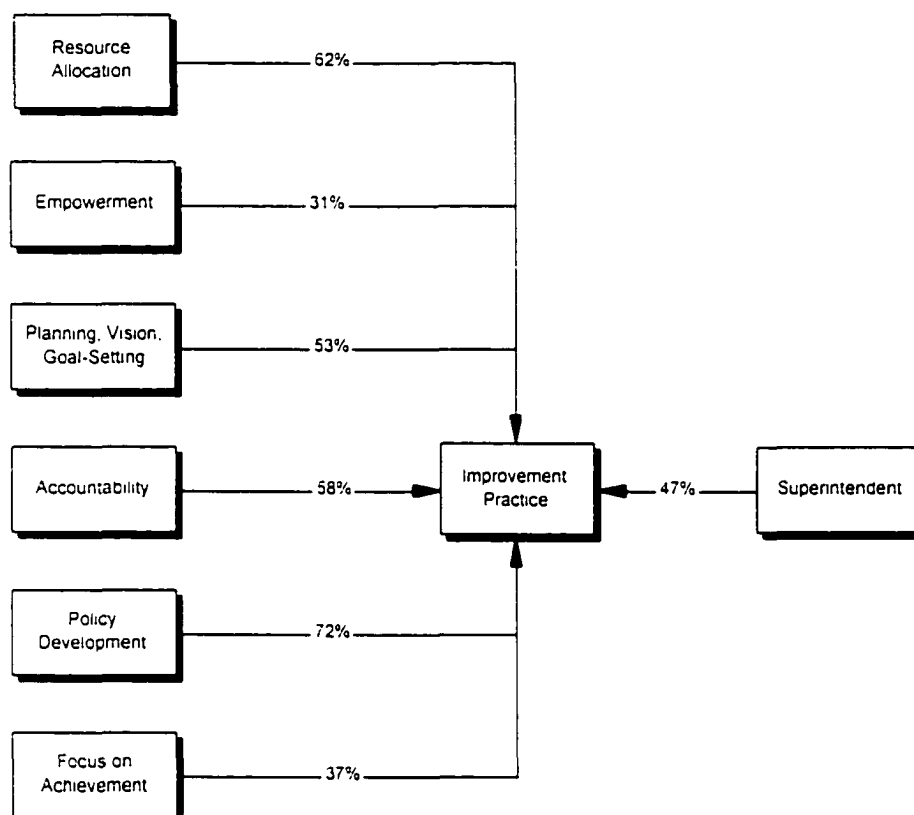
Table 9

Percentage of Superintendent's Influence Compared to Others by Restructuring Characteristic.

Restructuring characteristic	Supt.	School culture	Student needs	School council	School goals	Total internal
Allocation of resources	62	13	10	1	12	36
Empowerment	31	36	5	15	13	68
Planning, vision, goal-setting	53	20	6	2	18	46
Policy development	72	15	3	2	7	27
Focus on achievement	37	22	15	3	22	62
Accountability	58	21	8	3	10	42

Figure 2 further illustrates the link between the superintendent's influence and each of the restructuring components.

Figure 2. Superintendent's Influence on Restructuring Components.



**Figure 2.** The superintendent is the main source of influence 47% of the time. When the superintendent is the main influencing factor the boxes on the left reflect the level of activity within each restructuring component.

Empowerment is clearly an area where the superintendent does not enjoy the strongest sphere of influence—showing only 31% of the share of influence. Rather the school culture is viewed by principals as the strongest influence when responding to this series of questions. When viewing Table 9 vertically, school culture is the second most influential factor in every other case except

empowerment, where it is first. School Council was viewed as having the least influence on the leadership behavior in the school in every instance with the exception of empowerment where it accounted for about 15% of the influence behind the superintendent and school culture—these two factors collectively accounting for 67% of the influence.

The strength of school culture as an influence on school improvement is further illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3. School Culture Influence on Restructuring Components.

