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# Georgia Public School Superintendency: An Exploration of the Profession

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THE GEORGIA PUBLIC SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENCY:

AN EXPLORATION

OF THE PROFESSION

by

TINA MYCHELE COOK SWAIN

(Under the direction of James Burnham)

ABSTRACT

During the study, the researcher investigated the overall characteristics of the Georgia public school superintendency. The school superintendent has many functions, but all of these functions are to achieve one primary goal: the best possible educational environment for all children. Demands that are now being placed on school superintendents require them to create conditions in which all students can increase achievement, while creating these conditions with fewer and fewer resources. The superintendent constantly seeks consensus between the board, staff, and the community to make the best educational decisions for all students. The superintendent is a leader in the true sense, for he/she must always bring out the best in all stakeholders of the school community. A descriptive research study was developed to gather data from all 180 Georgia school superintendents. From those surveyed, 86 responded to the survey. The researcher addressed superintendent perceptions regarding school board/superintendent relations, challenges facing the school superintendent, and the school superintendents' level of satisfaction with their careers. The researcher gathered both qualitative and quantitative data. The results from this study clearly showed that school superintendents have a strong understanding of their relations with school board members, challenges in

the superintendency, and their levels of career satisfaction. Superintendents responded positively regarding their relations with school board members. Of the challenges identified by school superintendents, finance and state/federal mandates proved to be the greatest problems. Superintendents reported moderate to considerable stress in the school superintendency. Despite the challenges and stress, superintendents indicated achievement of career satisfaction as school superintendents. The researcher's findings provided data that was not available for the state of Georgia and strengthened data from previously national studies on the school superintendency.

**INDEX WORDS:** Dissertation, Georgia Public School Superintendents.

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OF THE PROFESSION

by

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## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family whose constant love and support have enabled me to complete this project. My parents, who have always supported me, loved me, and motivated me to set high goals and helped me to achieve all of my goals, I hope this work makes you proud. My sister, the person in my life whose unconditional love is forever present, you always help me to find my purpose. To my grandparents, who believe in me more than anyone in my life, and have always instilled in me that I could accomplish anything, you have been my inspiration to complete this project.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The school superintendency could be described using a variety of metaphors. Houston (2001) refers to his tenure as a superintendent through one rather undesirable metaphor, describing the relationship between the superintendent and the community as being similar to the role of a fire hydrant to a dog. However, that relationship goes much deeper:

The superintendency isn't so much a job as it is a calling. You may choose it, but it also chooses you. You are summoned to it. Part of the responsibility of the current generation of leaders will be to summon that next generation to duty. And that leads back to the fire hydrant. Yes, the hydrant does serve as convenience for the dog, but that isn't its mission. Its mission is a much nobler one. It is there to keep houses from burning down. Public school leaders may get a little damp from time to time from the exercises of their critics, but their mission is to help create a future where democracy is preserved and the ideals of this nation are moved forward. And that is a wonderful challenge and an amazing gift to receive (p. 433).

#### History of the Superintendency

The position of public school superintendent was developed nearly 170 years ago and has been in a state of evolution since its inception in 1837 (Carter & Cunningham, 1997). The current usage of the term could be a result of the industrial revolution, since the managers of 19th century mills were referred to as superintendents, or the term may have derived from as early as the year 1560 in Europe, when the official in charge of a

group of parishes within the Lutheran Church was designated as superintendent (Cuban, 1988). Konnert and Augenstein (1990) identify the two Latin derivatives that combine to create the term superintendent; “super, meaning over, and intendo, meaning direct”, these meanings offer insight into the utilization of the term within our society (p. 6).

The period of 1830 to 1850 is recognized as the era of the common school movement in the United States (Kowalski, 1999). According to Kowalski, the superintendency developed in conjunction with this movement in education. The focus of the common school movement was to develop a state system of public and secondary education. Between 1837 and 1850, 13 urban districts had superintendents, and by 1890 a majority of the larger cities within the United States had established the position of school superintendent (Kowalski). However, superintendents were not present in the small cities and towns until well into the twentieth century (Carter & Cunningham, 1997).

### *Roles of the Superintendent*

The evolution of the role of the school superintendent may be divided into four stages; clerical, master educator, expert manager, and chief executive officer for the board (Carter & Cunningham, 1997). As the clerical supervisor, Carter and Cunningham describe this earliest role of the superintendent as providing assistance to the board with the daily activities of the school district. At the end of the 19th century, the superintendent’s role became that of the master educator, focusing on the curricular and instructional matters of the district. The third change in the role of the superintendent occurred in the first half of the twentieth century, which resulted in the superintendent becoming known as the expert manager (Carter & Cunningham). In the role as expert

manager, the superintendent concentrated on four areas: bonds, buses, budgets, and buildings (Carter & Cunningham). Another change occurred in the second half of the twentieth century and marked the fourth and current role of the superintendent, chief executive officer (Carter & Cunningham). As the chief executive officer the superintendent became professional advisor to the board, leader of the reforms, manager of resources, and communicator to the public (Carter & Cunningham).

#### *History of the Georgia School Superintendent*

In 1777, Georgia adopted its first constitution, which stated that schools would be established in each county and supported by the state (Joiner, 1979). Prior to the 1777 constitution, there were academies already in existence in Chatham, Richmond, Glynn, and Bibb counties under the direction of a board of trustees from the community (Joiner). Basing their guidelines on the 1777 constitution, these counties became the first countywide school systems within the state of Georgia (Joiner). There were marked differences among the counties in the management of school affairs, as some systems utilized the poor school fund, which provided financial support from the state legislature for free schools for children who were unable to pay the tuition to the private academies (Joiner). There were also systems that used the common school plan that consolidated the poor school fund and revenue that was derived from the United States government. There were still others in which no record could be found for the method of decision making in the school system (Orr, 1950).

From the state's first constitution in 1777 until the time of the civil war, there had been many ups and downs toward the establishment of a public school system.



Several times legislation was actually passed creating a public school system, but at no time did any of this legislation take effect (Joiner, p. 33).

Despite its earlier beginnings, the 1868 Georgia constitution is described as the creator of public education and the position of commissioner of education in the state (Joiner, 1979). The procedure, according to the 1868 constitution, was for the designation of a commissioner of education for each militia district, who would be the equivalent of the urban school superintendent (Orr, 1950). The commissioner of education would be appointed by the governor, confirmed by the senate, and hold office for the same length of time as the governor (Orr). However, the counties of Chatham, Richmond, Glynn, and Bibb, which had already established county school systems, were protected from change under the law of 1872, which designated these systems as independent local systems, due to their early success and maintenance of public school programs (Orr).

The school law of 1872 created a state board of education, state school commissioner, and identified guidelines for the county level (Orr, 1950). Under the law of 1872, guidelines for the county level were under the control of the county board of education, members of which were appointed by the grand jury (Orr). In addition, the law of 1872 designated a county school commissioner, who was the executive officer of the county board and appointed by the county board of education (Orr). In 1909, there was a change in the process of selecting the county school commissioner (Joiner, 1979). The commissioner would no longer be an appointed position, but an elected position by popular vote (Joiner). Criticism and discussion transpired for years to come regarding the decision of 1909 establishing the election of county school superintendent (Joiner).

An additional change occurred in 1911, as the title of county school commissioner was changed to county school superintendent (Joiner).

A statewide survey conducted in 1923-1924 by Dr. Ralph E. Wager, Department of Education, Emory University, identified the procedure for selection of county school superintendents as one of the problem areas in education within the state of Georgia (Joiner, 1979). In 1947, a resolution by the Georgia Educators Association proposed that the selection of county school superintendent be made by the county school board, however the proposal was never implemented (Joiner). During the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, no significant changes were made to the position of school superintendent (Joiner). The next change concerning the school superintendency in the state of Georgia came in 1986, with the enactment of the Quality Basic Education (QBE) Act. Through the establishment of QBE and a constitutional referendum in 1991, the position of school superintendent changed from an elected to an appointed position.

#### History of School Boards

The earliest existence of a school board can be identified in the year 1642 in the state of Massachusetts (First & Walberg, 1992).

In 1642, a Massachusetts law called on ‘certain chosen men of each town to ascertain from time to time, if parents and masters were attending to their educational duties; if the children were being trained in learning and labor and other employments’ (p. 4).

However, the law of 1642 was abandoned, and several other laws followed, maintaining the premise that education is a function of local government (First & Walberg).

These laws included the ‘Ye Old Deluder Satan Act’ of 1647 and laws in other parts of the New England Colonies in 1650, 1693, 1721, 1789, and 1791 (First & Walberg).

One of these laws, the law of 1693, was enacted throughout the New England Colonies, stating that each town should choose ‘selectmen’ to maintain schools (Reeves, 1954). In addition, a 1789 law in the state of Massachusetts, “called for the election of a twelve member committee to serve as a separate governing body over public education” (Callahan, 1975, p. 19). The ratification of the Bill of Rights in 1791, through the Tenth Amendment, did not eliminate federal control, but did delegate “administrative authority to local school boards to operate schools” (First and Walberg, 1992, p. 6). Until the year 1837, with the creation of the school superintendent, school boards alone performed all “executive, administrative, and legislative tasks” for the school district (First & Walberg, 1992, p. 6).

### *Roles of School Boards*

The roles of school boards and the lines of authority between school boards and superintendents have evolved in several stages over the last hundred years (Glass, 2000). In the first stage, school boards were considered as the primary policy and decision makers for all schools (Glass). The turn of the 20th century marked the second stage, when superintendents became viewed as “highly trained professionals”. This change enabled the superintendent to gain more decision making authority over the board (Glass).

The final and the current stage, which was recognized in the 1940s, identified the superintendent as chief executive officer of the school district and the roles of school

boards as establishing general policy, as well as conducting the evaluation of the superintendent (Glass).

Although the role responsibilities of superintendents and school boards are commonly separated by the categories of administration and policy making, the line of demarcation between the two areas is not clear-cut, and there are broad areas of overlap. In reality, both parties rely on each other for successful outcomes (Kowalski, 1999, p. 143).

### *History of Georgia School Boards*

As a result of the 1777 Georgia state constitution, schools were to be established in each county, supported by the legislature, and governed by “commissioners and trustees” within the district (Orr, 1950). These commissioners and trustees controlled all aspects of the schools, which included, but was not limited to, finances, employment issues, and the curriculum (Orr). The commissioners and trustees of each county were appointed by the grand jury to oversee the proper allocations of funds and the education of students (Orr).

The early efforts of establishing a common school system within the state of Georgia were presented at the Marietta Convention in 1851 (Orr, 1950). The report that was agreed upon at the convention specified the following:

The report provided for the establishment of a Bureau of Education and provision by the legislature of at least one common school in each county to be under the charge of three “select men.” These officials were to choose the location for the schools and to provide as many as circumstances permitted (Orr, 1950, p. 160).

A second initiative toward the enactment of a common school system occurred in 1855 in the form of a bill that recommended the establishment of a general school board for the supervision of education in each county; however, the bill was not passed (Orr).

In 1868, the Georgia constitution provided the basis for the establishment of new statutes pertaining to education (Joiner, 1979). The first comprehensive school legislation bill was enacted on October 13, 1870 (Joiner). The law of 1870 contained the following provisions at the local level:

Each county was to consist of a single school district under a county school board. The latter was composed of one member elected from each militia district, plus one from each city ward and incorporated town which might be located within the county. After the first election, which was to be held in January 1871, each board was to have an organizational meeting and choose a president and a secretary, with the latter to serve as the county school commissioner (Joiner, p. 74).

There were no significant changes in the responsibilities of school boards until the ratification of a state constitutional amendment on October 5, 1904 (Joiner, 1979). The amendment empowered local school boards to divide their territories into districts to secure means for local taxation (Joiner). Additional changes in the responsibilities of Georgia school board members occurred in 1909 with the decision that superintendents would be elected by the community, not appointed by the board, and in 1922 when the General Assembly approved that local tax levies be recommended by local school boards, not by election (Joiner, 1979).

A new state constitution in 1945 brought changes to the tenure of county school board members. Terms were changed from four to five years, with terms arranged so that one seat would become vacant each year (Joiner, 1979). During the term of office of Governor Jimmy Carter (1971-1975), several pieces of educational legislation were enacted. One of these in 1972 disqualified county school board members who also served on other school boards, including the State Board of Education (Joiner, 1979). The next change that impacted school boards was in 1991, when school boards were designated to appoint a school superintendent for their district, which had been an elected position.

#### Perceptions of the Relationships

The relationship between the superintendent and the school board has been a topic that has captured the attention of many researchers due to the impact of this relationship on the success or failure of school improvement initiatives (Kowalski, 1999). The relationship between superintendents and school board members has been characterized as a negative one by many authors (Bjork, 2001; Callahan, 1975; Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Cunningham, 1960; Danzberger, 1987; Education Commission of the United States, 1999; Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000; Iannaccone & Lutz, 1970; Johnson, 1996; Kowalski, 1995; McCarty, 1959; McCarty & Ramsey, 1971; McCurdy, 1992; Mountford, 2004; Mountford & Brunner, 2001; National School Boards Association, 1996). However, the results of the American Association of School Administrators' (AASA) 2000 study of superintendents did not support the perception of school boards and superintendents being at "odds with one another" (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000). The findings of the AASA 2000 study reported:

Nearly every superintendent is evaluated annually by his or her school board. The study found that 69 % of those evaluations were in the “excellent” category, and 22 % in the “good” category. A corresponding item asked superintendents to rate their personal effectiveness. Ninety-five percent rated their effectiveness to be “excellent or good.” There definitely is a “match” between superintendent board ratings and superintendents’ perceptions of personal effectiveness (Glass, et al., p. iv).

Additional findings by the AASA 2000 study indicated that superintendents’ ratings of their school boards were not as positive as the ratings they received from the boards’ themselves (Glass, et al.). “When asked to evaluate the adequacy of their school boards, 30 percent found board members ‘not qualified’ to carry out their duties” (p. iv). AASA described the importance of the relationship between boards of education and superintendents in the following statement; “How boards and superintendents work together can mean the difference between exhilaration and frustration for both parties, and, more important, between success and failure for the students in our nation’s public schools “(AASA, 1994, p. 2).

### *School Superintendents*

The majority of superintendents know the importance of establishing and sustaining positive relationships with their school board members, in order to be successful in their position (Carter & Cunningham, 1997). “Deteriorating relations with the school board is often given as the reason why superintendents are asked to step down” (Carter & Cunningham, p. 92). Results of a research study by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) and the National Center for Educational

Statistics (NCES) revealed that school superintendents identified their relationship with school board members as critical in making important educational decisions for their school systems (Cooper, Fusarelli, & Carella, 2000).

The results of the 2000 study by AASA and NCES of the American School Superintendency revealed that, for the most part, superintendents believe that they have good relationships with their school boards (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000). An additional study in 2001, which was commissioned by the Education Commission of the States, reported the following information from a survey of school superintendents across the nation:

Ninety-three percent have a collaborative relationship with their school board. Only 30 % of superintendent leaders believe the current model for school board governance should continue in its current form. Instead, 52 % responded that the governance structure needs to be seriously restructured, and 16 % responded that the current governance system needs to be completely replaced (Glass, 2001, p. 2).

One of the primary responsibilities of the school superintendent has been identified as maintaining effective communication, in order to build a relationship of mutual respect with their school boards (Kowalski, 1999). As a school superintendent from the state of Kentucky stated; “The school board is key to my effectiveness. They know their job, and their policies support my leadership for schools” (Goodman, Fulbright, & Zimmerman, 1997, p. 16).



### *Public School Boards*

A report in 1986 by the Institute for Educational Leadership, *School Boards: Strengthening Grassroots Leadership*, focused on the concerns and the perceptions of boards of education in both large and rural districts across the country (Danzberger & Usdan, 1992, p. 91). The researchers' findings indicated that school boards had problems associated with understanding their responsibilities, as well as concerns regarding board and superintendent relationships (Danzberger & Usdan). "Data show that the boards need to develop processes for managing board-superintendent conflicts and make greater efforts to avoid involvement in administration of their districts" (Danzberger & Usdan, p. 116).

School boards have identified their relationship with the school superintendent as an important factor in their evaluation of their superintendents' performance (Mountford, 2004). Research by Hess (2002) found:

Eighty-six percent of school board members who participated in the National School Boards Association's study of more than 700 school districts reported the relationship superintendents had with their school board members was the most important factor in assessing and evaluating their superintendents (Mountford, 2004, p. 705).

In addition, the results of *The 2000 study of the American School Superintendency* indicated that school boards across the United States are satisfied with the job performance of their superintendents. They also identify the board and superintendent relationship as one of the top criteria in determining the effectiveness of the superintendent (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000). A school board president from

Massachusetts stated what school boards and superintendents have desired their relationship to be, “We agree that we can disagree with one another so long as we are not disagreeable” (Goodman, Fulbright, & Zimmerman, 1997, p. 15). The relations between superintendents and school board members, as well as other challenges, create tension and stress for school superintendents across the nation (Glass, et al.).

### Challenges Facing the School Superintendent

Although it is impossible to project what will happen in years to come, many experts predict that the superintendency will become even more challenging in the future (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000; Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Norton, Webb, Dlugosh, & Sybouts, 1996; Konnert & Augenstein, 1995). As public education continues to be under the microscope, and as schools are being held more and more accountable for results, tension and pressure seem to be inevitable in the superintendency (Norton, et al.). Superintendents of the future will need to serve as role models, demonstrating the highest degree of professionalism necessary to overcome the daily challenges of the school superintendency (Glass, et al.).

### *Stress in the Superintendency*

As conflict seems to be woven into the fabric of the school superintendency, unquestionably the superintendency can be a highly stressful position for some individuals (Kowalski, 1999). The position of school superintendent is stricken with problems due to lack of board support, long work hours, insignificant demands on time, lack of financial resources, and frequently is overcome with the burdens of state and federal mandates (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000). Conflict has been labeled the DNA of the school superintendency (Cuban, 1988).

There seems to be two primary sources of conflict for school superintendents-adequate funding and time management (Kowalski, 1999). The concerns for adequate funding and time management are not unique to American superintendents; Canadian superintendents also identify these as their greatest concerns in the superintendency (Webber, 1995). Despite these challenges, a large majority of superintendents believe they are effective or very effective in their positions (Colorado Association of School Executives, 2003; Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000).

#### *Overall Effectiveness*

The ability to resolve emerging conflict has become an essential characteristic of an effective superintendent (Cuban, 1988). Although the superintendency is perceived as being hectic and demanding, superintendents characterize their jobs as highly rewarding, exciting, and interactive (Kowalski, 1999). Research findings indicate that superintendents from all districts identify their overall effectiveness level as very successful or successful (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000). Through the long hours and stress, it is clear that superintendents who enter the position have no regrets (Kowalski, 1999).

#### *Career Satisfaction of School Superintendents*

Even though the superintendency is a position strangely awash in contradictions and anomalies, school superintendents are able to make sense out of this intriguing position in education (Crowson, 1987). Despite the long hours and stress, superintendents indicate they would still choose the superintendency as a career if they had a chance to start over in life (Glass, 1992). In spite of challenges, there is a high level of job satisfaction among school superintendents (Kowalski, 1999).