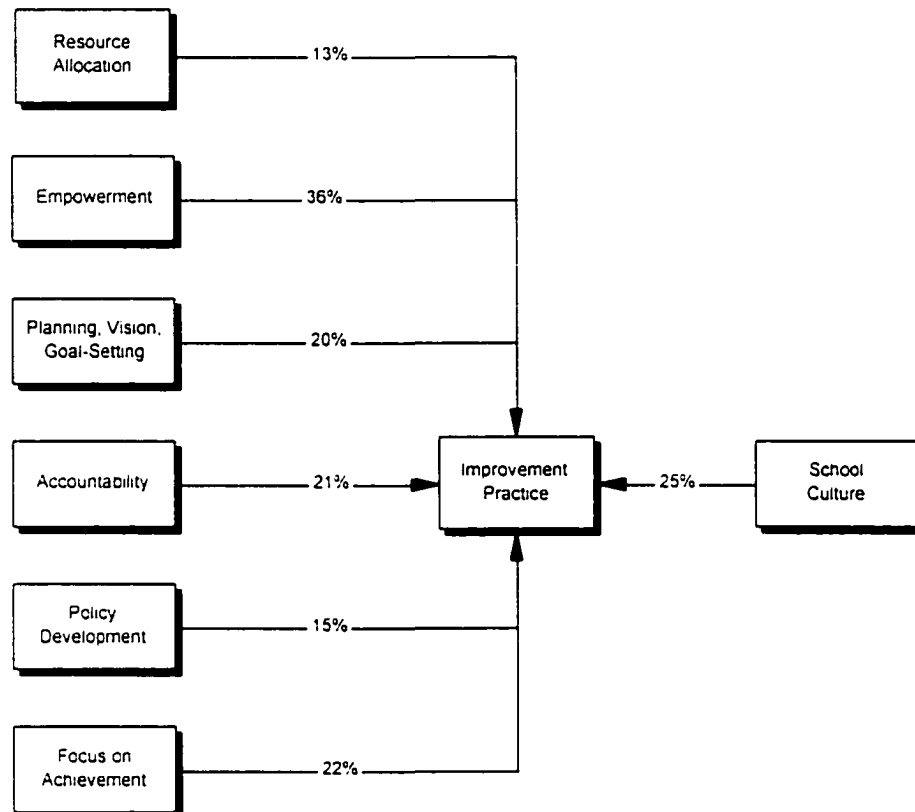


Figure 3. Overall influence of school culture. Boxes on the left show the degree of the restructuring activity that is attributable to school culture when school culture is the main influence of the school improvement practice.

### Chi Squared Test

Table 10 represents the expected numbers, which are based on the null hypothesis, and the number of observations, which are calculated using the number of questions in each category. For example, the "Allocation of



Resources" category contained four questions on the survey. With 59 survey responses that meant there were 236 possible responses for the five different restructuring categories in total. After eliminating the "non responses" (7), the number of expected responses, then for each category of influence, is 45.8.

If the null hypothesis is true the observed and expected numbers would not differ greatly. Large discrepancies between the observed and expected numbers (see Table 10) indicate departures from the null hypothesis.

Table 10

Chi-Squared Results for the Restructuring Components Compared to Influencing Factor

	Supt.	School culture	Student needs	School council	School goals	Total	$\chi^2$
Alloc.							
Obs	148	30	23	2	26	229	
Exp	45.8	45.8	45.8	45.8	45.8		295.3*
Emp.							
Obs	243	268	38	105	95	749	
Exp	149.8	149.8	149.8	149.8	149.8		268.1*
P.V.G.							
Obs	187	68	22	5	62	344	
Exp	68.8	68.8	68.8	68.8	68.8		294.8*
Policy							
Obs	168	33	7	4	16	228	
Exp	45.6	45.6	45.6	45.6	45.6		421.9*
Achvt.							
Obs	84	52	34	6	53	229	
Exp	45.8	45.8	45.8	45.8	45.8		71.5*
Acct.							
Obs	234	85	35	11	39	404	
Exp	80.8	80.8	80.8	80.8	80.8		398.6*

Note. Alloc. = Allocation of resources; Emp.= Empowerment; PVG = Planning, Vision and Goal-setting; Achvt. = Focus on Achievement; Acc. = Accountability.

Exp. = Expected frequency; Obs. = Observed frequency.

Expected frequency is the number of cases that would be expected in the cell if the row and column variables were statistically independent or unrelated to one another.

\* $P < .001$

$$\chi^2 (4, N = 229) = 295.3, p < .001$$

$$\chi^2 (4, N = 749) = 268.1, p < .001$$

$$\chi^2 (4, N = 344) = 294.8, p < .001$$

$$\chi^2 (4, N = 228) = 421.9, p < .001$$

$$\chi^2 (4, N = 229) = 71.5, p < .001$$

$$\chi^2 (4, N = 404) = 398.6, p < .001$$

The expected numbers in Table 11 are based on the alternate hypothesis; totaling all of the internal influencing factors and comparing the frequencies to those of the superintendent's influence by restructuring category. For example, the "Allocation of Resources" category contained 4 questions on the survey; with 59 survey responses that meant there were 236 possible responses. After eliminating the "non responses" (7), the expected responses in each of the two categories of influence is 114.5.

If the alternate hypothesis is true, the observed and expected numbers would not differ greatly. Minor discrepancies occur in each case except for the development of planning, vision, and goals. The .106 reading would still not indicate that the alternate hypothesis is false for this category of influence at the 95% confidence level. In summary there is no difference between the superintendent's influence and the total of all the internal influencing factors in any one of the categories.

Table 11  
Chi-Squared Results for the Superintendent's Influence Compared to Other Influences by Restructuring Components.