The position of school superintendent requires individuals who have physical stamina, leadership skills, vision, and the constant desire to improve the educational system for all students (Carter & Cunningham, 1997). There is a popular perception that aspiring superintendents look at those already in these roles, identify the unbalance in their lives, and immediately change their career aspirations (Houston, 1998). However, a national study on the school superintendency reveals this is a misconception; individuals continue to pursue the superintendency and are proud, as well as satisfied with their accomplishments and careers (Cooper, Fusarelli, & Carella, 2000). The overall findings of two national studies on the school superintendency indicate superintendents are satisfied with their careers and would recommend the profession of the superintendent of schools as a meaningful, satisfying career (Cooper, et al.; Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000).

#### Statement of Problem

The term school superintendent has come to mean the chief executive officer of a school district. Developed 170 years ago in Buffalo, New York, the position was created as the result of the need to have a full time leader to carry out the policies and procedures initiated by the board of education. Studies have been conducted by the American Association of School Administrators, the National Center for Education Statistics, and the Colorado Association of School Executives on the characteristics of the public school superintendency. Researchers have been able to identify several forces that impact the performance of a school superintendent.

The findings of previous research studies indicate that superintendents identify school board/superintendent relations, finance and time management as challenges they

face as public school superintendents. There are suggestions within the literature that despite the challenges school superintendents encounter, overall school superintendents seem satisfied with their careers. The research findings available on the school superintendency are all based on national samples, regions of the United States, and a few specific states. None of these research findings are specifically applicable to the state of Georgia. Therefore, the possibility of identifying Georgia superintendents' perceptions of the overall characteristics of the school superintendency is not possible based on current data.

In order to develop knowledge of Georgia school superintendents' perceptions of the overall characteristics of the public school superintendency, there is a need for researchers to determine if there are similarities to the findings of these national studies and with the state of Georgia. The administration of a Georgia survey would allow the researcher to identify the perceptions of Georgia school superintendents regarding the overall characteristics of the superintendency. Therefore, the researcher's purpose is to identify Georgia school superintendents' perceptions of the overall characteristics of the position specifically focusing on school board/superintendent relations, challenges facing the superintendent, and their level of satisfaction with their career.

#### Research Questions

The researcher, through this study, plans to answer the following overarching research question: What are Georgia public school superintendents' perceptions of the overall characteristics of the position? The following sub-questions will also be considered:

1. What are the demographics of Georgia public school superintendents?

2. What are Georgia public school superintendents' perceptions of school board/superintendent relations?
3. What are the challenges facing Georgia public school superintendents?
4. What is the level of Georgia public school superintendents' satisfaction with their careers?

### Significance of Study

Researchers have conducted many studies concerning the American school superintendent. The majority of these researchers have focused on the obstacles faced by school superintendents across the nation, as well as their level of satisfaction with their careers as school superintendents. Some of the obstacles identified are the school superintendent's relations with his/her school board and the impact of factors such as finance and time on the effectiveness of the school superintendent. The researchers' findings are based on national samples, and are available for some individual states, but not the state of Georgia. Therefore, specific data on the perceptions of Georgia public school superintendents regarding the overall characteristics of the superintendency are not obtainable within the current research.

Several groups within the state of Georgia would benefit from a research study of Georgia public school superintendents' perceptions of their relations with their school board members. These groups would include; current and aspiring superintendents and school board members, institutions of higher education, as well as professional organizations within the state of Georgia. Through the demographic information provided by the study, each of these groups would have a snapshot of the current school superintendents serving Georgia schools. The researcher's findings would allow current

and aspiring superintendents and school board members to understand the status of the relationships between superintendent and school boards, challenges faced by school superintendents, and their level of satisfaction with their careers.

The perception of the researcher is that the success of any organization is often dependent on the depth and breadth of the relationships between members within the organization. Through the establishment of positive and supportive relationships, as well as effective communication strategies, organizational cultures can be transformed, becoming cultures of trust that foster creativity, excitement, and persistence. A future goal of the researcher is to pursue advancement to the superintendency. Although the researcher can continue to investigate and review previous studies concerning the superintendency, the desire and intent of the researcher is to obtain more information specifically within the state of Georgia, in order to prepare for future career endeavors. Through the study of Georgia school superintendents' perceptions of the overall characteristics of the school superintendency, the researcher may acquire knowledge of superintendents' interactions with school board members, challenges faced by superintendents, as well as their level of satisfaction with their careers. The acquisition of this knowledge would assist the researcher in preparation for, and attainment of, future career goals.

## Procedures

### *Research Design*

The researcher's purpose for this study was to determine Georgia public school superintendents' perceptions of the overall characteristics of the school superintendency. The researcher used a descriptive study, identifying the demographics of Georgia public

school superintendents, as well as describing the relationship between these superintendents and their school board members, challenges faced by school superintendents, and their level of satisfaction with their careers. Descriptive research studies provide basic information describing the topic, as well as the respondents that may be involved within the research study (Nardi, 2003). Through descriptive techniques, the researcher identified the overall characteristics of the school superintendency in the state of Georgia. According to Gay (1992), descriptive research involves the collection of data to answer questions and to determine the current status of the topic of study. The researcher utilized quantitative and qualitative research methods, through the development of a survey instrument. Neuman (2000) identifies survey research methods as one of the oldest techniques for conducting research, enabling the researcher to produce numerical statistics, which can be used to analyze the variables within the research study.

### *Population*

The population for this study was all 180 public school superintendents within the state of Georgia. Gay (1992) defines the population as “the group of interest to the researcher, the group to which she or he would like the results of the study to be generalizable” (p. 125). Through this study, the researcher was able to collect data regarding the perceptions of the target population, Georgia public school superintendents, which was not available within the research on the superintendency from other state and national studies.



### *Data Collection*

The primary method of data collection was a survey instrument, which extracted items from a previously developed national survey conducted on the American school superintendent. A survey instrument increases the reliability of subject responses, as the researcher is not present to clarify or explain items to the respondents (Nardi, 2003, p. 59). The survey from which items were taken was *The 2000 study of the American school superintendency* by the American Association of School Administrators. The survey within the 2000 study of the American superintendency was validated through a review by a panel of experts from AASA, the Committee for the Advancement of School Administration, and a selected group of educational administration professors. In order to provide comparative data, items within the 2000 survey instrument were taken from the previous AASA study on the school superintendency conducted in 1992. The validity of the 2000 survey by AASA was approved by a panel of experts, as well as a trial administration of the instrument, which provided feedback regarding the clarity of the survey instrument.

The questions that were used from the previous research study already had content validity, and permission was granted for the use of questions within the researcher's survey. The survey was sent to the Institutional Review Board of Georgia Southern University for approval before conducting the research study. The survey instrument was sent by the researcher with a cover letter through the United States Postal Service to all public school superintendents in the state of Georgia. The mailing of surveys allows the researcher to have access to individuals that might not be easy to reach by person or telephone, as well as permits the respondent a sufficient amount of time to

answer the survey instrument (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996, p. 371). Superintendents who did not respond to the first survey were mailed a post card urging their participation in the research study.

### *Data Analysis*

The data received from the survey instrument was coded and entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 11.0. The SPSS software was used by the researcher to describe and analyze the research data. Combinations of descriptive and inferential statistics were utilized within the study.

Descriptive statistics were used to describe the demographic data of Georgia public school superintendents, as well as the perceptions of their relationships with school board members, challenges faced by superintendents, and their level of satisfaction with their careers. The purpose of descriptive research is to provide a survey of the present conditions of the topic of study (Hopkins, 1976, p. 135). Inferential statistics were used to allow the researcher to make inferences regarding the population from the data obtained within the study. The purpose of inferential research is to allow the researcher to make inferences about a population based on data obtained from a sample (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996, p. 224). Independent t-tests were used to compare respondents' demographic information with each of the variables representing school board/superintendent relations, challenges, and level of career satisfaction to determine if there were significant differences between the means of the participants within the study.

### Limitations

A limitation “is some aspect of the study that the researcher knows may negatively affect the study but over which he or she has not control” (Gay & Airasian, 2000, p. 108). The limitations that were present within the study were:

1. The utilization of self reporting data may represent limitations to the study.

### Delimitations

The researcher was aware that the methodology used within the study may not have been the most comprehensive approach. The delimitations that were present within the study were:

1. The researcher was aware that the results of the study were only generalizable to the state of Georgia.

### Definition of Terms

“Many of the terms in education are at best only roughly defined. A term may be so global that it encompasses different ideas for different people” (Hopkins, 1976, p. 26).

The definitions of terms that were used throughout the study were:

1. Common School Movement- A movement in public education to develop a state system of public and secondary education (Orr, 1950).
2. Common School Plan- A plan used in Georgia that consolidated the poor school fund and revenue derived from the United States government (Orr, 1950).
3. Common School System- A plan presented at the Marietta Convention in 1851 to establish at least one common school per county in the state of Georgia.

4. Poor school fund- A fund in the state of Georgia that provided financial support from the state legislature for poor children to attend private academies.
5. School Board Members- This term refers to the group of individuals who are elected to serve a school district.
6. Superintendent- In this study, superintendents are the chief executive officers and educational leaders in a school district.

### Summary

There have been a number of studies conducted on the aspects of the American school superintendency. The findings of these studies indicated that there were obstacles that the superintendent encountered in his/her role as chief executive officer of the school district. One obstacle that can have an impact on the performance of a superintendent was his/her relationship with his/her school board members. Previous research studies on the American school superintendent were all based on national samples. Therefore, there was no data available specific to Georgia school superintendents.

There were several groups within the state of Georgia that would benefit from a research study of Georgia's superintendents. These groups include current superintendents, aspiring superintendents, school board members, professional organizations, and institutions of higher education within the state of Georgia. The researcher's findings provided these groups with the current demographic information of Georgia school superintendents, as well the perceptions these superintendents have regarding their relationships with school board members. Through the utilization of quantitative research methods, the researcher developed a survey instrument for

distribution to all public school superintendents within the state of Georgia. The results of the research study provided a snapshot of the current superintendents within the state, provided information regarding superintendent relations with school board members, challenges faced by school superintendents, and their level of satisfaction with their careers.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RESEARCH AND RELATED LITERATURE

The school superintendency is a challenging position that continues to evolve through the influence of social, economic, and political factors. Since the inception of the school superintendency in Buffalo, New York in 1837, these challenges have been ever present for the public school superintendent (Kowalski, 1999):

In November 1907, the cover of the *School Board Journal* exhibited a cartoon that showed a vacancy notice for a superintendent of schools posted on the front door of the office of a board of education. The notice stated that the board was seeking an individual who would please everybody, from ultraconservatives to radical progressives. This almost-century-old cartoon illustrates that even in the formative years of public education and city government in the United States, school systems expected superintendents to appease groups holding divergent values and beliefs (p. 2).

Superintendents across the United States affirm that similar obstacles continue to exist as they did for superintendents in 1907. Research findings indicate the impact of social, economic, and political factors on the superintendency are concerns for the superintendents serving our nation's schools (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000).

Superintendent leaders report that the leading reasons for what researchers refer to as a state of crisis in the school superintendency are a result of three areas within the daily responsibilities of the school superintendent; school board relations, long work hours, and stressful working conditions (Glass, 2001). Additional research findings indicate that one of these areas, more than the other two, has a major impact on the performance of school

superintendents; the relationship that exists between the superintendent and school board members (Eaton, 1990; Parker, 1996; Walter & Supley, 1999). Public school superintendents find themselves facing a number of challenges and are unable to ignore the reality of the power structures that exist within the school system and in the community (Kowalski, 1999).

### Demographics of the Superintendency

School superintendents are commonly the source asked to solve the social, economic, and political problems facing their communities. There are nearly 14,000 men and women who encounter these obstacles as they provide leadership for nearly 90,000 schools (Glass, 2001). One author described the public school superintendent who provided this type of leadership in the twentieth century as follows:

The superintendent would be a white male, dressed in a dark suit with a conservative tie, who might look like a United States senator. He would have the respect of many and perhaps feared by some. Very likely, this superintendent would be in his fifties and worked in the district for many years (Hayes, 2001, p.1).

Although there have been many changes in communities and education since the twentieth century, research findings have indicated that the public school superintendent has not changed or varied greatly into the new millennium (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000). Studies have been conducted on the public school superintendency that have provided data regarding the demographics of the superintendents serving school systems across the United States (Glass; 2001, Cooper, Fusarelli, & Carella, 2000; Glass et al., 2000; Hodgkinson & Montenegro, 1999).

*Sex, Age, and Racial/Ethnic Group of Superintendents*

One of four research studies on the American school superintendency was conducted by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) in 2000: *The Study of the American School Superintendency, 2000: A Look at the Superintendent of Education in the New Millennium*. The researchers' purpose in conducting the 2000 American Association of School Administrators study was to provide current information regarding the American school superintendent, as well as provide trend data from the previous studies conducted by the American Association of School Administrators in 1960, 1971, 1982 and 1992 (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000). The researchers' findings have been used to make comparisons to previous AASA studies regarding the American school superintendency.

Findings from the AASA 2000 research study found that American school superintendents are 86.6 percent male, have a median age of 52.5 and the vast majority, 94.9 percent, are white (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000). These findings are consistent with the previous data collected during the 1992 research study: *The Study of the American School Superintendency*. However, research findings from the 2000 study indicated that there have been changes, since the 1992 study, regarding the number of female superintendents and minorities serving as school superintendents across the nation. The number of female superintendents has increased from 6.6 percent in 1992 to 13.2 percent in the year 2000 (Glass, et al.). During the same period, from 1992 to 2000, the number of minority superintendents increased from 3.9 percent to 5.1 percent (Glass, et al.).



A second study, *Career Crisis in the Superintendency: The Results of a National Survey* was conducted in joint cooperation with the American Association of School Administrators and the National Center for Education Statistics. The researchers' purpose was to explore the backgrounds, experiences, and perceptions of superintendents serving school districts across the United States. Research findings indicated 87.8 percent of the superintendents were males between the ages of 50-59, and 12.2 percent were females; findings consistent with the AASA 2000 study (Cooper, Fusarelli, & Carella, 2000). The researchers did not collect data regarding the ethnicity of the superintendents within the study; therefore no comparisons can be made with the 2000 study conducted by the American Association of School Administrators.

A third study conducted on the school superintendency, *Superintendent Leaders Look at the Superintendency, School Boards and Reform*, focused on the characteristics and demographics of the superintendency, as well as the status of school board/superintendent relations across the nation. The researcher surveyed 175 superintendents who had been nominated by their peers as outstanding superintendents, and are referred to within the study as the superintendent leader group (Glass, 2001). The findings of the research study were compared to the findings of the 2000 AASA study of the American school superintendency. According to the survey results, 84 percent of the superintendents within the study were white males between the ages of 46 and 60 (Glass). These findings are similar to the results of the 2000 AASA study which indicated 87 percent of the superintendents within the study were white males with an average age of 52 (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000).

A 1999 report entitled *The U.S. School Superintendent: The Invisible CEO* gathered demographic information on superintendents, examined the routes to the superintendency, and obtained information regarding the tenure of superintendents across the United States. The researchers' purpose was to provide factual data regarding those individuals serving in the position of school superintendent, as there is little information regarding school superintendents in comparison to other chief executive officers in the nation (Hodgkinson & Montenegro, 1999). The reported findings revealed similar information as the *The Study of the American School Superintendency, 2000: A Look at the Superintendent of Education in the New Millennium*, *Career Crisis in the Superintendency: The Results of a National Survey*, and *Superintendent Leaders Look at the Superintendency, School Boards and Reform*.

Research findings indicated the majority of superintendents, 88 percent, are white males with the number of female superintendents increasing from 4 percent in 1988 to 12 percent in 1999 (Hodgkinson & Montenegro, 1999). Consistent with the findings of the 2000 AASA study, the number of minority superintendents has not changed greatly, only 5 percent of superintendents are minorities as opposed to 3 percent in 1985 (Hodgkinson & Montenegro). In addition, more than half of the superintendents within the study were between the ages of 50 and 59 with an average tenure of 5 years per superintendency (Hodgkinson & Montenegro).

The findings from this study corroborated the findings of *The Study of the American School Superintendency, 2000: A Look at the Superintendent of Education in the New Millennium*, *Career Crisis in the Superintendency: The Results of a National Survey*, and *Superintendent Leaders Look at the Superintendency, School Boards and*

*Reform* (Hodgkinson & Montenegro, 1999). Research findings from these four studies indicated the majority of superintendents across the United States are white males, between 50-59 years of age, with an average of 14 years experience in the position of school superintendent (Glass, 2001; Cooper, Fusarelli, & Carella, 2000; Glass, et al., 2000; Hodgkinson & Montenegro, 1999).

*Years as a school superintendent and number of superintendencies held*

According to the 2000 AASA survey results, the superintendency is not a position with rapid turnover and mobility (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000). The findings revealed 75 percent of the respondents had held fewer than three superintendencies with an average length of tenure per superintendency as 5 years (Glass, et al.). In addition, 41.3 percent of the respondents had been superintendents for more than 10 years (Glass, et al.). The findings of this study indicated that the majority of school superintendents serving the nation's public schools are white, male, of middle age, and spend 14 to 17 years in the superintendency in 2 to 3 school districts (Glass, et al.).

A second study surveyed superintendents regarding their number of years in the superintendency and found the average number of years served by the superintendents was 13.68 years, which was consistent with the findings of the 2000 AASA study of the American school superintendency (Cooper, Fusarelli, & Carella, 2000). The results of a third study indicated 52 percent of the respondents within the superintendent leader group had more than 14 years of experience as a school superintendent, compared to 24 percent from the group surveyed by the American Association of School Administrators in 2000 (Glass, 2001). In addition, the superintendent leader group within the study averaged

nearly nine years in their present district, compared to less than six years by the national group (Glass).

The appearance of the school superintendent has not changed greatly since 1837; however, the role of the school superintendent has evolved from a clerical position to the role of chief executive officer of the school district (Carter & Cunningham, 1997). The evolution of the superintendency has resulted in tension between school boards and superintendents, as superintendents have attempted to prevent school boards from micromanaging the daily operations of the school district (Chapman, 1997). This theme has been identified throughout the evolution of the school superintendency and has been the subject of discussion and research for many years (Chapman). In order to better understand the nature of this conflict, school superintendent and school board relations will be examined.

#### Superintendent and School Board Relations

The relationship between the superintendent and the school board has been identified as one of the critical factors in the success of a school system (Davis, 1993). In order for a school system to be successful, the leadership provided by the superintendent and the school board must complement, not compete with each other (Porch & Protheroe, 2003).

Boards and superintendents have different roles, but they must act as a complete unit. They must focus on how they can complement each other....the board, for example, involves the community in setting a vision for the schools and supports that vision at all times. The superintendent, for instance, leads strategic planning initiatives and proposes policies for increasing student achievement. It's when

these roles become confused that the board and the superintendent can become distracted from the true mission of the school enterprise (Bryant & Houston, 2002, online).

Rapid turnover in the school superintendency has been attributed to poor relationships between the superintendent and the school board (Kowalski, 1999; Weller, Brown, & Flynn, 1991). There are a multitude of ethical, moral, professional, and social issues identified as impacting the relationship between the school board and the superintendent (Kowalski). Studies of positive relationships between school boards and superintendents have revealed that trust is ranked as the most important factor in the relationship (Kowalski; McCurdy, 1992). When trust is not present, suspicions, misinterpretations, accusations, and insecurity have been identified as primary characteristics of poor relationships that have existed between school boards and superintendents (Kowalski).

In addition to the importance of trust, the failure to discuss the role expectations that these two groups have for each other has been identified as a potential cause of conflict; in essence the discussion of role expectations has been described as providing a code of conduct for both groups (McCurdy, 1992). The roles and responsibilities of superintendents and school boards have often become blurred and unclear, which has resulted in confusion in governance, as well as contributing to strained relationships between the superintendent and the school board (Porch & Protheroe, 2003). The first step in the establishment of a productive relationship between the school board and the superintendent has been identified as “making the right match” of school board and superintendent, in which the school board has selected a superintendent with beliefs aligned to the goals of the school board and the school system (Bryant & Houston, 2002).

*Superintendent perceptions of selection process*

A 1982 survey on school board governance found the most important activity of the school board was to hire the school superintendent (Institute for Educational Leadership, 1986). The selection of a school superintendent that does not have the same goals and vision of the board has been responsible for “making life miserable” for school boards as well as superintendents (Hodgkinson & Montenegro, 1999). However, the selection of a school superintendent has been identified as the one time the school board has direct control and execution of the recruitment, screening, and selection of an employee (Hord & Estes, 1993). Through the hiring process, board members are provided the opportunity to assess the status of the district, determine the future goals of the district, and identify the leader which they believe would assist in reaching those goals (Castallo, 2003). School superintendents are selected for their positions in several ways (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2001).

The most prevalent selection process that has been used is the development of a search committee by the local school board (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2001). However, larger school districts have utilized a different method of selection through enlisting the services of a private search firm or an agency, such as the state school boards association (Glass, et al.). Research has shown that school boards have begun to rely more on consultant-assisted searches rather than the traditional district-based search team formed by the school board (Tallerico, 2000; Swart, 1990; Rickabaugh, 1986). Convenience, expertise, and access to the candidate pools are three factors that have contributed to school board’s decisions to enlist the assistance of consultants rather than conducting the search for a new superintendent themselves (Tallerico).

Superintendents have identified the hiring process as their chance to share who they are and their beliefs in what is important for education (Castallo, 2003). *The 1992 study of the American school superintendency* surveyed superintendents across the nation and asked what characteristics they perceived were important to board members and private agencies when choosing a new superintendent for a school district (Glass, 1992). Two-thirds of the superintendents believed they were employed because of their personal characteristics, and less than one-third felt they were employed to solve a specific problem within the school district (Glass). In the 1992 study, superintendents perceived that boards of education preferred to hire “well-qualified generalist” as their educational leaders (Glass). There has been a more recent study by the American Association of School Administrators that has provided information regarding superintendent perceptions of why they believe they were hired for a school district.

*The 2000 study of the American School Superintendency* indicated that 40.1 percent of superintendents attributed their hiring to personal characteristics (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000). In addition to selection based on personal characteristics, research findings indicated there are three roles school boards use as a basis for their selection of superintendent; change agent, instructional leader, and maintaining the status quo (Glass, et al.). The findings of the study revealed 26.3 percent of the superintendents in the study felt they were selected to be change agents, 31.9 percent believe they were selected to be instructional leaders, and 1.5 percent felt they were chosen to maintain the status quo (Glass, et al.). Additional research findings from *Superintendent leaders look at the superintendency, school boards, and reform* revealed similar results, 29 percent of the superintendents within the study felt they were chosen because of their abilities as an

instructional leader (Glass, 2001). Once the superintendent has been hired for the school district, his/her primary responsibilities then become keeping board members informed regarding all issues that affect policy development, policy implementation, and community relations (Kowalski, 1999).

Although the role responsibilities of superintendents and school boards have been commonly separated by the categories of administration and policy making, the line of demarcation between these two areas has not been clear-cut, which has led to situations of conflict between the superintendent and the school board in regards to the establishment and implementation of policy (Kowalski, 1999). From the initial development of the office of school superintendent until today, there has existed a strained relationship between the school board that makes policy and the superintendent who implements it (Norton, Webb, Dlugosh & Sybouts, 1996).

#### *Superintendent perceptions of policy making*

Throughout the early history of the school superintendency, school boards interacted directly with all school employees including teachers and principals (Glass, 1992). During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the superintendent was simply the supervisor of the district, while the school board was the main administrative body acting as the primary policy and decision makers (Glass). However, there have been changes in the roles of the school board and superintendent since that time (Glass). The current role of the superintendent has evolved to a different level with the superintendent being the primary policy and decision maker; however tension still exists between the overlapping roles of the superintendent and school board (Glass).



Superintendents have identified their major source of conflict with the school board, as the attempt by the board to micromanage and become inappropriately involved in administration rather than limiting their role to policy formation (Norton, Webb, Dlugosh & Sybouts, 1996). Historically, the board has been responsible for determining policy and the superintendent in administering policy for the school district (Davis, 1993). Research findings have indicated that school boards and superintendents disagreed more than they agreed on their perceptions of control in the policy making process (Godfrey & Swanchak, 1985). When these roles are not clearly defined, tension exists between the superintendent and the school board and in most situations these two groups invade the “turf” of the other group, which results in conflict within the school district (Smith, 1986). The ideal situation for policy making decisions would be for the board to be responsible for the “what” while the superintendent’s responsibility would be the “how” (Smith). The disagreement over the roles and the division of authority has continued to impact the relationship of the superintendent and the school board, which ultimately risks the stability and effectiveness of the school district (Smith).

The lines of authority and working relationships between school boards and superintendents have evolved in several stages over the last hundred years (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000). In each of these stages, the superintendents’ relationships with school board members have changed (Callahan, 1975). These changes have resulted in superintendents viewing their boards as interest groups, as well as viewing the boards’ primary responsibility as the establishment and setting of general policy (Tyack & Hansot, 1982). In the continual interaction between the school board and the superintendent, the development of system policy and role expectations in the

development of this policy have created the most conflict within the relationship of the school board and the superintendent (Davis, 1993). When the roles and responsibilities of the school board and the superintendent have become clouded, the result has been dissension and inefficiency which has resulted in a nonproductive environment for the school district (Vens & Kimmet, 1993).

A recent study of the American school superintendency has provided information concerning the perceptions of school superintendents regarding policy development. The results of *The 2000 study of the American School Superintendency* indicated 42.9 percent of superintendents were the initiators of new policies in their school districts, a decrease from *The 1992 study of the American School Superintendency* in which 66.9 percent of the superintendents initiated new policies for their school districts (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000). However, 36.7 percent of the superintendents in the 2000 study indicated that policy initiation was a shared activity, an increase from the 28.5 percent in *The 1992 study of the American school superintendency* (Glass, et al.). According to the superintendents surveyed, 88.6 percent indicated that their school boards accept their policy recommendations (Glass, et al.). The majority of the superintendents within the study indicated that their primary working relationship with their boards was that of professional advisor (Glass, et al.). In order for superintendent and school board relationships to be productive, superintendents must be cognizant of the expectations of their board and how these expectations impact the evaluation process (Institute for Educational Leadership, 1993). Superintendents who have clarified the purposes of schooling and facilitated informed decision and policy making with their boards have

been able to overcome the forces of politics and bring a means of order to their relationships and the school environment (Shibles, Rallis, & Deck, 2001).

*Superintendent perceptions of board expectations and evaluation*

Superintendents were unanimous in their agreement that knowing the expectations of their school board was critical for a successful beginning and long-term success in a school district (Castallo, 2003). Although the clarification of roles and functions performed by the superintendent and school board may seem to not be a complex task, overlapping responsibilities such as policy development have made the clear delineation of these roles essential for both superintendents and school boards (Norton, Webb, Dlugosh & Sybouts, 1996). School superintendents must have written criteria that clearly describe board expectations and all standards by which they will be evaluated (Vens & Kimmet, 1993). The expectations of school board members are not known by osmosis: written criteria are needed describing expectations and standards for the evaluation of the superintendent (Vens & Kimmet). The rationale for the evaluation of superintendent has included the following: (1) accountability, (2) personal growth, (3) identification of areas of need, (4) building open communications between the superintendent and the school board through structured process and (5) a basis for planning for improvement (Norton, et al.). There have been national studies regarding superintendents' perceptions of their boards' expectations and evaluation procedures by the American Association of School Administrators in 1992 and in 2000 (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000).

The participants in *The 2000 study of the American School Superintendency* indicated that their school boards expected them to be both educational leaders and

general managers of the school district (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000). Superintendents within the study identified two reasons for their boards conducting evaluations; to ensure systematic accountability and to establish performance goals, results that were consistent with *The 1992 study of the American school superintendency* (Glass, et al.) Findings from *The 2000 study of the American School Superintendency* revealed 2.7 percent of the superintendents believed their board's primary expectation was for them to be leaders of reform, and 12.7 percent of the superintendents felt their board expected them to be political leaders in the community (Glass, et al.). One important finding from both studies was that the majority of superintendents, 56.6 percent in 1992 and 50.2 percent in 2000, believed they were not evaluated according to the criteria in their job description; further reinforcing the notion that the interpersonal relationships between school boards and superintendents are what counts (Glass, 1992; Glass, et al.). Of the superintendents within the 2000 study by AASA, 69.1 percent reported that their boards had given them a rating of excellent on their last formal evaluation, and that 80.3 percent of superintendents were evaluated annually while 12.0 percent are evaluated semi-annually (Glass, et al.). Based on the results of *The 2000 study of the American school superintendency*, school boards across the nation were satisfied with the performance of their superintendents (Glass, et al.). Superintendents have agreed that valid evaluation is an important component for success (Castallo, 2003).

A comprehensive evaluation provides insights into how well the superintendent handles his/her responsibilities, as well as serves as an early warning sign if things are not going well (Castallo, 2003). An evaluation system that allows for dialogue between the school board and the superintendent has been determined as the most beneficial and

effective evaluation process (Castallo). Ideally, the system for evaluation of the superintendent incorporates a process for board/superintendent evaluation (Norton, Webb, Dlugosh & Sybouts, 1996). The goal for a successful evaluation process is for all individuals to work together in effective and productive relationships to provide an environment where open and honest communication has occurred for the benefit of the school district (Castallo).

*Superintendent perceptions of school board members*

Due to recent interests in superintendent and school board relationships, school boards have been scrutinized in an effort to determine whether they are an asset or a liability to the success of school districts (Todras, 1993). Although there have been extensive changes in American education over the past 100 years school boards remain remarkably unchanged (Kowalski, 1999).

Despite massive alterations in the social, economic, and political structure of American society, despite substantial population increases and despite movement toward fewer but larger school districts, the present arrangement for local control in public education- a system through which states delegate authority to elected or appointed school boards-remains very much as it was in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Danzberger & Usdan, 1992, p. 366).

The interplay between the superintendent and the school board has been identified as the one critical forum that has existed as far as running a school system, more important than the functions of boards and superintendents (Blumberg & Blumberg, 1985). For this reason, scholars have recognized that a poor relationship between a superintendent and his or her school board can impact school improvement (Danzberger, et al.). The vision

of the ideal school board member by superintendents has been shaped by several assumptions (Kowalski, 1999, p. 145-146):

- The primary, if not exclusive role of board members is policy making.
- Decisions by board members should be directed by the broad needs of the community, and not the special interests of individuals and pressure groups.
- Board members should be supportive of the superintendent and respect his or her professional knowledge.
- Board members should act ethically and morally and not use their office for personal gain.

The expectations that superintendents have established for school board members are usually based on an intricate mix of ethical, moral, social and political standards (Kowalski, 1999). There have been concerns expressed by superintendents that board members are unprepared for their responsibilities and lack the necessary skills to deal with policy making (Kowalski).

Four studies regarding superintendents' perceptions of the abilities of their school board members have been conducted to better understand the relationship that exists between superintendents and school board members (Glass, 2001; Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000; Glass, 1992). The first research study, *Superintendent leaders look at the superintendency, school boards, and reform* revealed 93 percent of superintendents believed they had a collaborative relationship with their school board, and 88 percent of these superintendents felt their board was effective (Glass, 2001). Only 30 percent of the superintendents that participated in the study expressed concerns regarding the current model for school board governance (Glass, 2001).

The second study, *The 2000 study of the American School Superintendency*, revealed findings consistent with *The 1992 study of the American School Superintendency*, 74 percent of the superintendents within the 2000 study believed school board members were qualified, but not well qualified for their responsibilities in the school system (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000). Consistent with the findings of the research study, *Superintendent leaders look at the superintendency, school boards, and reform*, 30 percent of the reporting superintendents in *The 2000 study of the American School Superintendency*, indicated their boards were underqualified for their jobs (Glass, et al.). Two-thirds of the superintendents within the *The 2000 study of the American School Superintendency*, characterized their school boards as generally aligned with a broad base of community interests, with only a small fraction of superintendents that viewed their boards as dominated by an elite group within the community (Glass, et al.).

Another study conducted within the state of Colorado, *A candid look at today's school superintendent* corroborated the findings of the three national studies. This study indicated that 69 percent of the superintendents within the state felt their school boards were qualified or very well qualified for their positions (Colorado Association of School Executives, 2003). However, the superintendents within the study indicated that the biggest problem that they faced regarding school board members was that the members do not understand and fulfill their roles (Colorado Association of School Executives). In addition, superintendents within the study felt school board members could do a better job of holding each other accountable for their responsibilities as school board members (Colorado Association of School Executives).

In the 1982, 1992, and 2000 American Association of School Administrators studies of the school superintendency, superintendents perceived similar problems facing board members in attempting to fulfill their board duties (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000). Consistent with the results of the Colorado study, *A candid look at today's school superintendent*, 16.5 percent of superintendents believed school board members understanding their role was a problem for school districts (Glass, et al.). Additional findings from the 2000 AASA study indicated 35.2 percent of superintendents saw finance as a major problem for school board members, 17.2 percent viewed community pressure as a problem and 5.2 percent felt internal board conflict was a problem experienced by school board members (Glass, et al.). In general, superintendents and school board members are concerned about the same issues within school systems and communities, which include; district financial levels, state assessment programs, and pressure from the community (Glass, et al.). Despite these imperfections, analysts have argued that the institution of the local school board should be sustained with an understanding of the importance of positive superintendent and school board member relationships that promote the best interests of the school system, community, and society (Kowalski, 1995).

### Challenges Facing the School Superintendent

The second half of the twentieth century brought challenges for school superintendents, as well as changes to the superintendent's authority and leadership within school systems and the community (Norton, Webb, Dlugosh, & Sybouts, 1996). Once thought of as experts by schools and the community, superintendents have become targets of criticism and forced to become the defenders of policy and implementators of



both state and federal mandates (Norton, et al.). In the past, the job of the school superintendent had been more predictable and routine, but now a myriad of social, economic, and political conditions require superintendents to adapt daily to challenges within their role as a school superintendent (Kowalski, 1999).

### *Stress in the superintendency*

Pressures from the social, economic, and political challenges facing public school superintendents have resulted in high levels of stress for these school administrators (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000). *The 2000 study of the American school superintendency* revealed 51.5 percent of the reporting superintendents felt considerable stress or very great stress in the school superintendency (Glass, et al.). An additional 40.9 percent indicated a moderate level of stress within their position as a school superintendent (Glass, et al.). The results of the study indicated that there were no significant differences between superintendent stress levels based on the size of their district with the exception of large district superintendents who indicated less stress than their colleagues in smaller school districts (Glass, et al.). In addition, there were no significant differences identified in the stress levels of the differing age groups within the study (Glass, et al.). However, superintendents over the age of 60 indicated lower stress responses than the younger superintendents in the sample (Glass, et al.). Superintendents in the 40- to 44-year-old category felt very great stress more often than any other age group within the study (Glass, et al.). There were two areas identified by superintendents as their greatest challenges; finances and time management (Glass, et al.).

### *Finances*

Over the last several decades, superintendents have identified finance as the greatest challenge that they encounter as a school superintendent (Norton, Webb, Dlugosh, & Sybouts, 1996). In *The 2000 AASA study of the American school superintendency*, 96.7 percent of superintendents viewed finance as the biggest problem encountered by both they and their school board members (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000). This finding was similar to the results of *The 1992 study of the American school superintendency* in which 96.3 percent of the superintendents surveyed identified finance as their greatest challenge (Glass, et al.). In the 1992 study, superintendents from large districts expressed a greater concern with finances than those superintendents from smaller districts (Glass, et al.) However, all superintendents within the 2000 study indicated finance was a problem regardless of the size of their district (Glass, et al.)

### *Time Management*

An additional finding of *The 1992 study of the American school superintendency* indicated that small district superintendents felt more pressure from too many demands on their time, which was a problem identified by all superintendents from both small and large districts within the 2000 study (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000). Additional areas viewed as challenges by the superintendents in the 2000 AASA study were assessment and testing, accountability and credibility, as well as time management (Glass, et al.). A review of the 2000 AASA survey results indicated the number of items superintendents rank as major issues and challenges have significantly increased from the 1992 and 1982 studies of the American school superintendency (Glass, et al.).

### *Overall Effectiveness*

Despite the challenges with finance and time management, 97.1 percent of the superintendents within the study identified their overall effectiveness level as very successful or successful (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000). Only 0.5 percent of the superintendents within the study indicated they felt they were not successful or had no idea (Glass, et al.). These findings are similar to the results of the 1992 and 1982 AASA studies, in which 96.7 percent of the superintendents felt themselves to be very successful or successful (Glass, et al.). Even though superintendents considered themselves to be quite effective, there were three challenges that they felt inhibited their job performance; lack of finances, too many insignificant demands, and compliance with state-mandated reforms (Glass, et al.). Despite the problems caused by under-financing and demands on their time, superintendents from all districts indicated a good deal of satisfaction with their role as a school superintendent (Glass, et al.)

### *Career Satisfaction of School Superintendents*

Most school superintendents have expressed contentment with their jobs despite the long hours and stress (Boothe, Bradley, & Flick, 1994). One superintendent wrote the following describing life in the superintendency:

Nobody ever said public life was devoid of frustrations- or that every member of the general public, all staff, each board of education member, every parent, all town officials, all students, and every other person and groups of persons with whom school leadership is in professional contact will always be intelligent, insightful, open, empathetic, tolerant, emotionally secure, flexible, well motivated, or any other way you'd prefer them to be (Cattanach, 1996, p. 337).

The school superintendency has been described as a position in which a certain amount of frustration and stress is unavoidable (Kowalski, 1999). However, several studies regarding the school superintendency revealed that the majority of superintendents were satisfied with their careers despite the daily frustrations of the position (Kowalski). Even though many superintendents have served districts with inadequate financing, community pressure, and numbing state bureaucracy, they have remained emotionally attached to the superintendency (Chapman, 1997).

*The 2000 study of the American school superintendency* found that two-thirds of the superintendents within the study indicated that they would again choose the superintendency as a career choice (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000). In addition, over half of the superintendents expressed considerable satisfaction with their jobs, with the exception of superintendents in smaller districts who were less satisfied than those in larger districts (Glass, et al.). The research findings have shown that even superintendents who felt a great deal of stress in the superintendency were receiving sufficient intrinsic and extrinsic rewards to keep them in the profession (Glass, et al.).