	Supt.	Total internal influence	$\chi^2$
Alloc.			
Obs	148	81	
Exp	114.5	114.5	0.00*
Emp.			
Obs	243	506	
Exp	374.5	374.5	0.00*
P.V.G.			
Obs	187	157	
Exp	172	172	0.106*
Policy			
Obs	168	60	
Exp	114	114	0.00*
Achvt.			
Obs	84	145	
Exp	114.5	114.5	0.00*
Acct.			
Obs	234	170	
Exp	202	202	0.001*

Note. Alloc. = Allocation of resources; Emp.= Empowerment; PVG = Planning, Vision and Goal-setting; Achvt. = Focus on Achievement; Acc. = Accountability.

Exp. = Expected frequency; Obs. = Observed frequency.

\* $P < 3.841$  at the .05 alpha level

\* $\chi^2 (1, N = 229) = .00, p < .05$

\* $\chi^2 (1, N = 749) = .00, p < .05$

\* $\chi^2 (1, N = 228) = .00, p < .05$

\* $\chi^2 (1, N = 229) = .00, p < .05$

\* $\chi^2 (1, N = 344) = .106, p < .05$

\* $\chi^2 (1, N = 400) = .106, p < .05$

At the 99% confidence level there is also no difference overall. It is just as likely that the superintendent influences change as it is that all the internal factors in the school collectively will influence change. This is also true when we consider the relationship between the superintendent's influence and each individual internal factor. Figure 4 is a replication of the path model comparing the superintendent's influence to the combination of all of the internal influencing factors.

Table 12 examines the significance of the relationship between each individual influencing factor and each individual restructuring component. The assumption that there is no difference between the influence of any one factor on any restructuring component is false, even at a *post priori* alpha level of .001. The relatively lower chi-squared reading in the school goals area shows that compared to the other influencing factors, setting school goals is more likely to influence the school improvement practice in each of the restructuring components than are the others.

Figure 4. Internal Factor's Total Influence on Improvement Practice by Restructuring Component.

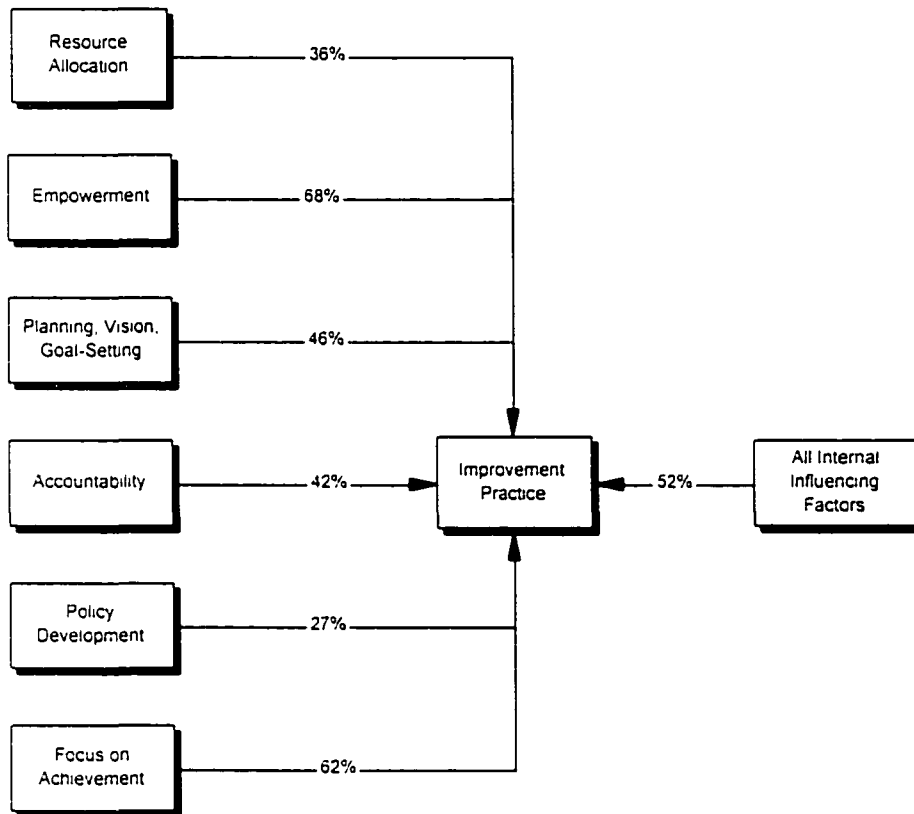


Figure 4. The influence of internal factors in total accounts for the improvement practice 52% of the time. The boxes on the left show the percentage of attributable activity in each restructuring component when internal factors are the main influence.

Table 12

Chi-Squared Results for the Influencing Factors Compared to Restructuring Components.