An additional study of a superintendent leader group of superintendents from across the nation revealed 83 percent of the respondents found considerable fulfillment in the school superintendency, and 82 percent would choose the superintendency again as a career choice (Glass, 2001). These findings are similar to the results of *The 2000 study of the American school superintendency* and a national study, *Career Crisis in the School Superintendency* (Glass, 2001; Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000; Cooper, Fusarelli & Carella, 2000). Findings of the *Career Crisis in the School Superintendency* indicated that 91 percent of the superintendents within the study felt their work was challenging,

rewarding, and satisfying and had provided real career satisfaction (Cooper, et al.). Although superintendents spend long hours and encounter demanding challenges, research findings have indicated that many who enter the position had no regrets (Kowalksi, 1999). “In part, the relatively high level of job satisfaction among superintendents probably relates to an intrinsic motivator: these are people who are deeply committed to helping others” (Kowalski, 1999, p. 350). However, there has been one factor that has been determined to have a large impact on the effectiveness and the satisfaction of the top educational leader in the school system; the extent to which one was able to build and maintain a strong relationship with the school board (Konnert & Augenstein, 1995). Successful superintendents have excellent communication skills, understand the instructional process, and have created functioning coalitions that ensure the financial and educational survival of the school system (Glass, et al.).

### Summary

The review of the literature focused on the demographics of the school superintendency, superintendent relations with their school board members, challenges to the superintendency, as well as the career satisfaction of school superintendents. The intent was to provide a description of the superintendents serving our nation’s schools, as well as identify challenges and problems these superintendents face, specifically in their relations with school board members. In the United States, there are currently 14, 000 men and women serving as school superintendents.

The review of the literature has shown that the majority of superintendents are white males, between the ages of 50-59 years of age, with an average of 14 years experience as a school superintendent. These individuals identify their relationships with

their school board members as being a critical factor in their success as superintendent. Specific areas of concern superintendents' identify in relating to their board members include the areas of policy making, board expectations, and evaluation. There are additional pressures for the school superintendent including social, economic, and political challenges. Superintendents' identify their greatest challenge as finance, slightly above the constant demands and expectations on their time by all stakeholders.

Despite all of these obstacles, superintendents indicate they feel successful in their positions as the leaders of school systems. Although they encounter stress and frustration daily within their positions, the majority of superintendents identify the superintendency as their primary career choice if they had to choose again. The overall finding within the literature is that superintendents are proud and satisfied regarding their accomplishments as school superintendents.

Table 1  
 Studies Related to the Demographics of the School Superintendency

Study	Purpose	Participants	Design/Analysis	Outcomes
Glass (2001)	To gather information on issues relating to superintendent and school board leadership.	175 superintendents	Quantitative Survey	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>84 percent of superintendents were white males between the ages of 46 and 60.</li> <li>52 percent of the superintendents had more than 14 years of experience.</li> <li>The superintendents averaged nine years in their present district.</li> </ol>
Cooper, Fusarelli, & Carella (2000)	To survey incumbent superintendents from around the nation to find out what these chief executives think about their careers and what is happening to their role as district leaders.	2,979 superintendents	Quantitative Survey	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>87.8 percent of the superintendents were between the ages of 50 and 59.</li> <li>12.2 percent of the superintendents were females.</li> <li>The average number of years served as a superintendent was 13.68 years.</li> </ol>

Table 1 (continued)

Study	Purpose	Participants	Design/Analysis	Outcomes
Glass, Bjork, & Brunner (2000)	To provide current information on the superintendency to national, state, and local education policymakers, the media, and superintendents themselves.	2, 262 superintendents	Quantitative Survey	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 86.6 percent of the superintendents were male.</li> <li>2. The median age of the superintendents was 52.5 years of age.</li> <li>3. 94.9 percent of the superintendents were white.</li> <li>4. 13.2 percent of the superintendents were female.</li> <li>5. 5.1 percent of the superintendents were minorities.</li> <li>6. 75 percent of the superintendents had held fewer than 3 superintendencies.</li> <li>7. The average number of superintendencies held was 1.75.</li> <li>8. The average tenure per superintendency was 5 years.</li> </ol>



Table 1 (continued)

Study	Purpose	Participants	Design/Analysis	Outcomes
<p>To provide researchers with data and analyses about public education and the superintendent leaders in the 1990s who will lead American public school districts into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.</p>	<p>9. 41.3 percent of the superintendents had been a superintendent for more than 10 years.</p> <p>10. The majority of the superintendents spent 14-17 years in the position in 2 to 3 school districts.</p>			
<p>Hodgkinson &amp; Montenegro (1999)</p>	<p>To examine and provide factual data to influential lay as well as professional audiences on this critical position of leadership and its pipeline, especially in relation to the challenges facing schools.</p>	<p>8, 029 superintendents</p>	<p>Quantitative Survey</p>	<p>1. 88 percent of the superintendents were white.</p> <p>2. The number of female superintendents increased from 4 percent in 1988 to 12 percent in 1999.</p> <p>3. The number of minority superintendents increased from 3 percent in 1985 to 5 percent in 1999.</p> <p>4. More than half between the ages of 50 and 59.</p>

Table 2  
 Studies Related to Superintendent and School Board Relations

Study	Purpose	Participants	Design/Analysis	Outcomes
Glass (2001)	To gather information on issues relating to superintendent and school board leadership.  To provide current information on the superintendency to national, state, and local education policymakers, the media, and superintendents themselves.	175 superintendents	Quantitative Survey	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 93 percent of the superintendents believed they had a collaborative relationship with their board members.</li> <li>2. 88 percent of the superintendents felt their board was effective.</li> <li>3. 30 percent of the superintendents expressed concerns regarding board governance.</li> <li>4. 30 percent of the superintendents felt their board members were underqualified.</li> </ol>

Table 2 (continued)

Study	Purpose	Participants	Design/Analysis	Outcomes
Glass, Bjork, & Brunner (2000)	To provide trend data that can be compared to studies conducted in 1960, 1971, 1982, and 1992.	2, 262 superintendents	Quantitative Survey	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 40.1 percent of the superintendents attributed their hiring to personal characteristics.</li> <li>2. 26.3 percent of the superintendents believed they were hired to be change agents.</li> <li>3. 31.9 percent of the superintendents felt they were hired to be instructional leaders.</li> <li>4. 1.5 percent of the superintendents believed they were hired to maintain the status quo.</li> <li>5. 42.9 percent of the superintendents indicated they were the initiators of new policies, a decrease from 66.9 percent in 1992.</li> <li>6. 36.7 percent of the superintendents believed policy making was a shared activity, which was an increase from 28.5 percent in 1992.</li> </ol>
	To provide an overview of public education from the perspective of its executive leaders.			
	To provide researchers with data and analyses about public education and the superintendent leaders in the 1990s who will lead American public school districts.			

Table 2 (continued)

Study	Purpose	Participants	Design/Analysis	Outcomes
7.	88.6 percent of the superintendents indicated their boards accepted their policy recommendations.			
8.	2.7 percent of the superintendents believed their board's primary expectation for them was to be a leader of reform.			
9.	12.7 percent of the superintendents believed the board's primary expectation was for them to be political leaders.			
10.	50.2 percent of the superintendents felt they were not evaluated according to their job descriptions, a decrease from 56.6 percent in 1992.			
11.	69.1 percent of the superintendents indicated their boards rated them excellent.			

Table 2 (continued)

Study	Purpose	Participants	Design/Analysis	Outcomes
12.	80.1 percent of the superintendents indicated they were evaluated annually, while 12 percent were evaluated semi-annually.			
13.	74 percent of the superintendents felt their board members were qualified.			
14.	16.5 percent of the superintendents indicated that school board members understanding their role was a problem.			
15.	35.2 percent of the superintendents indicated that finance was a major problem.			
16.	17.2 percent of the superintendents felt community pressure was a problem.			
17.	5.2 percent of the superintendents identified internal board conflict as a problem.			

Table 2 (continued)

Study	Purpose	Participants	Design/Analysis	Outcomes
Colorado Association of School Executives	The purpose of the report was to summarize information regarding Colorado superintendents in four major areas: superintendent effectiveness, recruitment and retention, school board relations, and professional development.	130 superintendents	Quantitative Survey	1. 69 percent of Colorado superintendents believed their boards were very well qualified or qualified.

Table 3  
 Studies Related to the Challenges of the School Superintendency and Career Satisfaction in the School Superintendency

Study	Purpose	Participants	Design/Analysis	Outcomes
Glass (2001)	To gather information on issues relating to superintendent and school board leadership.	175 superintendents	Quantitative Survey	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>83 percent of the superintendents found considerable fulfillment in their positions.</li> <li>82 percent of the superintendents would choose the position again.</li> </ol>
Cooper, Fusarelli, & Carella (2000)	To survey incumbent superintendents from around the nation to find out what these chief executives think about their careers and what is happening to their role as district leaders.	2,979 superintendents	Quantitative Survey	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>91 percent of the superintendents felt their work was challenging, rewarding, satisfying, and provided real career satisfaction.</li> </ol>

Table 3 (continued)

Study	Purpose	Participants	Design/Analysis	Outcomes
Glass, Bjork, & Brunner (2000)	To provide current information on the superintendency to national, state, and local education policymakers, the media, and superintendents themselves.	2, 262 superintendents	Quantitative Survey	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 51.5 percent of the superintendents felt considerable stress in their position.</li> <li>2. 40.9 percent of the superintendents felt moderate stress in their position.</li> <li>3. Superintendents over the age of 60 felt lower stress levels than superintendents ages, 40-44.</li> </ol>
	To provide trend data that can be compared to studies conducted in 1960, 1971, 1982, and 1992.			4. The two major challenges identified by superintendents were finance and time management.
	To provide an overview of public education from the perspective of its executive leaders.			5. 96.7 percent of the superintendents felt finance was a major problem, an increase from the 96.2 percent in 1992.
				6. 97.1 percent of the superintendents felt very successful or successful, an increase from 96.7 percent in 1992.



Table 3 (continued)

Study	Purpose	Participants	Design/Analysis	Outcomes
	To provide researchers with data and analyses about public education and the superintendent leaders in the 1990s who will lead American public school districts into the 21 <sup>st</sup> century.			<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. .5 percent of the superintendents did not feel successful or had no idea.</li> <li>8. 2/3 of the superintendents indicated they would choose the superintendency again as a career choice.</li> <li>9. Over ½ of the superintendents indicated considerable satisfaction with their jobs.</li> <li>10. Superintendents in smaller districts indicated less satisfaction than those superintendents from larger districts, similar to the findings of the 1992 study.</li> </ol>

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

The school superintendency has been identified as one of the least investigated areas within educational leadership (Tallerico, 2000). However, there have been several studies conducted on the school superintendency at a national level reporting the demographics of current superintendents, challenges encountered by these superintendents, the level of career satisfaction of these superintendents, as well as the impact of their relationships and interactions with school board members (Glass, 2001; Cooper, Fusarelli, & Carella, 2000; Glass et al., 2000; Hodgkinson & Montenegro, 1999). All of these research studies have been based on national samples of superintendents. Therefore, no specific data has been collected regarding the present status of the school superintendency within the state of Georgia or superintendents' perceptions of their relationships with school board members.

#### Research Questions

The researcher examined the following overarching question for this study: What are Georgia public school superintendents' perceptions of the overall characteristics of the position? The researcher addressed the following research questions during the study:

1. What are the demographics of Georgia public school superintendents?
2. What are Georgia public school superintendents' perceptions of school board/superintendent relations?
3. What are the challenges facing Georgia public school superintendents?

4. What is the level of Georgia public school superintendents' satisfaction with their careers?

### *Research Design*

The descriptive survey approach was used as the research design of this study. Descriptive research gathers and analyzes information to describe existing phenomena, identify problems and current conditions, as well as make comparisons and evaluations (Borg, 1981). Quantitative research methods allowed the researcher to study the perceptions of Georgia public school superintendents through statistical analysis. The utilization of quantitative research allowed the researcher to describe data in abbreviated terms using statistical analysis (Sprinthall, 2000). Data was collected from a questionnaire that measured four areas of the Georgia public school superintendency: (1) superintendent characteristics (sex, race, age, size of district, and number of years in the superintendency), (2) superintendent/school board member relations, (3) challenges of the superintendency, and (4) the level of career satisfaction of the superintendents.

### *Population*

The researcher identified all Georgia public school superintendents listed within the *Georgia Public Education Directory* (Georgia Department of Education, 2005). The list within the *Georgia Public Education Directory* (Georgia Department of Education, 2005) contains the name, address, telephone number, and email address of each superintendent within the state. The current 180 superintendents in the state of Georgia were used to gather information regarding public school superintendents' perceptions of their relationships with school board members.

### *Instrumentation*

An extensive review of the literature allowed the researcher to locate several national studies which have been conducted regarding the school superintendency. One of these research studies, *The 2000 national study of the American school superintendency*, utilized a questionnaire containing 86 items regarding the following areas of the public school superintendency: (1) characteristics of superintendents (Sex, age, racial/ethnic group, number of superintendencies), (2) superintendent/school board member relations, (3) professional development of superintendents, (4) issues and challenges facing the superintendency and (5) career satisfaction in the school superintendency. The questionnaire used for *The 2000 National Study of the American School Superintendency* was developed by Thomas Glass (2000) for the American Association of School Administrators' ten year study of the American school superintendency.

The questionnaire for the 2000 study was an adjustment of the instrument used in *The 1992 study of the American school superintendency* (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000). The survey was tested for face validity, content validity, and reliability (Glass, et al.). Before mailing the questionnaire, a trial administration of the instrument allowed the researchers to receive feedback concerning the amount of time required to complete the survey, as well as any unclear wording within the instrument (Glass et al.). The 2000 sample population was the largest of any of the "Ten-Year Studies" by the American Association of School Administrators, containing responses from 2, 262 superintendents across the nation (Glass et al.).

The present researcher used 33 items from *The 2000 study of the American school superintendency* questionnaire to develop the survey for this research study (see Appendix A). Permission was obtained from Thomas Glass to use questions from the 2000 survey instrument (see Appendix B). The questions chosen for the survey were selected after an extensive review of the literature on the public school superintendency and will focus on the following areas:

- (1) Demographic information regarding Georgia public school superintendents
- (2) Georgia superintendent and school board member relationships
- (3) Challenges facing Georgia public school superintendents
- (4) Career satisfaction of Georgia public school superintendents

The goal of the researcher was to determine the perceptions of Georgia public school superintendents in regards to the overall characteristics of the position, specifically focusing on superintendent perceptions of their relations with school board members, challenges facing Georgia superintendents, and their level of satisfaction with their careers as public school superintendents.

The survey questions were grouped into four subheadings: demographics, roles and relationships, challenges facing the superintendent, and career satisfaction. The first 7 questions of the survey were used to gather information regarding the characteristics of those individuals serving as public school superintendents within the state of Georgia. The next 13 questions allowed the respondents the opportunity to rank order some of their responses. The remaining 10 questions were rated using a Likert scale to represent superintendent attitudes toward challenges facing the superintendent, as well as their level of career satisfaction in the public school superintendency. Three open-ended

questions on particular aspects of the school superintendency were coded to allow the researcher to study more personal reactions to the public school superintendency. The open-ended questions allowed the superintendents the opportunity to relate in their own words their perceptions regarding the overall characteristics of the superintendency.

### *Data Collection*

The researcher requested permission from the Georgia Southern University Institutional Review Board (IRB) to complete this study. Upon receipt of approval from IRB, the researcher mailed the survey instrument to all 180 public school superintendents within the state of Georgia. A letter accompanied the survey instrument stating the purpose of the research study, as well as explaining the importance of receiving all responses to have a comprehensive sample of the individuals serving as Georgia public school superintendents. The letter explained the format of the survey, procedures for completing the survey, and offered respondents the opportunity to request a copy of the research results upon completion of the research study. A self-addressed envelope was included for the easy return of the survey to the researcher.

Each survey instrument was assigned a number to assist the researcher in determining the number of responses and those surveys that had been returned to the researcher. The randomized numbers corresponding to the list of superintendents will be printed on each envelope. This enabled the researcher to contact those superintendents not responding to the survey. Approximately two weeks after sending the survey instrument, a follow-up postcard was sent to those individuals who had not yet responded to the survey. The purpose of the postcard was to encourage attention to the survey and emphasize that a response was of great value to ensure a comprehensive description of

superintendents within the state of Georgia. A second mailer was sent to those superintendents who had not responded to the survey after three weeks from the first mailer.

### *Data Analysis*

Statistical tests were used to determine the current status of Georgia school superintendents, as well as their perceptions of their relationships with school board members. Descriptive statistics (mean, median, range, and standard deviations) were computed for all variables using the Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 11.0 (Green, Salkind, & Akey, 2000). In addition, independent t-tests were used to analyze the research questions and provided a way to determine if groups within the study differed on their perceptions of the overall characteristics of the Georgia public school superintendency. The analysis enabled the researcher to identify whether or not there were differences among specific groups of superintendents and if those differences were significant (de Vaus, 2001).

The researcher analyzed the open-ended questions by looking for patterns, themes and categories within the responses. Once themes and categories were established and the responses tallied for frequencies within categories, a third party expert verified thematic patterns in the data gathered from the responses. Using both quantitative and qualitative data, the researcher was able to more fully understand and report the perceptions of Georgia school superintendents regarding the overall characteristics of the profession.

Table 4 noted the research questions and the survey items that were used to answer the research questions. Tables showing all results of the analysis were established

to show the respondents answered the survey items. Text was also written to further show how superintendents responded including descriptive statistics, frequencies and variances according to demographics. The researcher stated the major findings from the data for each of the research questions.

### Summary

The purpose of the research study was to determine the perceptions of Georgia public school superintendents regarding the overall characteristics of the superintendency, specifically focusing on superintendent perceptions of their relationships with school board members, challenges facing the superintendents, and their level of satisfaction with their careers. The researcher used quantitative and qualitative research methods to gather data from Georgia public school superintendents. The responses were analyzed using the Statistical Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS)-version 11.0. Descriptive statistics and independent t-tests were used to determine the answers to the research questions. In addition, open-ended questions were analyzed for thematic patterns in the data.

The researcher used the survey method to collect data from public school superintendents within the state of Georgia. Surveys were mailed to all 180 superintendents based on the information within the Georgia Public Education Directory (Georgia Department of Education, 2005). The survey contained 33 questions that included Likert scale items, rank order responses, and open-ended questions. Return envelopes were numbered to determine the surveys that were returned. A post card was mailed within two weeks emphasizing the importance of the requested information, a second mailer was sent within three weeks of the original mailing date.



Table 4  
Alignment of Research Questions to Survey Items

Item	Research	Research Question
1. Gender	Glass, 2001; Cooper, Fusarelli, & Carella, 2000; Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000; Hodgkinson & Montenegro, 1999 Carter & Cunningham, 1997	1
2. Age	Glass, 2001; Cooper, Fusarelli, & Carella, 2000; Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000; Hodgkinson & Montenegro, 1999 Carter & Cunningham, 1997	1
3. Race/Ethnicity	Glass, 2001; Cooper, Fusarelli, & Carella, 2000; Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000; Hodgkinson & Montenegro, 1999 Carter & Cunningham, 1997	1
4. Years as a superintendent	Glass, 2001; Cooper, Fusarelli, & Carella, 2000; Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000; Hodgkinson & Montenegro, 1999	1
5. Number of superintendencies	Glass, 2001; Cooper, Fusarelli, & Carella, 2000; Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000; Hodgkinson & Montenegro, 1999	1
6. Size of community	Glass, 2001; Cooper, Fusarelli, & Carella, 2000; Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000; Hodgkinson & Montenegro, 1999	1
7. Size of district	Glass, 2001; Cooper, Fusarelli, & Carella, 2000; Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000; Hodgkinson & Montenegro, 1999	1
8. Perception of reason for hiring	Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000; Glass, 1992	2

Table 4 (continued)

Item	Research	Research Question
9. Frequency of evaluation	Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000	2
10. Characterizing the school board	Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000; Kowalski, 1999; Danzberger & Usdan, 1994; Todras, 1983	2
11. Policy recommendations	Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000	2
12. Board's primary expectations	Castallo, 2003; Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000; Norton, Webb, Dlugosh, & Sybouts, 1996; Institute for Educational Leadership, 1993; Vens & Kimmet, 1993	2
13. Current evaluation	Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000	2
14. Reasons for evaluation	Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000; Norton, Webb, Dlugosh, & Sybouts, 1996; Institute for Educational Leadership, 1993; Vens & Kimmet, 1993	2
15. Policy development	Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000; Norton, Webb, Dlugosh, & Sybouts, 1996; Davis, 1993; Smith, 1986; Godfrey & Swanchak, 1985; Tyack & Hansot, 1982	2
16. Abilities and preparation of school board members	Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000; Colorado Association of School Executives, 2003	2

Table 4 (continued)

Item	Research	Research Question
17. Level of stress	Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000; Kowalski, 1999 Norton, Webb, Dlugosh, & Sybouts, 1996	4
18. Factors inhibiting effectiveness	Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000; Kowalski, 1999 Cattanach, 1996; Norton, Webb, Dlugosh, & Sybouts, 1996	3
19. Problems board members face	Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000	3
20. Overall effectiveness	Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000	4
21. Finances	Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000; Norton, Webb, Dlugosh, & Sybouts, 1996	3
22. Administrator-board relations	Porch & Protheroe, 2003; Bryant & Houston, 2002; Glass, 2001; Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000; Kowalski, 1999; Chapman, 1997; Norton, Webb, Dlugosh, & Sybouts, 1996; Danzberger & Usdan, 1994; Castallo, 1993; Davis 1993; Hord & Estes, 1993; Glass, 1992; McCurdy, 1992; Weller, Brown, & Flynn, 1991; Kowalski, 1995; Blumberg & Blumberg, 1985; Smith, 1986; Callahan, 1966	3
23. Personal time management	Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000	3

Table 4 (continued)

Item	Research	Research Question
24. Compliance with state and federal mandates	Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000	3
25. Finances	Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000; Norton, Webb, Dlugosh, & Sybouts, 1996	3
26. Administrator-board relations	Porch & Protheroe, 2003; Bryant & Houston, 2002; Glass, 2001; Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000; Kowalski, 1999; Chapman, 1997; Norton, Webb, Dlugosh, & Sybouts, 1996; Danzberger & Usdan, 1994; Castallo, 1993; Davis 1993; Hord & Estes, 1993; Glass, 1992; McCurdy, 1992; Weller, Brown, & Flynn, 1991; Kowalski, 1995; Blumberg & Blumberg, 1985; Smith, 1986; Callahan, 1966	3
27. Personal time management	Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000	3
28. Compliance with state and federal mandates	Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000	3
29. Level of career satisfaction	Glass, 2001; Cooper, Fusarelli, & Carella, 2000; Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000; Boothe, Bradley, & Flick, 1994	4
30. Recommending the superintendency	Glass, 2001; Cooper, Fusarelli, & Carella, 2000; Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000	4

Table 4 (continued)

Item	Research	Research Question
31. Characteristics of an effective superintendent	Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000	2
32. Factors inhibiting effectiveness	Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000; Kowalski, 1999 Cattanach, 1996; Norton, Webb, Dlugosh, & Sybouts, 1996	3
33. Career Aspirations	Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000	4

## CHAPTER IV

### REPORT OF DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS

The future of the nation is inextricably tied to the success of students within the public school system. The individual ultimately responsible for the teaching and learning process and ensuring successful student outcomes is the local school superintendent. A position that continually encounters political, economic, and social problems, the school superintendency has been identified as one of the most difficult chief executive undertakings in America today.

#### Introduction

This researcher investigated the perceptions of Georgia public school superintendents regarding the overall characteristics of their position, specifically focusing on superintendent relations with school board members, challenges faced by superintendents, and superintendents' level of satisfaction with their careers. The researcher to gather this information surveyed all 180 school superintendents within the state of Georgia. The survey instrument given to all 180 superintendents included four significant areas: (1) demographic information, (2) superintendents' perceptions of school board/superintendent relations, (3) challenges faced by Georgia public school superintendents, and (4) Georgia public school superintendents' level of satisfaction with their careers. The survey was mailed to all 180 school superintendents in the state of Georgia listed within the *Georgia Public Schools Directory*, published by the Georgia Department of Education (2005). A post card reminder (see Appendix C) was mailed to the superintendents who did not return the surveys within two weeks and again emphasized the importance of the requested information. A second mailer was sent to

the superintendents who had not responded to the survey after three weeks from the first mailer. Of the 180 surveys mailed out, the researcher received 86 surveys, for a return rate of 48%. One survey was sent back with an accompanying letter which stated that the superintendent had only been in his position for three weeks and was not comfortable responding to the survey questions. Therefore, out of the 86 surveys that were returned, 85 surveys were used for the data analysis.

Data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 11.0 (Green, Salkind, & Akey, 2000). Data analysis utilizing SPSS generated descriptive statistics including frequencies, means, and standard deviations to determine the superintendents' demographics, perceptions of school board/superintendent relations, challenges facing the superintendents, and the level of career satisfaction of the school superintendents. SPSS was also used to conduct independent t-tests, which allowed the researcher to determine if groups within the study differed on their perceptions of the overall characteristics of the Georgia public school superintendency. The researcher analyzed the qualitative answers by developing categories for the responses and frequencies of responses based on the research questions for the study. This helped the researcher to further study the similarities and differences among the superintendents within the study.

### Research Questions

The researcher examined the following overarching question for the study: What are Georgia public school superintendents' perceptions of the overall characteristics of the position? The researcher addressed the following sub-questions during the study:

1. What are the demographics of Georgia public school superintendents?

2. What are Georgia public school superintendents' perceptions of school board/superintendent relations?
3. What are the challenges facing Georgia public school superintendents?
4. What is the level of Georgia public school superintendents' satisfaction with their careers?

### Research Design

A descriptive survey approach was used as the research design of the study. Data was collected from a questionnaire that measured four areas of the Georgia public school superintendency: (1) superintendent characteristics (gender, age, race, number of years as a school superintendent, number of public school superintendencies held, location of the school district, and size of the school district), (2) superintendent/school board relations, (3) challenges of the superintendency, and (4) the level of career satisfaction of the superintendents. The researcher collected and analyzed both quantitative and qualitative data.

### Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The researcher surveyed all 180 public school superintendents within the state of Georgia. Of the 180 superintendents that were mailed surveys, 86 chose to respond and return surveys. The total of 86 surveys received established a return rate of 48% for the study. One survey was returned with a letter indicating that the superintendent had only been in his position for three weeks and was not comfortable completing the survey. Therefore, 85 of the 86 surveys were used in the analyzing of data.

Section one of the survey included seven questions which required superintendents to provide responses regarding their personal and professional



information. Superintendents' responses to questions 1-7 provided information regarding the following characteristics: gender, age, race, number of years as a school superintendent, number of public school superintendencies held, location of the school district, and size of the school district. These seven questions helped to answer the first research question identifying the demographics of Georgia public school superintendents. Appendix D represents data from respondents regarding the demographic data from questions 1-7 on the survey.

The first question within the survey required respondents to report their gender. Gender results indicated that there were more male superintendents (72.9%) that responded to the survey than female superintendents (27.1%).

A second item on the survey asked respondents to identify their age. The largest percentage of respondents was in the "51-55" age category with 38.8% in this age range. The smallest percentage of those responding represented two groups within the study, with 1.2% in the "30-35" category and 1.2% in the "36-40" category. The second most frequented age group represented was 32.9% in the "56-60" age category of the respondents.

In responding to the question on race, almost all superintendents within the study were white (91.8%). The remaining superintendents were black (7.1%), with one superintendent as a Pacific Islander (1.2%).

The largest percentage of superintendents, 23.5%, responded they had four to five years experience as a school superintendent. A small percentage of superintendents (1.2%) indicated they had twelve to thirteen years experience in the school

superintendency. An additional 20% of the superintendents responding to the survey indicated they had two-three years experience as a school superintendent.

The majority of superintendents, 70.6% were in their first superintendency. Additional results indicated 21.2% had held two superintendencies, 4.7% had held four superintendencies, and the smallest percentage, 3.5% had held at least three superintendencies.

The last two questions in the demographics section related to the type of community the superintendent served and the number of students within the school district. A higher percentage, 71.8%, of the superintendents responding work in rural communities, while 21.2% work in suburban communities and the smallest percentage, 7.1%, in urban communities.

The majority of the superintendents responding to the survey, 58.8%, represent school districts with more than 3,000 students. The smallest percentage of those responding was 5.9% in districts with less than 1,000 students. There were 35.3% of the superintendents that indicated their school district enrolled 1,000-3,000 students.

The most prevalent demographic data about Georgia public school superintendents indicated the majority of these individuals are white males, between the ages of 51-55 with at least 4-5 years experience as school superintendents. A large percentage of these superintendents are in their first superintendency employed in rural school districts with more than 3,000 students.

## Findings

The purpose of this study was to address the perceptions of Georgia public school superintendents regarding the overall characteristics of their positions. After sending 180 surveys to all superintendents in the state of Georgia and receiving 86 responses, the researcher analyzed data on superintendents' perceptions of their position, as well as three specific areas within the school superintendency.

### *Georgia Public School Superintendent Perceptions of School Board/Superintendent Relations*

Nine survey questions assessed superintendents' perceptions concerning their relations with school board members and helped answer the second research question which determined superintendents' perceptions of school board/superintendent relations. Each of the nine questions (Questions 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 & 16) presented in the survey allowed the researcher to obtain information from four categories that are present in the relationship between the superintendent and school board. These four categories are: 1) Superintendent perceptions of hiring and expectations established by the board, 2) Superintendent perceptions of the general abilities of the school board, 3) Superintendent perceptions of policy development, and 4) Superintendent perceptions regarding the evaluation process. Two of these questions (Questions 8 & 12) were ranked items with values ranging from "5" indicating "great significance" to "1" indicating "little or no significance" as answer choices. A third question (Question 14) had values ranging from "4" indicating "great significance" to 1 indicating "little or no significance" as response choices. The remaining six questions (Questions 9, 10, 11, 13, 15 & 16) required superintendents to select one answer from within the response choices.

The first category assessing superintendent perceptions of school board/superintendent relations was superintendent perceptions of the hiring process and their perceptions of board expectations for them as school superintendent. The superintendents had five responses to rank regarding their perceptions of the most important reason they were hired by their board of education. These choices included: 1) Personal characteristics (honesty, tact, etc.), 2) Potential to be a change agent, 3) Ability to maintain the status quo, 4) Ability to be an instructional leader, and 5) No particular reason. Table 5 represents the responses of the superintendents regarding their perceptions of the board's decision to hire them as school superintendent.

Table 5

Superintendent Perceptions of Hiring

Variable	Great Significance 5	Significant 4	Limited Significance 3	Little Significance 2	No Significance 1	Average Ranking Score
Personal Characteristics	37 (44%)	22 (26%)	22 (26%)	3 (4%)	1 (1%)	3.9
Change Agent	20 (24%)	21 (25%)	36 (42%)	6 (7%)	2 (2%)	3.5
Maintain Status Quo	2 (2%)	7 (8%)	4 (5%)	64 (75%)	8 (10%)	2.1
Instructional Leader	22 (26%)	34 (40%)	23 (27%)	4 (5%)	2 (2%)	3.7
No reason	3 (4%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	8 (9%)	73 (86%)	1.3

Superintendents believe they were hired due to two primary reasons, which included their personal characteristics, as well as their ability to be an instructional leader for the school district. Georgia public school superintendents believed they were hired due to their personal characteristics as the average rank to that component within the survey question was the highest at 3.9. Personal characteristics was chosen as a factor of great significance by 44% of the respondents, significant factor by 26%, a factor with limited significance by 26%, a factor of little significance by 4%, and a factor of no significance by one superintendent. School superintendents also strongly believed that many of them had been hired due to their abilities as an instructional leader as the average rank to that area was 3.73. Instructional leader was chosen as a factor of great significance by 26% of the respondents, significant factor by 40%, a factor with limited significance by 27%, a factor of little significance by 5%, and a factor of no significance by two superintendents. There were also responses that indicated that superintendents' perception of the reason for being hired was their potential to be a change agent for the school district with an average response of 3.53. Of the respondents, 24% indicated their ability to be a change agent was of great significance, 25% significant, 42% limited significance, 7% little significance, and two superintendents responded that their ability to be a change agent was of no significance. Few superintendents believed their ability to maintain status quo was the reason they were hired with an average response rate of 2.05. Only two superintendents indicated their ability to maintain the status quo was of great significance, 8% of the superintendents felt maintaining the status quo was significant, and 5% indicated limited significance. A large percentage, 75%, believed maintaining the status quo was of little significance in the hiring process, and 10% felt there was no

significance regarding their selection based on their ability to maintain the status quo. The lowest ranking item was they were hired for no particular reason with a rating of 1.3. Only 4% of the respondents indicated no particular reason was of great significance, one superintendent responded no reason was of significance, and 9% indicated little significance. A large percentage, 86%, felt there was no significance. The highest rank of 3.9 indicated that the majority of superintendents' attributed the most important reason that they were employed by their present board of education was their personal characteristics. Sixty-eight percent of the superintendents indicated personal characteristics as a reason of great significance or significance in the reason for their being hired for the school superintendency. Overall, superintendents believe they were hired because they are personable, able to bring about change, and have the ability to be the instructional and educational leaders of the school district.

An additional question within the survey (Question 12) referred to the superintendents' perceptions of their board's primary expectations of them as school superintendent. The superintendents had five responses to rank regarding their perceptions of the board's primary expectations of them as school superintendent. These choices included: 1) Educational leader (curriculum and instruction), 2) Political leader (board and community relations), 3) Managerial leader (general management, budget, and finance), 4) Leader of school reform, and 5) Other. Table 6 represents the responses of the superintendents regarding their perceptions of their board's primary expectations of them as school superintendent.

Table 6

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 Superintendent Perceptions of Board's Primary Expectations
 

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Variable	Great Significance 5	Significant 4	Limited Significance 3	Little Significance 2	No Significance 1	Average Ranking Score
Educational Leader	35 (41%)	28 (33%)	14 (17%)	6 (7%)	2 (2%)	3.9
Political Leader	10 (12%)	22 (26%)	31 (37%)	20 (24%)	2 (2%)	3.1
Managerial Leader	23 (27%)	15 (18%)	22 (26%)	19 (22%)	6 (7%)	3.3
Leader of School Reform	3 (4%)	20 (24%)	18 (21%)	40 (47%)	4 (5%)	2.7
Other/ Please Specify	4 (5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	64 (75%)	1.0

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Georgia school superintendents solidly believed the board's primary expectation of them as school superintendent was to be the educational leader of the school system with an average rank of 3.9. In rating the significance of the expectation by the board of the superintendent to be the educational leader, 41% indicated great significance, 33% significance, 17% limited significance, 7% little significance, and only two superintendent indicated no significance. School superintendents responded with an average score of 3.3 regarding their belief that the board's primary expectation for them was to be the managerial leader focusing on the general management, budget, and financial matters of the school district. The percentages of the ratings were similar with

the exception of the area of no significance, 7% of the superintendents indicated managerial leader was a factor of no significance. Twenty-seven percent of the superintendents believed managerial leader was a factor of great significance, 18% a factor of significance, 26% a factor of limited significance, and 22% a factor of little significance. The perceived third highest response by superintendents indicated that the board's primary expectation for them was to be the political leader of the district with an average response rate of 3.1. A large percentage, 58%, believed the expectation to be a political leader was a factor of limited to little significance. Only 12% indicated political leader was a factor of great significance. Fewer superintendents identified the board's primary expectation for them was to be the leader of school reform with an average response of 2.7. Almost half of the superintendents, 47%, indicated the expectation of being a leader of school reform was of little significance, only 4% indicated leader of school reform was a factor of great significance. Sixty-eight superintendents responded in the other category, with three of these superintendents listing specific expectations which were not listed within the survey question. These three responses included the following: 1) CEO, 2) Leader of an effective team, and 3) To build a team. Overall, Georgia public school superintendents' believed the school boards expectation for them was to be the educational leader of the school districts.

The second category of questions within the survey instrument, which assisted the researcher in answering the second research question regarding superintendent/school board relations, required superintendents to respond regarding the characteristics of their board, as well as the general abilities of the school board. Question 10 within the survey instrument required superintendents to choose one answer choice identifying how they



would characterize their school board. Question 16 asked superintendents to choose one answer choice concerning the general abilities and preparation of board members to handle their duties. Table 7 represents the frequencies and percentages of their responses to Question 10.

Table 7

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Characterize Your School Board

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Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Dominated by the elite in the community	3	4
Represents distinct factions in the community and votes accordingly	21	25
Active, aligned with community interests, not rigid	54	64
Not active, accepting of recommendations made by the professional staff	7	8

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Georgia school superintendents (64%) characterized their school boards as being active, aligned with community interest, and not rigid. Only a small percentage (4) believed their boards were dominated by the elite in the community. There were 25 percent of the superintendents that characterized their board as representing distinct factions in the community and 8 percent that characterized their board as not active and accepting of the recommendations made by the professional staff. The majority of the superintendents agreed that their boards are active and aligned with community interest.

The second question regarding Georgia school superintendents' perceptions of their school boards was Question 16 which asked superintendents to identify the general abilities and preparation of school board members. Table 8 represents the frequencies and percentages of their responses.

Table 8

General Abilities of School Board Members

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Very well qualified	28	33
Qualified	44	52
Not well-qualified	13	15
Incompetent	0	0

Georgia school superintendents (52%) agreed that most school board members are qualified to handle their duties. There were superintendents (33%) that responded that their board members were well-qualified for their positions. A small percentage (15%) indicated that their board members were not well-qualified to handle their duties on the school board. No superintendent identified their school board members as being incompetent in their abilities. Overall, superintendents agreed that their school board members are qualified to handled their duties on the board of education.

The third category which assisted the researcher in obtaining information to answer research question two focused on policy development and recommendations for

policy within the school district. There were two questions (Questions 11 & 15) within the survey that addressed the issue of policy development and the acceptance of policy recommendations by the school board. The first, Question 11, asked superintendents to identify the percentage of time that the board of education accepted their policy recommendations. Table 9 represents the frequencies and percentages for this question.