	Supt.	School culture	Student needs	School council	School goals	Total
Alloc.						
Obs	148	30	23	2	26	229
Exp	45.8	45.8	45.8	45.8	45.8	
Emp.						
Obs	243	268	38	105	95	749
Exp	149.8	149.8	149.8	149.8	149.8	
P.V.G.						
Obs	187	68	22	5	62	344
Exp	68.8	68.8	68.8	68.8	68.8	
Policy						
Obs	168	33	7	4	16	228
Exp	45.6	45.6	45.6	45.6	45.6	
Achvt.						
Obs	84	52	34	6	53	229
Exp	45.8	45.8	45.8	45.8	45.8	
Acc.						
Obs	234	85	35	11	39	404
Exp	80.8	80.8	80.8	80.8	80.8	
$\chi^2$	1141.7*	103.3*	188.3*	247.3*	71.2*	

Note. Supt. = Superintendent; Alloc. = Allocation of resources; Emp. = Empowerment;

PVG = Planning, Vision and Goal-setting; Achvt. = Focus on Achievement; Acc. =

Accountability.

Exp. = Expected frequency; Obs. = Observed frequency.

\* $P < .001$

## Chapter V

### Summary, Conclusions, Discussion, and Recommendations.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine if the superintendent's influence was the same, more, or less substantial than that of a series of internal factors that effect school improvement in the province of Alberta. The leadership components of the restructured school system in Alberta were used to design the questionnaire such that each influencing factor in the school improvement process might be linked to any of these components. Size and type of school were identified to help determine if the schools in the sample compared to those of the public system in the entire province.

Murphy (1994a) has suggested that the superintendent's sphere of influence has been reduced since the restructuring movement began in North America in the 1990s. Others such as Sergiovanni (1988), Elmore (1996), and Hord (1990) espouse that the key leadership activity supporting change is generated at the school level. Fullan (1998) advocates a site-based model for change that is constructed and enacted at the school level. Leithwood (1995) developed a model that identified and compared the relevance of certain internal factors that drive school improvement. Since the restructuring of education in Alberta in 1994, principals have consistently reported that the site-based model has resulted in more emphasis on accountability, more opportunities to effect school improvement, and greater levels of collaboration.

In this site-based environment with an emphasis on improvement practice being generated and orchestrated from within the school, does the school superintendent still have influence on the school, and, if so, what are those areas of influence?

### Findings

The hypothesis in this study was that the principal's perceptions of outcomes of a school improvement process, characterized by the key components of the restructuring expectations, are influenced equally by the superintendent's leadership, school culture, student needs, parent council input, or school goals.

The findings rejected the null supported by a substantial level of significance—the superintendent emerges with significantly more influence than the rest of the factors. The chi-squared analysis reveals that these results could not have occurred by chance.

It is important initially to note that in more than 90% of instances, the subjects in the study concurred that they were indeed implementing improvement practice and that in 47% of these cases the superintendent's influence was prevalent. It is only in the area of allocation of resources that at least 10% of the respondents indicated that the improvement practice was not occurring in their school. When one considers the accompanying cutbacks that were associated with restructuring in Alberta in 1994, it is understandable that acquiring sufficient resources was an issue in some Alberta schools and that the response to any question regarding funds and other resources could be negative.



The superintendent's influence exceeded that of other internal factors in all key leadership components, being strongest in the allocation of resources and in policy development. Clearly, principals view the superintendent to be largely responsible for the allocation of resources, and that such resources play an important role in implementing improvement practice. In the same vein, the superintendent in the Alberta system plays a major role in generating, developing and implementing policy. Once again the principals in this study recognize and acknowledge that role.

None of the internal influencing factors received the support that the superintendent received. In fact, only when all of the internal factors are grouped together do we see that the influence of the superintendent is challenged. The superintendent's influence of 48% is exceeded marginally by the internal factors collectively at 52%. This result seems somewhat incongruent with much of the restructured leadership theory that emphasizes local factors when leading for change and improvement. The superintendent's influence accounted for almost half of the overall influence with school culture emerging as the only other competing influence—contributing 25%. Bolman and Deal (1991) determine that culture is created largely by a combination of leadership, staff commitment to the shared vision, and a focus on student learning.

Principals perceived strong links between their school improvement practice and each of the restructuring components of leadership. In other words principals acknowledged that the incidence of school improvement practice was high in their response to all questions on the survey.

When compared to other factors, student needs and the parent council were attributed very low levels of influence across all leadership components. This result seemingly contradicts the intent of the site-based movement which stressed empowerment when making decisions.