Table 9

Acceptance of Policy Recommendations

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
90-100% of time	79	93
80-89% of time	6	7
70-79% of time	0	0
60-69% of time	0	0
50-59% of time	0	0
Less than 49% of time	0	0

The majority of Georgia school superintendents (93%) indicated that their policy recommendations are accepted 90-100% of the time by their school board members. A small percentage (7%) responded that their policy recommendations are accepted 80-89% of the time. There were no Georgia school superintendents who had policy recommendations accepted less than 80% of the time. Overall, school superintendents indicated that their school boards almost always accept their policy recommendations.

A second question (Question 15 within the survey) regarding policy required superintendents to identify who takes the lead in policy development within the school district. Table 10 represents the frequencies and percentages for this question.

Table 10

Policy Development

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
School Board	1	1
School Board Chairperson	0	0
Superintendent	58	68
Shared Responsibility	25	29
Other	1	1

Georgia school superintendents (68%) indicated they take the lead in policy development for the school district. There were superintendents (29%) that responded policy development in their district was a shared responsibility. A small percentage (1) identified policy development as the responsibility of the school board and other representatives within the school district. Overall, Georgia superintendents within the study responded that they take the lead in the development of policy for their school district.

The fourth and final category which addressed the relationship between the superintendent and school board required superintendents to provide responses regarding

their perceptions of the evaluation process. There were three questions within the survey regarding evaluation: Questions 9, 13, and 14. Table 11 represents the percentages and frequencies for Question 9, which asked superintendents to identify how often they were evaluated by the school board.

Table 11

Frequency of Evaluation

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Annually	80	94
Semi-Annually	4	5
At contract renewal time only	0	0
Never	0	0
Other	1	1

The majority of superintendents within the study (94%) responded that they were evaluated annually. A small percentage (5%) indicated that they were evaluated semi-annually and only one superintendent (1) responded other. No superintendent indicated that they were never evaluated or that their evaluation was only at contract renewal time. Overall, school superintendents within the state of Georgia indicated they were evaluated on an annual basis by their school board.

Question 13, the second question regarding the evaluation process, researched the current level of evaluation that superintendents were given by their board. Table 12 represents the frequencies and percentages for this question.

Table 12

## Current Level of Evaluation

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Excellent	58	68
Good	14	17
Average	2	2
Below Average	0	0
Not evaluated	11	13

Georgia school superintendents responded in all categories within Question 13 from excellent (68%), good (17%) to not evaluated (13%). A small percentage (2%) of those responding indicated their current level of evaluation was average. There were no superintendents who responded that their current level of evaluation was below average. The eleven superintendents that have not been evaluated indicated on their survey they were within their first year as superintendent and would be evaluated before the end of the school year. Overall, superintendents within the state of Georgia responded their evaluations were excellent.

Question 14, the last question regarding evaluation, researched superintendents' beliefs in why they were evaluated by their school board. The superintendents had four responses to rank regarding their perceptions of the board's reasons for evaluating them as school superintendent. These choices included: 1) To provide periodic and systematic accountability, 2) To identify areas needing improvement, 3) To point out strengths, and 4) To document general dissatisfaction with their performance. Table 13 represents the responses of the superintendents regarding their perceptions of their board's primary reasons for evaluation.

Table 13

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Superintendent Perceptions of Board's Reasons for Evaluation

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Variable	Great Significance 4	Significant 3	Limited Significance 2	No Significance 1	Average Ranking Score
Periodic/ Systematic	73 (86%)	5 (6%)	3 (4%)	4 (5%)	3.7
Needs Improvement	3 (4%)	47 (55%)	35 (41%)	0 (0%)	2.6
Point out Strengths	3 (4%)	32 (38%)	42 (49%)	8 (9%)	2.3
Dissatisfaction With Performance	6 (7%)	1 (1%)	5 (6%)	73 (86%)	1.3

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All respondents strongly agreed (3.7) that the primary reason for the board's evaluation of superintendent performance was to provide periodic and systematic accountability. In responding to the significance for periodic and systematic evaluation, 86% of the superintendents indicated great significance, 5% significant, 3 % limited significance, and 4% no significance. There were superintendent responses that indicated the board's primary reason for evaluation was to identify areas needing improvement (2.6) and to point out strengths (2.3). Superintendents (55%) felt that needing improvement as a reason for evaluation was of significance; while 41% felt needing improvement was of limited significance. In determining if the reason for evaluation was to determine strengths, 49% of the superintendents indicated strengths as a reason of limited significance and 38% indicated strengths as a reason of significance. A small number of superintendents (1.3) believed the primary reason for evaluation was to document general dissatisfaction with the performance of the school superintendent. The majority of superintendents (86%) indicated dissatisfaction with performance as having no significance within the evaluation process. Overall, Georgia school superintendents believed the primary reason for the board evaluating them was to provide periodic and systematic accountability.

The second section of the survey instrument identified the perceptions of Georgia public school superintendents regarding their relations with school board members. There were questions which related to four areas within the relationship between the school superintendent and school board members. These four categories were: 1) Superintendent perceptions of hiring and expectations established by the board, 2) Superintendent perceptions of the general abilities of the school board, 3) Superintendent



perceptions of policy development, and 4) Superintendent perceptions regarding the evaluation process. Overall, Georgia public school superintendents believed their reason for selection was due to their personal characteristics, and their boards' primary expectation for them was to be the educational leader of the school district. In regards to their boards' abilities, Georgia public school superintendents agreed that their school board members were qualified to handle their duties. Superintendents in Georgia indicated they were responsible for policy development, and policy recommendations were accepted by their school board members. The final area regarding evaluation revealed superintendents in Georgia were evaluated annually by their school boards to document periodic and systematic accountability and these evaluations were excellent. A third section within the survey instrument focused on the challenges facing Georgia public school superintendents.

#### *Challenges Facing Georgia Public School Superintendents*

Thirteen survey questions (Questions 18, 19, 21-28, 31 & 32) assessed superintendents' perceptions concerning the challenges they face as public school superintendents and helped answer the third research question which identified the challenges facing Georgia public school superintendents. Each of the thirteen questions presented in the survey allowed the researcher to obtain information from two categories that are present in the challenges encountered by the school superintendent. These two categories were: 1) Superintendent perceptions of the challenges faced as superintendent and 2) Superintendent perceptions of the challenges faced by school board members.

Two of the survey questions (Question 18 and Question 19) were ranked items with values ranging from "8" indicating "great significance" to "1" indicating "little or no

significance” as answer choices. Nine questions (Questions 21-28) required superintendents to use a Likert Scale with values ranging from “5” indicating “great significance” to “1” indicating “no significance.” There were also two open ended questions (Question 31 and Question 32) which allowed the superintendents to comment on the characteristics of effective superintendents and the top three factors inhibiting their effectiveness as school superintendents.

Question 18 allowed superintendents the opportunity to rank eight items which inhibited their effectiveness as superintendents. Table 14 represents the ratings for each of the answer responses for Question 18.

Table 14  
 Superintendent Perceptions of Factors Inhibiting Effectiveness

Variables	Great 8	Significant 7	Significant 6	Significant 5	Significant 4	Limited Significance 3	Little Significance 2	No Significance 1	Average Ranking Score
Demands	20 (24%)	13 (15%)	16 (19%)	15 (18%)	5 (6%)	5 (6%)	5 (6%)	6 (7%)	5.8
Added Responsibility	0 (0%)	8 (9%)	21 (25%)	21 (25%)	13 (15%)	13 (15%)	6 (7%)	3 (4%)	5.3
Funding	37 (44%)	22 (26%)	14 (16%)	3 (4%)	3 (4%)	2 (2%)	3 (4%)	1 (1%)	6.5
Mandates	19 (22%)	25 (29%)	12 (14%)	18 (21%)	4 (5%)	3 (4%)	2 (2%)	2 (2%)	6.1
Board members	0 (0%)	4 (5%)	3 (4%)	6 (7%)	14 (16%)	21 (25%)	17 (20%)	20 (24%)	2.6
Lack of Community Support	2 (2%)	3 (4%)	3 (4%)	2 (2%)	14 (16%)	21 (25%)	17 (20%)	23 (27%)	2.6
Insufficient Administrative Staff	2 (2%)	6 (7%)	11 (13%)	10 (12%)	18 (21%)	8 (9%)	21 (25%)	9 (11%)	3.6
Board Micro- Management	5 (6%)	4 (5%)	5 (6%)	10 (12%)	14 (16%)	12 (14%)	14 (16%)	21 (25%)	3.4

The highest ranking problem identified by Georgia school superintendents was inadequate funding of schools (6.5). Forty-four percent of the superintendents responded that finance was a problem of great significance, 26% indicated significance, and only one superintendent indicated finance was a problem of no significance. A second problem which was ranked closely to inadequate funding of schools was state reform mandates (6.1). Twenty-two percent of the superintendents responded that state reform mandates were a problem of great significance, 29% a problem of significance, and two superintendents responded that state reform mandates were of no significance. There were also two other problems ranked similarly by the superintendents. These two issues were too many insignificant demands (5.8) and too much added responsibility (5.3). Twenty-four percent of the superintendents identified insignificant demands as an issue and challenge of great significance, 15% indicated significance, and 7% identified insignificant demands as no significance. In rating the issue of too much added responsibility, 50% of the superintendents indicated this issue and challenge as a problem of significance. The remaining problems were not ranked as high as those previously mentioned which were insufficient administrative staff (3.6) in which only two superintendents identified as a problem of great significance, board micro-management (3.4) ranked as a problem of great significance by two superintendents, lack of community support (2.7) identified as a problem of great significance by two superintendents, and difficulty in relations with board members (2.6) ranked as a problem of great significance by no superintendents. An overall analysis of the findings indicated Georgia school superintendents responded their greatest problem was inadequate funding

of schools. Superintendents also expressed concern regarding state and federal reform mandates.

A second series of questions (Questions 21-24) provided superintendents the opportunity to rate issues and challenges facing the school superintendency. Table 15 represents the results for Questions 21-24.

Table 15

Issues and Challenges Facing the School Superintendent

Variable	Great Significance 5	Significant Significance 4	Limited Significance 3	Little Significance 2	No Significance 1	Average Ranking Score
Finance	76 (89%)	8 (10%)	1 (1%)	0	0	4.9
Relations	25 (29%)	28 (33%)	17 (20%)	11 (13%)	4 (5%)	3.7
Time	22 (26%)	37 (44%)	17 (20%)	7 (8%)	2 (2%)	3.8
Mandates	43 (51%)	34 (40%)	7 (8%)	1 (1%)	0	4.4

Georgia school superintendents strongly believed (89%) that finance was a problem of great significance. Ten-percent of the superintendents indicated finance as a problem of significance, resulting in 99% of Georgia school superintendents ranking finance as significant to great challenge in their daily endeavors. The second highest rating related to state and federal mandates in which 51% of the superintendents rated the item with great significance and 40% as significant. Twenty-six percent of the superintendents rated personal time management as a problem with great significance and

44% rated time as significant issue and challenge. The lowest rated issue and challenge was administrator/board relations which 29% of superintendents rated as an issue of great significance and 33% as an issue of significance. Overall, Georgia public school superintendents identified their greatest problem as inadequate funding of schools and were concerned regarding state and federal reform mandates.

Superintendents were given one open-ended question (Question 32) which required them to identify the top three factors that inhibited their effectiveness as a school superintendent. The researcher established categories based on the frequency of responses. Several superintendents provided comments regarding the issues that were identified as impacting their effectiveness. Table 16 represents the themes within the responses, as well as frequencies of responses for Question 32.

Table 16

Top Three Factors Inhibiting Effectiveness

<u>n</u>	<u>% of responses (n = 85)</u>	<u>Description</u>
54	64%	Financial Issues
30	35%	State and Federal Mandates
17	20%	Lack of time
13	15%	Board Members
11	13%	Inadequate staffing
7	8%	Lack of Parent Support
1	1%	Transient Population, Testing Requirements

In responding to the open-ended question, 64% of the superintendents identified finance as the greatest issue and challenge and 35 % identified state reform mandates. These results supported the findings of the previous questions in which superintendents ranked the issues and challenges they encountered as school superintendents.

A third series of questions within the survey instrument required superintendents to identify the challenges and obstacles encountered by school board members. One of the survey questions (Question 19) asked superintendents to rank problems board members face with values ranging from “8” indicating “great significance” to “1” indicating “little or no significance” as answer choices. Four questions (Questions 24-28) required superintendents to use a Likert Scale with values ranging from “5” indicating “great significance” to “1” indicating “no significance” regarding how board members would rate issues and challenges facing the school superintendency. Table 17 represents the ratings for each of the answer responses for Question 19.

Table 17  
 Superintendent Perceptions of Problems Faced by Board Members

Variables	Great Significance 8	7	6	5	4	Limited Significance 3	Little Significance 2	No Significance 1	Average Ranking Score
Finance	43 (51%)	10 (12%)	4 (5%)	7 (8%)	9 (11%)	8 (9%)	3 (4%)	1 (1%)	6.4
Community Pressure	12 (14%)	30(35%)	12 (14%)	9 (11%)	6 (7%)	6 (7%)	5 (6%)	5 (6%)	5.6
Employee Relations	1 (1%)	3 (4%)	18 (21%)	10 (12%)	16 (19%)	11 (13%)	17 (20%)	9(11%)	3.9
Curriculum	1 (1%)	5 (6%)	8 (9%)	10 (12%)	12 (14%)	15 (18%)	17 (20%)	17(20%)	3.3
Internal Board Conflict	2 (2%)	2 (2%)	7 (8%)	13 (15%)	8 (9%)	13 (15%)	13 (15%)	27 (32%)	3.1
Understanding Appropriate Board Role	9 (11%)	5 (6%)	9(11%)	16(19%)	13 (15%)	10 (12%)	15 (18%)	8 (9%)	3.9
Avoid Micro- Management	4 (5%)	11(13%)	15(18%)	12 (14%)	7(8%)	18 (21%)	9 (11%)	9 (11%)	4.3
Special Interest Groups	13 (15%)	19 (22%)	12 (14%)	8 (9%)	14 (16%)	4 (5%)	6 (7%)	9 (11%)	5.2



Superintendents identified financial issues (6.4) as the most significant problem faced by school board members. Fifty-one percent of the superintendents indicated finance was a problem of great significance; only one superintendent indicated finance was a problem of no significance. The next two problems for school board members identified by school superintendents were community pressure (5.6) and pressure from special interest groups (5.2). Thirty-five percent of the respondents indicated that community pressure was a problem of significance and 22% indicated pressure from special interest groups as a significant problem. The remaining problems were rated similarly to one another and are listed respectively: 1) avoiding micromanagement (4.3) identified by four superintendents as a problem of great significance, 2) understanding appropriate board role (3.9) indicated as a problem of great significance by nine superintendents, 3) employee relations (3.9) ranked as greatly significant by 1 superintendent, 4) curriculum issues (3.3) identified as a problem of great significance by one superintendent, and 5) internal board conflict (3.1) a greatly significant problem recognized by two superintendents. Overall, superintendents identified the same primary challenge for board members as they identified for themselves; inadequate financing to effectively operate the school district.

The final series of questions (Questions 25-28) were the same questions asked of superintendents in Questions 21-24. The difference between Questions 25-28 was superintendents were asked to respond as they felt their board might rate the issues and challenges facing the school superintendency. Table 18 represents the results for Questions 25-28.

Table 18

Issues and Challenges Facing the School Superintendent as Rated by Board Members

Variable	Great Significance 5	Significant 4	Limited Significance 3	Little Significance 2	No Significance 1	Average Ranking Score
Finance	74 (87%)	9 (11%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	0	4.8
Relations	17 (20%)	28 (33%)	17 (20%)	16 (19%)	7 (8%)	3.4
Time	12 (14%)	26 (31%)	26 (31%)	20 (23%)	1 (1%)	3.3
Mandates	36 (42%)	40 (47%)	8 (9%)	0	1 (1%)	4.3

The ratings by respondents indicated similarities between the scores from Questions 21-24 and Questions 25-28. For Question 25, Superintendents (87%) responded that finance was a problem of great significance that would be identified by school board members. Finance was also ranked as the number one problem as identified by superintendents in Question 21. The second most prevalent problem that superintendents felt would be rated by school board members was federal and state mandates. Forty-two percent of the superintendents believed school board members would rank mandates as a problem of great significance. Superintendents also rated federal and state mandates as a problem that was of great significance. Twenty-percent of the superintendents responded that school board members would rate administrator/board relations as a problem of great significance. The lowest ranked item, time management, was viewed by superintendents as a problem board members would rate 14% at a level of great significance. Overall, Georgia school superintendents, when

rating as to how board members viewed issues and challenges, identified finance as the biggest issue and challenge with state and federal mandates as the second greatest challenge.

The researcher used independent t-test to compare superintendent responses to Questions 21, 22, 23, and 24 and to determine levels of significance within those responses according to the following areas: 1) gender and 2) number of superintendentcies held. The results indicated that there was no significant difference between the superintendents' responses to Questions 21-24 according to the number of superintendentcies they have held thus far in their career. When studying specific components and the gender of the respondents, significance of variance was reported for Question 23 regarding time management. Female superintendents reported time management as more of an issue and challenge of greater significance than male superintendents within the study. Tables 19 and 20 present t-tests analysis from Questions 21, 22, 23, and 24 by gender and number of superintendentcies held.

Table 19

Comparison of Superintendents within the Research Study by Gender

	Mean	Standard Deviation	t	p
Finance			-1.163	.248
Male	4.85	.399		
Female	4.96	.209		
Relations			-.216	.830
Male	3.68	1.128		
Female	3.74	1.287		

Table 19 (continued)

	Mean	Standard Deviation	t	p
Time			-2.289	.025*
Male	3.68	1.004		
Female	4.22	.850		
Mandates			-1.244	.217
Male	4.35	.704		
Female	4.57	.662		

p = <.05

Table 20

Comparison of Superintendents within the Research Study by Number of Superintendencies

	Mean	Standard Deviation	t	p
Finance			1.471	.145
1 superintendency	4.92	.277		
More than 1	4.79	.509		
Relations			1.598	.114
1 superintendency	3.82	1.118		
More than 1	3.38	1.245		
Time			.427	.670
1 superintendency	3.85	.997		
More than 1	3.75	.989		
Mandates			-.041	.968
1 superintendency	4.41	.716		
More than 1	4.42	.654		

Superintendents were provided the opportunity through Question 31, an open ended question, to identify the characteristics of an effective superintendent. Several superintendents identified communication skills, honesty, and knowledge of curriculum and reform trends as characteristics of effective superintendents. Respondent 34 reported the characteristics of an effective superintendent, “Honest, consistent, trustworthy, fair, good listener, focused on the vision and mission of system, knows oneself, courageous, and diplomatic.” Other superintendents reported the following characteristics, “good listener, sense of humor, knowledgeable, consensus building skill, not taking over to be more important than others” (57), and “honesty, patience, insight, tact, and persistence” (68). Respondent 63 reported, “An effective superintendent must be an effective leader. He/She must be a person of integrity. Loyalty and trust are essential. The decisions made must focus on children and providing the best quality education for each child. An effective superintendent must be a good listener. He/she must be able to select quality staff to allow them to do their job.” Table 21 represents the themes and frequencies of the responses for Question 31.