The only result that showed a decline in the degree of superintendent influence was linking school improvement practice to empowerment. According to Chubb (1988), many of the reform initiatives, under the guise of empowerment and shared decision-making, were designed to reduce or eliminate layers of administration and to minimize the influence of the superintendent's position. The superintendents who were involved in Murphy's study (1994b) supported this claim stating that they felt their sphere of influence had diminished in the new school-based structure. The empowerment finding in this study supports this claim when linking the superintendent's influence to other restructuring leadership components such as policy-making or vision-building where the superintendent's influence is much greater. Murphy (1990) stated that empowerment [of students, teachers, and parents] is a more effective tool than prescription; and bottom-up, school-based solution strategies will lead to more satisfying results than will top-down, mandated ones. The finding that school culture would influence how empowerment impacts school improvement is consistent with a restructured model of decision-making. However, the finding that the superintendent's influence is still a factor, even though it is diminished, suggests that a new relationship is emerging.

The superintendent's influence is strongest in matters of accountability and policy development. In the Alberta system school boards are required to report annually to the ministry and the public on goal accomplishment. The accountability process, in turn, mandates that schools report results to the superintendent. Similarly, the board is regulated by the ministry to develop policy. The superintendent, as CEO for the board, has the responsibility to implement board policy. Both of these factors could account for the predominance of the perception that the superintendent exceeds all other influencing factors in these areas.

In the restructuring legislation of 1994, the province of Alberta required that school councils be developed in all schools. The school council comprises mainly parents and its responsibility is to be advisory to the school principal. School councils provide a legitimate forum for input into school affairs and in some cases their sphere of influence extends into matters of program, budgeting, and planning. Despite this development this study showed that the school council had the least influence over matters of school improvement. A key component of the restructuring movement was to involve the stakeholders in their schools and to develop ownership for decisions at the school community level. The school council influence revealed in this study suggests that much work is still to be done in this regard.

Similarly, principals did not view student needs as a strong influence when compared to the superintendent and school culture. Alberta prescribes a core curriculum throughout all grades in its schools. Elective courses are offered at

the junior and senior high levels, but the content of these courses are prescribed. Similarly, the province mandates achievement tests for all students at grades three, six, and nine. Graduating students are required to write provincial diploma examinations in English, social studies, mathematics, and the sciences. It is only in curriculum matters associated with special education that schools are required to develop individualized programs for students. The program requirements and the mandated achievement testing could mitigate strongly against linking school improvement efforts to student needs in this province.

### Conclusions and Discussion

The literature review for this study revealed that the restructuring movement in North America had de-emphasized the hierarchical control of central offices and superintendents. Murphy (1994c) and Leithwood (1995) each described a new system that moved the key decision-making power to the school level. The Alberta Government's restructuring legislation indeed mandated school-based decision making as a key focus in the improvement of schools. Other studies claimed that the school-based model was indeed the most effective way of ensuring school improvement. Fullan (1994), Fullan and Hargreaves (1996), and Estes (1988) all identified strategies for school improvement that focussed on staff development, empowerment, and shared vision. Leithwood (1995) conducted a study that constructed key internal influencing factors in the school improvement process.

This study incorporated Murphy's (1994a) claim that the superintendent's influence declines considerably in a restructured system. However, the findings

do not support this claim in small and mid-sized school jurisdictions in the province of Alberta. Principals perceive the superintendents to have a strong presence in their schools and that they have at least as much influence over school improvement efforts as do all the internal factors combined. In Murphy's studies based on the Kentucky restructuring of the early 1990s, he concluded that the role of the superintendent would likely disappear as restructuring was successfully implemented. Recently, others such as Carver (2000) and Dawson and Quinn (2000) have criticized school boards, especially for the way they interact with superintendents, suggesting that the superintendent can become ineffective in effecting school improvement largely because of the political role that the board demands. Some education systems such as those in the Australian states have restructured their school system without school boards-- instead appointing area superintendents to work directly with schools in a flattened hierarchy.

This study provided evidence that restructuring is continuing with new relationships emerging in school improvement practice, but it did not support the claims that the superintendent has only marginal influence. The collaborative nature of shared decision making is clearly providing a foundation for partnerships and for shared leadership, but this relationship has not eliminated the superintendent from the formula for school improvement. What did emerge in this study was that the parents' influence through the school council does not influence school improvement to the degree that the restructuring legislation intended. Perhaps one expectation that the study's findings does support is that

of Johansson and Bredeson (1999) who advocate a model of shared leadership. They claim that leadership is not the responsibility on one individual but rather it is shared among the partners, and it will be largely dependent on the strengths, goals, and the culture of the school. On the basis of a study completed in Sweden, they describe educational leadership as a transformative link between policy and learning interests, and that the superintendent's traditional source of power may have been eroded, but there is a new interdependent relationship that has emerged between the superintendent and the school. Silins (1992), recognized this when she referred to the mediating influence of the superintendent. Alberta principals in this study perceive the superintendent to be a key player in that relationship.