Table 21

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 Characteristics of an Effective Superintendent
 

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<u>n</u>	% of responses (n = 85)	Description
27	32%	Communication Skills
24	28%	Knowledge of educational practices and trends
22	26%	Honesty and integrity

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Table 21 (continued)

<u>n</u>	% of responses (n = 85)	Description
18	21%	Vision
18	21%	Knowledge of Resources
14	17%	Interpersonal skills
11	13%	Good listener
5	6%	Love for children
4 or less	5 or less	Organizational skills; lifelong learner; fair and consistent; positive and enthusiastic; always building positive relationships

Georgia public school superintendents (32%) believed communication skills was the most important characteristic of an effective superintendent. In addition, 28% of the respondents indicated knowledge of educational practices and trends were important characteristics, as well as 26% of the superintendents felt honesty and integrity were important characteristics of an effective superintendent. Twenty-one percent of the superintendents believed an effective superintendent possessed vision and a knowledge of resources available for the school district. Interpersonal skills were identified by 17% of the respondents, and the ability to be a good listener by 13% of Georgia public school superintendents. Six-percent of the superintendents identified love for children and less than five-percent identified organizational skills, the ability to be a lifelong learner, fairness and consistency, enthusiasm and the ability to build positive relationships as

characteristics of effective superintendents. Overall, Georgia public school superintendents believed effective superintendents are good communicators who are knowledgeable of their field, with vision and interpersonal skills that enable them to be effective public school superintendents.

Georgia public school superintendents identified the greatest challenge for superintendents and for school board members as finance with additional concerns in the area of state and federal reform mandates. According to number of superintendencies held, Georgia school superintendents did not differ in their perceptions of their greatest challenges. However, female superintendents within the state of Georgia indicated time management was a greater challenge than did male superintendents within the analysis of the data. Georgia public school superintendents identified communication skills, vision, and interpersonal skills as characteristics of effective school superintendents.

#### *Georgia Public School Superintendents' Satisfaction with Their Careers*

Five survey questions (Questions 17, 20, 29, 30 & 33) assessed superintendents' perceptions concerning their satisfaction with their careers and helped answer the fourth research question which identified the level of Georgia public school superintendents' satisfaction with their careers. Each of the five questions (Questions 17, 20, 29, 30 & 33) presented in the survey allowed the researcher to obtain information from three categories in relation to the career satisfaction of the school superintendent. These three categories were: 1) superintendent perceptions of the stress levels associated with their position, 2) superintendent perceptions of their overall effectiveness and career satisfaction, and 3) superintendent recommendations regarding the career of school superintendent. The final

question on the survey, Question 33, allowed respondents the opportunity to share their career aspirations in the next three to five years.

Question 17 within the survey asked superintendents to identify their level of stress in regard to their occupation as a school superintendent. Table 22 represents the frequencies and percentages of their responses.

Table 22

Superintendent Perceptions of Stress Level

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
No stress	0	0
Little stress	12	14
Moderate Stress	51	60
Considerable Stress	22	26

Georgia school superintendents solidly believed (60%) they experienced moderate stress levels as superintendent. Twenty-six percent of the respondents indicated considerable stress in the position of school superintendent. There were superintendents that indicated (14%) little stress in the occupation. No superintendents indicated that they had no stress within their role as a school superintendent. Overall, Georgia public school superintendents indicated they experience moderate to considerable stress.



Question 20 within the survey researched superintendents' beliefs regarding their overall effectiveness as superintendent. Table 23 represents the frequencies and percentages for this question.

Table 23

Superintendent Perceptions of Overall Effectiveness

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Very Successful	40	47
Successful	44	52
Sometimes Successful	1	1
Not Successful	0	0
Have no idea	0	0

Forty-seven percent of the respondents perceived their overall effectiveness as very successful. Fifty-two percent identified their perception of overall effectiveness as successful. Only one superintendent believed he/she was sometimes successful as school superintendent. No superintendents identified their overall effectiveness as not successful or have no idea. Overall, respondents believed they were effective in their position as school superintendent.

Question 29 and Question 30 allowed superintendents the opportunity to respond to their perception of their satisfaction within the school district and if they would recommend the profession of superintendent of schools as a satisfying career.

Superintendents ranked their responses according to the following scale: “5” indicating “strongly agree”, “4” indicating “somewhat agree”, “3” indicating “neither agree or disagree”, “2” indicating “somewhat disagree”, and “1” indicating “strongly disagree.”

Table 24 represents the responses to Question 29 and Question 30 regarding superintendents’ perceptions of their level of career satisfaction.

Table 24

Superintendent Perceptions of Career Satisfaction

Variable	Strongly Agree 5	Somewhat Agree 4	Neither Agree or Disagree 3	Somewhat Disagree 2	Strongly Disagree 1	Average Ranking Score
Career Satisfaction	69 (81%)	15 (18%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (1%)	4.8
Recommend the Career	42 (49%)	35 (41%)	6 (7%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	4.4

Eighty-one percent of the superintendents responding revealed that they strongly agreed and 18% somewhat agreed with Question 29 which was, “My work in the district has given me real career satisfaction.” Only one (1%) superintendent disagreed with this statement. In regards to Question 30 which was, “In advising fellow educators, I would truly recommend the profession of superintendent of schools as a meaningful and satisfying career”, 49% indicated strong agreement with the statement and 41% somewhat agreed that they would recommend the superintendency as a meaningful and satisfying career. Only six superintendents (7%) responded that they neither agreed or

disagreed with advising fellow educators to pursue the school superintendency as a career. One superintendent (1%) somewhat agreed, and one superintendent (1%) strongly disagreed regarding the recommendation of the superintendency as a career to fellow educators. An analysis of the findings indicated Georgia public school superintendents felt successful and would recommend the superintendency as a career for fellow educators.

Superintendents were given one open-ended question (Question 33) to respond to and offer input regarding their career aspirations within three to five years. The researcher studied the responses to the question and established categories and patterns within the responses. Frequencies of the patterns were recorded by the researcher to chart the number of responses within each category. Not all of the superintendents responded to the question. Responses were grouped into three categories: 1) Remain a superintendent, 2) Transition to another field related to present position, and 3) Retirement. Several superintendents responded, “Be the best superintendent I can be for my school district” (4), “continue improvement of myself and of our school system” (28), and “continue in my district to build an exceptional team of leaders” (75). Table 25 represents the themes and frequencies of responses for Question 33.

Table 25

## Career Aspirations

<u>n</u>	% of responses (n = 85)	Description
41	48%	Remain a superintendent
33	39%	Retirement
4	5%	Pursue a job in a related field

The majority (48%) of Georgia public school superintendents indicated they would remain a school superintendent within the next three to five years. Thirty-nine percent of the school superintendents responded they would be retiring, and 5% indicated their plan was to pursue a job related to education. Overall, Georgia public school superintendents indicated their career aspiration for the next three to five years was to continue as a school superintendent.

Georgia public school superintendents indicated despite the moderate to considerable stress experienced in the position, they felt effective in their positions, and were satisfied with their careers as school superintendents. The respondents agreed they would recommend the superintendency as a career and plan to remain public school superintendents for the next three to five years.

## Summary

The researcher investigated Georgia public school superintendents' perceptions of the overall characteristics of the position. Data was collected from a questionnaire containing 33 items that measured four areas of the Georgia public school superintendency: (1) superintendent characteristics (gender, age, race, number of years as a school superintendent, number of public school superintendencies held, location of the school district, and size of the school district), (2) superintendent/school board relations, (3) challenges of the superintendency, and (4) the level of career satisfaction of the superintendents. The researcher collected and analyzed both quantitative and qualitative data.

The researcher sent surveys to all 180 public school superintendents within the state of Georgia. Of the 180 superintendents that were mailed surveys, 86 chose to respond and return surveys. The total of 86 surveys received, established a return rate of 48% for the study. One survey was returned with a letter indicating that the superintendent had only been in his position for three weeks and was not comfortable completing the survey. Therefore, 85 of the 86 surveys were used in the analyzing of data.

The researcher analyzed data using both quantitative and qualitative research methods to answer the research questions within the study. The first question within the study focused on the demographics of Georgia public school superintendents. Through the utilization of frequency data, the researcher was able to conclude that the majority of superintendents within the state of Georgia are white males, between the ages of 51-55, in their first superintendency. The respondents had at least four to five years in the

superintendency and were predominately employed in rural school districts with more than 3,000 students.

A second research question focused on Georgia public school superintendents' perceptions of school board/superintendent relations. The majority of Georgia's school superintendents believe they were hired due to their personal characteristics, as well as their ability to be an instructional leader for the school district. Superintendents' indicated their perception of the board's primary expectation of them was to be the educational leader of the school system. Respondents strongly agreed that their school boards are active, aligned with community interest, and are qualified to handle their duties on the school board. These superintendents indicated they take the lead in policy development with their board accepting policy recommendations 90-100% of the time. The majority of Georgia public school superintendents are evaluated annually with their current level of evaluation as excellent. School superintendents believed the primary reason for the board evaluating them was to provide periodic and systematic accountability.

The third research question required the respondents to identify the challenges and issues they encounter as school superintendents from their perspective, as well as from the perspective of school board members. Georgia public school superintendents identified their greatest problem as inadequate funding of schools and were concerned regarding state and federal reform mandates. The respondents also, when rating as to how board members may view issues and challenges, identified finance as the biggest issue and challenge with state and federal mandates as the second greatest challenge. The researcher applied independent t-tests to examine for variances according to gender and

number of superintendencies held in regards to the results of the greatest issues and challenges facing superintendents. There was no significant difference in responses when compared with number of superintendencies held. When comparing gender, the researcher reported a significant difference between females and males regarding time management as a challenge in the superintendency. Female superintendents identified time management as more of an issue and challenge than male superintendents within the study.

A fourth research question determined the current level of Georgia public school superintendents' satisfaction with their careers. The majority of the respondents indicated they experienced moderate to considerable stress in their position; however, they perceived themselves as very successful or successful as school superintendent. Georgia public school superintendents were in strong agreement that their work in their districts had given them career satisfaction and that they would recommend the superintendency as a career to fellow educators. A discussion of the findings and implications of these findings is included in Chapter V.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

A position developed nearly 170 years ago, the public school superintendent has been forced into a constant state of evolution and required to adapt to a myriad of social, economic, and political conditions. Public school superintendents are impacted on a daily basis by an intricate mix of state and local authority, political and economic constraints, and the needs of students and the community. Despite all of these factors, public school superintendents are charged with having the vision to determine the current state of a school district and where the district should be directed in the future.

There have been a number of national studies conducted on the public school superintendency. All of these studies have provided data based on national samples. To date, there has been no study conducted specific to the public school superintendency in the state of Georgia. The purpose of this study was to provide a snapshot of the current superintendents within the state of Georgia, provide information regarding superintendent relations with school board members, challenges faced by these superintendents, and their level of satisfaction with the superintendency.

#### Summary

The researcher's purpose was to study Georgia public school superintendents' perceptions of the overall characteristics of the position. A descriptive research design was used by the researcher to address the following research questions:

1. What are the demographics of Georgia public school superintendents?
2. What are Georgia public school superintendents' perceptions of school board/superintendent relations?



3. What are the challenges facing Georgia public school superintendents?
4. What is the level of Georgia public school superintendents' satisfaction with their careers?

The researcher sent surveys to all 180 school superintendents serving within the state of Georgia as found in the *Georgia Public Education Directory*. The survey was accompanied by a cover letter explaining the study, as well as a self-addressed stamped envelope for easy return. Two weeks from the date of the initial mailing, the researcher sent a follow-up postcard to all participants within the study. A third mailing was necessary to increase the return rate and to ensure an adequate number of participants were in the study. The researcher received 86 surveys which established a return rate of 48% for the study. The survey instrument was constructed to allow the researcher to collect both quantitative and qualitative data to explore Georgia public school superintendents' perceptions of the overall characteristics of the position.

#### Analysis of Research Findings

The researcher analyzed data using both quantitative and qualitative research methods to answer the research questions within the study. The researcher was able to conclude that the majority of superintendents within the state of Georgia are white males, between the ages of 51-55, in their first superintendency. The respondents had at least four to five years in the superintendency and were predominately employed in rural school districts with more than 3,000 students.

The majority of Georgia's school superintendents believe they were hired due to their personal characteristics, as well as their ability to be an instructional leader for the school district. Superintendents' indicated their perception of the board's primary

expectation of them was to be the educational leader of the school system. Respondents strongly agreed that their school boards are active, aligned with community interest, and are qualified to handle their duties on the school board. These superintendents indicated they take the lead in policy development with their board accepting policy recommendations 90-100% of the time. The majority of Georgia public school superintendents are evaluated annually with their current level of evaluation as excellent. School superintendents believed the primary reason for the board evaluating them was to provide periodic and systematic accountability.

Georgia public school superintendents identified their greatest problem as inadequate funding of schools and were concerned regarding state and federal reform mandates. When rating how board members may view issues and challenges, the respondents identified finance as the biggest issue and challenge with state and federal mandates as the second greatest challenge. The researcher applied independent t-tests to examine for variances according to gender and number of superintendencies held in relation to the results of the greatest issues and challenges facing superintendents. There was no significant difference in responses when compared with the number of superintendencies held. When comparing gender, the researcher reported a significant difference between females and males regarding time management as a challenge in the superintendency. Female superintendents identified time management as more of an issue and challenge than male superintendents within the study.

The majority of the respondents indicated they experienced moderate to considerable stress in their position; however, they perceived themselves as very successful or successful as school superintendent. Georgia public school superintendents

were in strong agreement that their work in their districts had given them career satisfaction and that they would recommend the superintendency as a career to fellow educators.

### Discussion of Research Findings

The researcher gathered data from Georgia public school superintendents regarding their perceptions of the overall characteristics of their position, including demographical information, school/board superintendent relations, challenges faced by superintendents, and the level of superintendents' satisfaction with their careers. The researcher's findings provided current data for the state of Georgia which was not available, as well as strengthened data previously gathered in a national study on the school superintendency. The following discussion of research findings was presented in response to the four research questions stated in Chapter IV and the major themes stated in the literature review in Chapter II.

#### *Demographics of Georgia Public School Superintendents*

Research findings have indicated that the demographics of public school superintendents have not changed greatly into the new millennium (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000). National research studies have previously shown that the majority of superintendents across the United States were white males, between 50-59 years of age with an average of 14-17 years in the superintendency in two to three school districts (Glass, 2001; Cooper, Fusarelli, & Carella, 2000; Glass et al., 2000; Hodgkinson & Montenegro, 1999). Georgia school superintendents did not vary from the national sample in regards to gender, race, and age. The majority of Georgia superintendents were white (91.8%) males (72.9%) between the ages of 51-60 (71.7%). However, Georgia

school superintendents did vary from the national sample in regards to years of experience. Twenty-three percent of Georgia school superintendents had four to five years of experience, and only 10% of respondents had more than 14 years experience as a school superintendent. Results of a national study revealed a higher percentage with 52% of the superintendents across the nation averaging more than 14 years experience as a school superintendent (Glass, 2001). Overall, Georgia school superintendents were found to be similar to the national sample with the exception of years experience in the superintendency.

#### *Superintendent Perceptions of Relations with School Board Members*

Hodgkinson & Montenegro (1999) indicated that the selection of a school superintendent that does not share the same goals and vision of the board can “make life miserable” for school boards, as well as superintendents. Georgia superintendents were in agreement that they were hired due to their personal characteristics (3.9) and for their ability to be an instructional leader (3.5). These results are similar to the results of national studies of school superintendents who attributed their hiring to personal characteristics and to serve as instructional leaders for the school system (Glass, 1992; Glass, Bjork & Brunner, 2000). Overwhelmingly, Georgia school superintendents identified the board’s expectation for them was to be educational leaders of the school system.

The relationship between the superintendent and school board has been identified as one of the critical factors in the success of the school system (Davis, 1993). Georgia school superintendents (52%) reported board members were qualified to handle their duties as school board members which was less than the results of a Colorado study

in which 69% of Colorado superintendents felt their school board members were qualified for their positions (Colorado Association of School Executives, 2003). Georgia public school superintendents (63.5%) believed their school board members were active and aligned with community interests, which was similar to the findings of the national study in which 66% of the respondents indicated their board members were active and aligned with the interests of the community (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000).

Georgia superintendents firmly agreed (68.2%) that they take the lead in policy development, which was greater than the superintendents in the national study who initiated policy development 42.9% of the time as school superintendent (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner's, 2000). Georgia school superintendents (92.9%) reported board members accepted their policy recommendations 90-100% of the time indicating a higher number than the 88.6% reported by superintendents within the national study (Glass et.al.).

Review of the literature revealed that evaluation of the school superintendent allowed for communication and dialogue between the school board and superintendent (Castallo, 2003). Georgia superintendents indicated the primary reason for their evaluation was to provide periodic and systematic accountability. The responses of Georgia superintendents regarding the purpose evaluation were consistent with the responses from two national studies conducted on the school superintendency (Glass, 1992; Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000).

When responding to how often they were evaluated, the majority (94%) responded they were evaluated annually and their current level of evaluation was excellent (68%). Georgia school superintendents differed from the national sample regarding frequency of evaluation as 80.3% of superintendents within the national sample

were evaluated annually; however, results were similar regarding the level of the evaluation with 69.1% of the superintendents from the national sample receiving a rating of excellent (Glass, et. al).

#### *Challenges Facing Georgia Public School Superintendents*

Superintendents supported Glass, Bjork, & Brunner's findings (2000) regarding finance as the greatest challenge faced by school superintendents. The majority of Georgia superintendents (89%) identified finance as a challenge of great significance not only for superintendents, but also for board members within school districts. Although time management was not identified as the biggest problem for Georgia superintendents, female superintendents within the state of Georgia reported time management as a greater concern than male superintendents.

#### *Career Satisfaction of Georgia Public School Superintendents*

The majority of Georgia school superintendents (86%) indicated they experience moderate to considerable stress in their position as school superintendent. The stress level identified by Georgia superintendents is less than superintendents across the nation who indicated 92.4% felt moderate to considerable amounts of stress in the superintendency (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000). Although Georgia superintendents indicated moderate to considerable stress levels, 99% of superintendents perceived themselves as very successful or successful as a school superintendent, which was only slightly larger than the 97.1% of superintendents within the national study that felt successful in the superintendency (Glass, et. al.).

Ninety-nine percent of Georgia public school superintendents believed their jobs had given them career satisfaction, which was higher than the findings of Cooper,

Fusarelli, & Carella's (2000) national study on the school superintendency which indicated 91% of superintendents felt satisfaction with their careers. Overwhelmingly, Georgia school superintendents (90%) would recommend the career of school superintendent to fellow educators, supportive of Kowalski's (1999) findings that indicated many who enter the position have no regrets despite long hours and demanding challenges.

### Conclusions

The researcher has concluded from the study that:

1. Georgia school superintendents responding to the survey can be characterized as primarily males, between the ages of 51-60 who are in their first superintendency in rural school districts.
2. Georgia school superintendents attributed their hiring to personal characteristics and their ability to be an instructional leader.
3. Georgia school superintendents identified the board's expectation for them was to be the educational leader of the school system.
4. Georgia school superintendents reported their boards were active and aligned with community interest, not rigid.
5. Georgia school superintendents responded that their board members were qualified to perform their duties.
6. Georgia school superintendents indicated their policy recommendations were accepted 90-100% of the time.
7. Georgia school superintendents responded that they take the lead in policy development.