Lynn (1998), an Alberta Superintendent serving as president of the College of Alberta Superintendents, stated that the restructured infrastructure had reached its limits and could not support sustained improvement and change in the classroom. Lynn advocated that we needed to make further changes to the structure in which people work to facilitate a change in culture. Some findings in this study provide strong evidence that those changes are emerging. The principal's perceptions that the superintendent has at least as much influence as all internal influences combined means that the possibility exists that the pendulum has settled between the managerial-hierarchical model and the site-based model, and that there is potential for shared responsibilities to emerge.

Townsend (1998) stated that after 5 years, 91% of teachers, 83.5% of principals, and 65.5% of superintendents did not believe that overall reforms had

contributed to improvements in student learning. He also stated that similar numbers of the same group did not believe overall reforms have contributed to improvements in classroom teaching practices. Both of those claims, as did Lynn's, reflected a frustration with change, a disenchantment with new school-based managerial responsibilities, and a perception that resources were insufficient to effect classroom improvement. This study provides evidence that the superintendent can have a strong influence through a carefully crafted vision and a relevant set of goals, by enacting enabling policy, and by equitably allocating the resources of the system. The study also suggests that further work needs to be done in empowering staff and community. For example, principals perceive the superintendent as a partner in influencing empowerment, but school councils have not, in this study, emerged as partners in this arrangement. The perception that the superintendent's influence is somewhat reduced in an empowered environment suggests that other spheres of influence can emerge. This perception could be interpreted as an indication that the decision-making power is now in the hands of those in a position to effect improvement.

Clearly the visionary role of the superintendent is important in the restructured setting. Change experts Fullan (1994) and Leithwood (1992), and Alberta scholars Lynn (1998) and Townsend (1998) agree that the improvement process is marginal and slow. In this context, the leadership role of the superintendent becomes quite significant. Johansson and Bredeson (1999) gathered empirical evidence in Sweden and the United States to support a model that clearly builds on a strong relationship between the principal and the

superintendent if instructional leadership is to be effective in schools. These findings suggest an answer to Murphy's (1994a) questions about the emerging role of the superintendent—a collaborative role where responsibility for school improvement decisions are shared among partners.

The research questions in this study were posed to determine if the superintendent's influence could influence change in a restructured setting. The findings indicate the school climate plays a vital role in improvement, but the superintendent can significantly influence that climate. Superintendents are indeed important members of the restructured learning community and their relationship with boards and the school community continues to provide the foundation for educational leadership that supports classroom improvement. Estes (1988) identified strategies for school improvement that focussed on staff development, empowerment, and shared vision. Clearly the superintendent can be a full partner with other stakeholders in enacting and influencing school improvement. The manner in which empowerment is enacted and the vision is shared can positively impact on staff commitment and build a meaningful school culture. Further study about the relationship between the superintendent and the school culture, and the potential of the school council to serve effectively in this empowering relationship, could provide important information regarding the influence on school improvement.



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## Appendix A

## Responding School Demographics.

	<b>School</b>	<b>Size</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Jurisdiction</b>
1	Falun	<200	Elementary	Wetaskiwin
2	Millgrove Elem.	<200	Elementary	Parkland
3	Vimy	<200	Elem-Jnr. High	Pembina Hills
4	Lamont Elem.	>200	Elementary	Elk Island
5	A. L. Horton	>200	Elementary	Elk Island
6	High Park	>200	Elem-Jnr-Senior	Parkland
7	Thomas Aquinas	<200	Elem-Jnr-Senior	East Central
8	Coalhurst	>200	Elementary	Palliser
9	Brooks	>200	Junior High	Grassland
10	Westlock	>200	Elementary	Pembina Hills
11	Bentley	>200	Elem-Junior	Wolf Creek
12	Bluffton	>200	Elementary	Wolf Creek
13	Diamond Willow	>200	Middle	Wolf Creek
14	Ponoka Comp.	>200	High	Wolf Creek
15	Glen Allan	>200	Elementary	Elk Island
16	Breton	>200	Junior-Senior	Wild Rose
17	Sherwood Height	>200	Junior High	Elk island
18	Dr. Gibson	>200	Elementary	Foothills
19	Vera Welsh	>200	Elementary	Elk Island

	<b>School</b>	<b>Size</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Jurisdiction</b>
20	Percy Pegler	>200	Elementary	Foothills
21	Stony Plain Cent	>200	Elementary	Parkland
22	Lorne Jenkins	>200	Junior-Senior	Pembina Hills
23	School of Hope	>200	Gde. 1 -12	East Central
24	Wetaskiwin	>200	High	Wetaskiwin
25	Flo. MacDougall	>200	Elem.-Junior	Ft. Vermillion
26	R.I. Baker	>200	Junior High	Palliser
27	Banff	>200	Elementary	Can. Rockies
28	St. Theresa	>200	Elem.-Junior	Elk Isle Catholic
29	Oyen Public	>200	Grade 1-12	Prairie Rose
30	Notre Dame	>200	Gde 1-12	Thomas Aquinas
31	Central	>200	Elementary	Grasslands
32	St. Paul Ecole	>200	Elementary	Lakeland
33	Ft. Saskatch.	>200	Senior High	Elk Island
34	Noble Central	<200	Gde 1-12	Palliser
35	Brooks Comp.	>200	Senior High	Grasslands
36	Highwood	>200	Senior High	Foothills
37	Rosemary	<200	Gde I-9	Grasslands
38	Dot Dalgliesh	>200	Elementary	Palliser
39	Millarville	>200	Gde. 1-8	Foothills
40	Parkdale	>200	Elementary	Wetaskiwin
41	Central	>200	Elementary	Northern Lights

	<b>School</b>	<b>Size</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Jurisdiction</b>
42	F.G.Miller	>200	Junior.-Senior	St. Paul Reg.
43	Bassano	>200	Gde.1 - 9	Grasslands
44	Parkside	>200	Elementary	Prairie Rose
45	Alder Flats	>200	Elementary	Wetaskiwin
46	Fort Vermillion	>200	Junior.-Senior	Ft. Vermillion
47	Grande Center	>200	Elementary	Northern lights
48	Lakedell	<200	Elementary	Wetaskiwin
49	Athabasca	<200	Gde. 1-9	Northern lights
50	New Brigden	<200	Gde. 1-9	Prairie Rose
51	Grande Center	>200	Senior	Northern Lights
52	St Benedict	>200	Elementary	Thomas Aquinas
53	Winfield	<200	Elementary	Wetaskiwin
54	Schular	<200	Gde.1-9	Prairie Rose
55	Lawrence Grassi	>200	Middle	Can. Rockies
56	Tomahawk	<200	Elementary	Parkland
57	Picture Butte	>200	Jnr.-Senior High	Palliser
58	Two Hills	>200	Elementary	St. Paul Reg.
59	W.E. Hay	>200	Jnr-Senior High	Clearview

## Appendix B

Responding Jurisdictions with number of principals eligible for the study.

Responded with principal contact information	Responded but not eligible
Palliser (12)	Livingstone Range
Foothills (13)	Grande Prairie & District
Canadian Rockies (5)	Battle River
Wolf Creek (17)	Yellowhead
Grasslands (7)	
Elk Island Catholic (5)	
St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic (3)	
Prairie Rose (15)	
Wild Rose (7)	
Wetaskiwin (15)	
Clearview (5)	
East Central Catholic (5)	
Elk Island Public (38)	
Pembina Hills (8)	
St. Paul Regional (14)	

## Appendix C

## Survey

Directions: Read the statements below.

Decide on a scale of 1 (false), 2 (sometimes true) to 3 (mostly true), the degree to which the statement reflects conditions in your school, and indicate your response in the left column. Then, on the right, decide which factor is the biggest influence on implementation of the statement and so indicate by a check (✓) in the appropriate blank on the right. (Select one only.). The influencing factors and their codes are as follows:

S. superintendent's influence

C. culture of the school

N. student needs

P. parent council input

G. school goals

1	2	3		S	C	N	P	G
			1. 1. Student achievement is used as a key measure of success in this district.					
			2. Teachers are trusted to make important decisions about classroom improvement.					
			3. Parents are provided with opportunities for input into important decisions.					
			4. There is a system of teacher evaluation based on widely accepted standards.					
			5. Teachers and other staff have input into system-wide decisions.					
			6. A variety of assessments are used to supplement provincial examinations when evaluating the students.					
			7. All decisions that can be made at the school level are permitted to be made there.					
			8. All teaching staff has accepted that they control the essential factors in learning.					
			9. There is a shared group of beliefs that drive the decisions in this district.					
			10. Decisions are made by consensus (rather than by voting or by the leader alone).					
			11. Teachers and principals incorporate high standards in their goals.					
			12. All teaching staff has accepted that all students can learn.					
			13. Students, parents, and community have been kept informed of changes in educational practices.					
			14. Parents are provided with assistance in learning their role.					
			15. There is a system-wide professional development model in place.					

1	2	3		S	C	N	P	G
			16. Problems are typically resolved collaboratively.					
			17. The superintendent is held accountable for problems in the system.					
			18. All participants in the system understand their roles.					
			19. The superintendent's goals are clearly understood.					
			20. The performance of the system in regards to goal achievement is reported to the public.					
			21. System policies generally encourage schools to adopt procedures, which speak to local needs.					
			22. Staff evaluation is a school-based matter.					
			23. Decision-making is collaborative in nature.					
			24. Policies are changed frequently to allow for flexibility in school-based decisions.					
			25. Performance measures have been implemented to assess success of the system goals.					
			26. The formation of the education plan involves input from all interested parties.					
			27. School councils are functioning as part of the decision making team at the school level.					
			28. School based budgets have been fully implemented.					
			29. Allocation of staff is done at the school level.					
			30. A school-based decision-making policy has been adopted for the system.					
			31. The instructional block of system funding is allocated equitably. (fairly)					
			32. Schools prepare a school program blueprint (plan) as part of the planning process.					
			33. Schools report their achievement results to the public.					
			34. The system's annual report contains an accounting of system expenditure.					
			35. The system's annual report contains a summary of system achievement.					
			36. The system's annual report focuses on progress toward system goals.					
			37. School Councils are provided with an opportunity to meet with the School Board.					
			38. Trustees, administrators, teachers and school councils have roles defined in system-wide policy.					

## Appendix D

## Coded Survey

- Achvt 1. Student achievement is used as a key measure of success in this district.
- Emp 2. Teachers are trusted to make important decisions about classroom improvement.
- Emp 3. Parents are provided with opportunities for input into important decisions.
- Acc 4. There is a system of teacher evaluation based on widely accepted standards.
- Emp 5. Teachers and other staff have input into system-wide decisions.
- Achvt 6. A variety of assessments are used to supplement provincial examinations when evaluating the students.
- Emp 7. All decisions that can be made at the school level are permitted to be made there.
- Acc 8. All teaching staff has accepted that they control the essential factors in learning.
- PVG 9. There is a shared group of beliefs that drive the decisions in this district.
- Emp 10. Decisions are made by consensus (rather than by voting or by the leader alone).
- PVG 11. Teachers and principals incorporate high standards in their goals.
- Acc 12. All teaching staff has accepted that all students can learn.
- Emp 13. Students, parents, and community have been kept informed of changes in educational practices.
- Emp 14. Parents are provided with assistance in learning their role.
- Alloc 15. There is a system-wide professional development model in place.
- Emp 16. Problems are typically resolved collaboratively.
- Acc 17. The superintendent is held accountable for problems in the system.
- Emp 18. All participants in the system understand their roles.
- PVG 19. The superintendent's goals are clearly understood.
- Acc 20. The performance of the system in regards to goal achievement is reported to the public.
- Pol 21. System policies generally encourage schools to adopt procedures, which speak to local needs.
- Emp 22. Staff evaluation is a school-based matter.
- Emp 23. Decision-making is collaborative in nature.
- Pol 24. Policies are changed frequently to allow for flexibility in school-based decisions.
- Acc 25. Performance measures have been implemented to assess success of the system goals.
- PVG 26. The formation of the education plan involves input from all interested parties.
- Emp 27. School councils are functioning as part of the decision making team at the school level.
- Alloc 28. School based budgets have been fully implemented.
- Alloc 29. Allocation of staff is done at the school level.
- Pol 30. A school-based decision-making policy has been adopted for the system.
- Alloc 31. The instructional block of system funding is allocated equitably. (fairly)
- PVG 32. Schools prepare a school program blueprint (plan) as part of the planning process.
- Achvt 33. Schools report their achievement results to the public.
- Acc 34. The system's annual report contains an accounting of system expenditure.
- Achvt 35. The system's annual report contains a summary of system achievement.
- PVG 36. The system's annual report focuses on progress toward system goals.
- Emp 37. School Councils are provided with an opportunity to meet with the School Board.
- Pol 38. Trustees, administrators, teachers and school councils have roles defined in system-wide policy.

## Appendix E



## Survey Letters

### Superintendent Letter

Thursday, May 20, 1999

Dear[Superintendent]:

I am currently conducting my doctoral dissertation focusing on the principal's perception of the influence of the superintendent's leadership practice. I am targeting those mid-sized and small jurisdictions in the province that have been operating with the same superintendent since restructuring occurred on January 1, 1995.

If you meet that criterion and are willing to grant me access to some of your principals, I would appreciate receiving your consent by return email.

If you are willing to have your system participate in my study, please ask your secretary to forward the following information to me (by email) at your earliest convenience:

1. Your jurisdiction's 1999 enrolment.
2. Names of Principals who have served in their current capacity for at least 4 years, and their school email addresses.

Thank you for your assistance in this project. With your cooperation, I hope to be able to make some useful determinations about the effectiveness of our work as superintendents.

Regards,

Art Aitken

Email: plrd\_ceo@telusplanet.net

Principal Letter

Dear [Principal]:

Your superintendent has allowed me to include your school in my doctoral leadership study. I would be most appreciative if you could take a few minutes to complete the accompanying online form (survey). When completed return by saving, using "Reply" email, and attaching the saved survey. Otherwise just print it and fax the form back to me at 1 403 854 2803.

Thanks for your assistance.

Art Aitken