8. Georgia school superintendents reported that they were evaluated annually and their current level of evaluation was excellent.
9. Georgia school superintendents indicated the primary reason for their evaluation was to provide periodic and systematic accountability.
10. Georgia school superintendents identified their greatest challenge as finance, and their second greatest challenge as state and federal reform mandates. This was also identified by superintendents when rating how they felt their school board members would rate the issues and challenges. Female superintendents also identified time management as a challenge as a superintendent.
11. Georgia school superintendents responded that they felt moderate to considerable stress in their position as superintendent.
12. Georgia school superintendents reported that they felt successful and would recommend the superintendency as a career for fellow educators.

### Implications

The purpose of the study was to provide an overview of the individuals currently serving as school superintendents in the state of Georgia, as well as gain superintendents' perceptions of their relations with school board members, challenges in the superintendency, and their level of satisfaction with their careers. The researcher's findings are beneficial for several groups within the state of Georgia. These groups include current superintendents, aspiring superintendents, school board members, professional organizations, policy makers, and institutions of higher education. Through the demographic information provided by the study, each group now has a snapshot of the superintendents serving Georgia school districts.



Current superintendents, aspiring superintendents, school board members, professional organizations, policy makers, and institutions of higher education need to be aware of the importance of the relationship between the superintendent and school board members. Superintendents have identified their relationship with their school board as an important component of their success in the district. The researcher's findings give superintendents and school board members a comprehensive view from the superintendent's perspective regarding the relationship between the superintendent and school board members. Institutions of higher education and professional organizations may benefit from the information regarding school board/superintendent relationships to assist in the development of training and induction programs for current and aspiring superintendents. School board members may benefit from understanding the superintendents' perspective in their future relations with school superintendents, as well as during the selection of a new school superintendent.

Many superintendents are feeling frustrated with the lack of financial resources for their district, as well as have concerns regarding state and federal mandates. These superintendents are concerned that school districts are not receiving the funds to implement the required state and federal mandates. Policy makers may benefit from the identification of these challenges in the superintendency and should consider these before establishing policies and mandates that impact education. One solution could be to create school district teams to focus on challenges, such as finance to develop more efficient use of resources which may assist in alleviating some of the frustration of the school superintendent. In addition, institutions of higher education and professional organizations may need to consider professional learning opportunities that traditionally

have been associated with business administration to provide additional training to public school superintendents.

All groups within the state of Georgia may gain an appreciation for superintendents, as well as understand that all superintendents are affected by their relations with school board members and the challenges they encounter each day. Although superintendents indicated satisfaction with their careers, they also expressed moderate to considerable levels of stress. These concerns further emphasize the importance of networking opportunities for school superintendents. Professional organizations need to recognize the contributions of school superintendents, as well as provide ways for superintendents to share ideas and exchange solutions for the challenges they encounter each day.

The researcher's findings provide specific data that has not been available regarding superintendents within the state of Georgia. Current superintendents, aspiring superintendents, school board members, professional organizations, policy makers, and institutions of higher education may benefit from the information revealed through this study of the Georgia public school superintendency.

#### Recommendations

1. The researcher's findings were limited to the perceptions of Georgia school superintendents. Further research should be conducted involving school board members to determine if superintendent perceptions of board members are accurate.
2. The researcher's findings indicated that finance was a significant problem for school superintendents. Colleges of education and professional organizations

should be interested in the results of this study to consider in the design of courses and professional development opportunities that would help educational leaders in the area of inadequate funding for school districts. In addition, further research should be conducted to determine the specific types of financial problems faced by school superintendents.

3. The researcher's findings indicated that state and federal reform mandates were significant problems for school superintendents. Policy makers should ensure that all mandates are fully funded for successful implementation in school districts.
4. The researcher's findings indicated the majority of Georgia school superintendents are white males. There is a need to identify talented women and minorities to serve as educational leaders within the state, with the understanding that the most qualified and best candidates should still be the most important qualifier for the position of school superintendent.
5. The researcher's findings relate only to the state of Georgia. This study should be replicated in other states as the comparative findings may give a clearer picture of the issues associated with the contemporary school superintendency.
6. The study should be replicated in several years to determine if any changes have occurred regarding the superintendency within the state of Georgia.

#### Dissemination

The findings of this research study will be shared with the Georgia School Superintendents Association to assist the organization in obtaining current information regarding superintendents within the state of Georgia. The researcher will also share the findings of the research study with Dr. Thomas Glass, who serves as the primary

researcher for the national studies of the school superintendency. Research is conducted every ten years by the American Association of School Administrators. Copies of the paper will be on file at the Georgia Southern University Library and will be available electronically through the doctoral dissertations web site.

### Concluding Thoughts

The success of a school system is largely dependent upon the leadership of the school superintendent. Presently, school reform initiatives, as well as state and federal mandates make a once challenging job more difficult than ever before. Despite all of these challenges, school superintendents remain satisfied with their careers. All of these factors should be taken into consideration when training educational leaders to be visionary, data driven leaders who can communicate what is most important in any school system- students.

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## APPENDICES

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER AND THE GEORGIA  
PUBLIC SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENCY SURVEY



**DEPARTMENT OF LEADERSHIP, TECHNOLOGY, AND HUMAN  
DEVELOPMENT**

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**INFORMED CONSENT LETTER**

Dear Superintendent,

My name is Mychele Swain and I am the principal of J.A. Maxwell Elementary School in Thomson, Georgia. I am currently working on my doctorate in Educational Leadership from Georgia Southern University and would greatly appreciate your assistance.

The purpose of my research study is to collect data regarding Georgia school superintendents. Currently, all research findings on the school superintendency are based on national studies. There is no data available specifically to the state of Georgia. The research study will provide a snapshot of the current superintendents within the state of Georgia, provide information regarding superintendent relations with school board members, challenges faced by these superintendents, and their level of satisfaction with the superintendency.

I am asking that you sign the Informed Consent Letter, complete the attached survey, and return both documents to me using the self-addressed, stamped envelope by February 17, 2006. The survey contains 33 items and should take less than 35 minutes for you to complete. Several groups within the state of Georgia will benefit from your participation in this research study. These groups will include; current and aspiring superintendents and school board members, institutions of higher education, as well as professional organizations within the state of Georgia. Through the demographic information provided by this study, each of these groups will have a snapshot of the current school superintendents serving Georgia schools. The researcher's findings will allow current and aspiring superintendents and school board members to understand the status of the relationships between superintendents and school boards within the state of Georgia, as well as the challenges faced by these superintendents, and their level of career satisfaction.

There will be minimum risks for participating within this study, no greater risks than encountered in everyday life. The risks for participating involve confidentiality due to the collection of your detailed demographical information. After receiving the survey data, I ensure your confidentiality by storing the data in a locked cabinet in my home and by destroying the survey data upon completion of the research study. If this research is

published, no information that would identify you will be written. There is no penalty if you decide not to participate in this research study. You can end your participation at any time by contacting the researcher. In addition, you do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. You must be 18 years of age or older to participate in this research study. If you have any questions or would like a copy of the completed research study, please email me at [mycheleswain@bellsouth.net](mailto:mycheleswain@bellsouth.net) or call 706-986-4810. To contact the Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs for answers to questions about the rights of research participants please email [oversight@georgiasouthern.edu](mailto:oversight@georgiasouthern.edu) or call (912) 486-7758.

Title of Project: The Georgia Public School Superintendency: An Exploration of the Profession.

Principal Investigator: Mychele C. Swain, P.O. Box 1985, Thomson, Georgia 30824, 706-736-5734 (Home) 706-986-4810 (Work) [mycheleswain@bellsouth.net](mailto:mycheleswain@bellsouth.net)

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Participant Signature

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Date

I, the undersigned, verify that the above informed consent procedure has been followed.

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Investigator Signature

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Date

### The Georgia Public School Superintendency: An Exploration of The Profession

**This survey is intended to collect information regarding the current superintendents serving within the state of Georgia. The data will be used for research purposes only. Participation is optional, and there is no penalty should you decide not to complete the questionnaire, but your responses are very important to the quality of this study. Completion of this questionnaire will indicate your permission to use these data. Your responses will remain confidential and all data will be aggregates so no individual can be identified. Thank you for your assistance with this important study.**

**If you have any questions about this research project, please call Mychele Swain at (706) 986-4810. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant in this study, they should be directed to the Georgia Southern University IRB Coordinator at the Office of Research Services and Sponsored Program at (912) 681-5465.**

Directions: Please complete the following items by placing an "X" in the appropriate blank.

<p>1. Gender</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Male</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Female</p>	<p>4. Years as a school superintendent</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 1            <input type="checkbox"/> 14-15</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 2-3          <input type="checkbox"/> 16+</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 4-5</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 6-7</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 8-9</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 10-11</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 12-13</p>
<p>2. Age</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 30-35      <input type="checkbox"/> 51-55</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 36-40      <input type="checkbox"/> 56-60</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 41-45      <input type="checkbox"/> 61-65</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 46-50      <input type="checkbox"/> 66 +</p>	<p>5. How many public school superintendencies have you held? Include your present position.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 1            <input type="checkbox"/> 6</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 2            <input type="checkbox"/> More</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 3</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 4</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 5</p>
<p>3. Racial/Ethnic Group</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> White</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Black</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Native American</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Asian</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Pacific Islander</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify): _____</p>	



<p>6. Which best describes the community in which you are located?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Urban</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Suburban</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Rural</p>	<p>10. How would you characterize your school board? (Check all that apply)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Dominated by the elite in the community</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Represents distinct factions in the community and votes accordingly</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Active, aligned with community interests, not rigid</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Not active, accepting of recommendations made by the professional staff</p>
<p>7. How many students are enrolled in your school district?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> More than 3,000</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 1,000-3,000</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Less than 1,000</p>	<p>11. How often does the board of education accept policy recommendations presented by you?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 90-100 % of time</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 80-89 % of time</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 70-79 % of time</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 60-69 % of time</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 50-59 % of time</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Less than 49 % of time</p>
<p>8. What is your perception of the most important reason you were employed by your present board of education? (Rank these items from 1-5; 5 indicating great significance, 1 indicating little or no significance.)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Personal characteristics (honesty, tact, etc.)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Potential to be a change agent</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Ability to maintain the status quo</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Ability to be an instructional leader</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No particular reason</p>	<p>12. In your opinion, which of the following are your Board's primary expectations of you as a superintendent? (Rank these items from 1-5; 5 indicating great significance, 1 indicating little or no significance.)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Educational leader (curriculum and instruction)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Political leader (board and community relations)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Managerial leader (general management, budget &amp; finance)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Leader of school reform</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other/Please specify:</p>
<p>9. How often does your Board evaluate your job performance?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Annually</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Semi-annually</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> At contract renewal time only</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Never</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____</p>	

<p>13. Indicate the current level of evaluation given to you by your board.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Excellent</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Good</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Average</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Below average</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Not evaluated</p>	<p>16. In your present superintendency, what is your opinion concerning the general abilities and preparation of board members to handle their duties?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Very well-qualified</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Qualified</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Not well-qualified</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Incompetent</p>
<p>14. In your opinion, which of the following are reasons for your Board evaluating you? (Rank these items from 1-4; 4 indicating great significance, 1 indicating little or no significance.)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> To provide periodic and systematic accountability</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> To identify areas needing improvement</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> To point out strengths</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> To document general dissatisfaction with performance</p>	<p>17. The superintendency is often described as a stressful occupation. Do you, in performing your role as superintendent, feel:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No stress</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Little stress</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Moderate stress</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Considerable stress</p>
<p>15. Who takes the lead in policy development? (Select only one)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> School board</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> School board chairperson</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Superintendent</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Shared responsibility</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other</p>	<p>18. From your perspective, which of the following factors most inhibits your effectiveness as superintendent? (Rank these items from 1-8; 8 indicating great significance, 1 indicating little or no significance.)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Too many insignificant demands</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Too much added responsibility</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Inadequate financing of schools</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> State reform mandates</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty in relations with board members</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Lack of community support</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Insufficient administrative staff</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Board micromanagement</p>

<p>19. As superintendent, what do you see as the most difficult problem your board members face as board members? (Rank these items from 1-8; 8 indicating great significance, 1 indicating little or no significance.)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Financial issues</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Community pressure</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Employee relations</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Curriculum issues</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Internal board conflict</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Understanding appropriate board role</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Avoiding micromanagement</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Pressure from special interest groups</p>	<p>20. How do you perceive your overall effectiveness as superintendent?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Very successful</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Successful</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes successful</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Not successful</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Have no idea</p>
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**Please rate the following issues and challenges facing the superintendency today in your school district.**

**5) Of Great Significance; 4) Significant; 3) Of Limited Significance; 2) Little Significance; 1) No significance. (Circle the appropriate response)**

	<b>Of Great Significance</b>	<b>Significant</b>	<b>Of Limited Significance</b>	<b>Little Significance</b>	<b>No Significance</b>
21. Financing schools to meet increasing current expenditures and capital outlay	5	4	3	2	1
22. Admin/ board relations	5	4	3	2	1
23. Personal time management	5	4	3	2	1
24. Compliance with state and federal mandates	5	4	3	2	1

**How would your board rate the following issues and challenges facing the superintendency today in your school district?**

**5) Of Great Significance; 4) Significant; 3) Of Limited Significance; 2) Little Significance; 1) No significance. (Circle the appropriate response)**

	<b>Of Great Significance</b>	<b>Significant</b>	<b>Of Limited Significance</b>	<b>Little Significance</b>	<b>No Significance</b>
25. Financing schools to meet increasing current expenditures and capital outlay	5	4	3	2	1
26. Admin/ board relations	5	4	3	2	1
27. Personal time management	5	4	3	2	1
28. Compliance with state and federal mandates	5	4	3	2	1

**Please respond to the following statements concerning career satisfaction by selecting one of these responses for each item:**

**5) Strongly Agree; 4) Somewhat Agree; 3) Neither Agree nor Disagree; 2) Somewhat Disagree; 1) Strongly Disagree. (Circle the appropriate response)**

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Somewhat Agree</b>	<b>Neither Agree or Disagree</b>	<b>Somewhat Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
29. My work in the district has given me real career satisfaction.	5	4	3	2	1
30. In advising fellow educators, I would truly recommend the profession of superintendent of schools as a meaningful and satisfying career.	5	4	3	2	1

**Please respond to the following questions:**

31. What are the characteristics of an effective superintendent?

32. What are the top three factors inhibiting your effectiveness?

33. What are your career aspirations within the next three to five years?

## PERMISSION TO USE SURVEY FROM DR. THOMAS GLASS

**From:** Thomas E Glass <tglass@memphis.edu>  
**To:** Mychele Swain <SwainM@mcduffie.k12.ga.us>  
**Date:** 11/15/2004 2:11:53 PM  
**Subject:** Re: 2000 Survey Instrument

Tom Glass wrote: Yes, but you should customize it and update some of the items.

Mychele Swain wrote:

>Thank you so much! Do I have your permission to use the survey in my  
 >dissertation?

>Mychele

>

>Mychele C. Swain

>Principal

>J. A. Maxwell Elementary School

>520 Mt. Pleasant Road

>Thomson, Georgia 30824

>Phone: (706) 595-1762

>Fax: (706) 595-2023

>

>

>>>>Thomas E Glass <tglass@memphis.edu> 11/15/2004 11:27:06 AM >>>

>>>>

>>>>

>Tom Glass wrote: I have been out of town and just returned and a copy

>

>of the AASA survey is on its way to you. You might also go to the

>website of the Education Commission of the States ([www.ecs.org](http://www.ecs.org)) and

>look

>under leadership/superintendency/glass and you will find the executive

>

>summaries of five national samples that should provide you with a

>framework for your dissertation.

>

>Mychele Swain wrote:

>

>

>

>>Dr. Glass,

>>My name is Mychele Swain. I am an elementary school principal in

>>Thomson, Georgia. This semester I complete my course work for my

>>doctoral degree through Georgia Southern University, and will begin

>>

>>

>>my

>

>

>>dissertation in January.

>>

>>My topic of interest for my dissertation is the superintendency. I

>>initially began researching preparation programs, impact of external

>>influences, and through my research I found the two studies that you

>>have conducted for AASA.

## STUDY PARTICIPANT FOLLOW-UP POST CARD

**Important Survey Information**

Mychele Swain, Principal  
JA. Maxwell Elementary  
520 Mount Pleasant Road

Phone: 706-986-4800

Email:  
mycheleswain@bellsouth.net

Dear Superintendent,

I recently sent you a survey on the Georgia public school superintendency.

I trust you felt a need to respond. Your input is important and vital to my study. If you have already completed and mailed the survey, thank you for your support. If you have not already done so, I would greatly appreciate your assistance. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,  
Mychele C. Swain

## DEMOGRAPHICS OF GEORGIA PUBLIC SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS

### Demographic Data of Participating Superintendents

Variable	<u>N</u>	Percent of Responses
Gender	85	
Male	62	72.9
Female	23	27.1
Age	85	
31-35	1	1.2
36-40	1	1.2
41-45	3	3.5
46-50	14	16.5
51-55	33	38.8
56-60	28	32.9
61-65	3	3.5
66 +	2	2.4
Race	85	
White	78	91.8
Black	6	7.1
Pacific Islander	1	1.2



Variable	<u>N</u>	Percent of Responses
Years as a superintendent	85	
1	10	11.8
2-3	17	20.0
4-5	20	20.0
6-7	13	23.5
8-9	6	7.1
10-11	9	10.6
12-13	1	1.2
14-15	3	3.5
16+	6	7.1
Number of Superintendencies Held	85	
1	60	70.6
2	18	21.2
3	3	3.5
4	4	4.7
Location of District	85	
Urban	6	7.1
Suburban	18	21.2
Rural	61	71.8

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Variable	<u>N</u>	Percent of Responses
Number of Students	85	
More than 3,000	50	58.8
1,000-3,000	30	35.3
Less than 1,000	5	5.9

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## IRB APPROVAL LETTER

Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs		
<b>Institutional Review Board (IRB)</b>		
Phone: 912-681-5465		Administrative Annex
		P.O. Box 8005
Fax: 912-681-0719	Ovrsight@GeorgiaSouthern.edu	Statesboro, GA 30460

**To:** Mychele Swain  
P.O. Box 1985  
Thomson, GA 30824

**CC:** Jim Burnham, Faculty Advisor  
P.O. Box 8131

**From:** Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs  
Administrative Support Office for Research Oversight Committees  
(IACUC/IBC/IRB)

**Date:** January 23, 2006

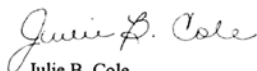
**Subject:** Status of Application for Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research

After a review of your proposed research project numbered: **H06089**, and titled "**The Georgia Public School Superintendency: An Exploration of the Profession**", it appears that (1) the research subjects are at minimal risk, (2) appropriate safeguards are planned, and (3) the research activities involve only procedures which are allowable.

*Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that the Institutional Review Board has approved your proposed research.*

**This IRB approval is in effect for one year from the date of this letter.** If at the end of that time, there have been no changes to the research protocol, you may request an extension of the approval period for an additional year. In the interim, please provide the IRB with any information concerning any significant adverse event, **whether or not it is believed to be related to the study**, within five working days of the event. In addition, if a change or modification of the approved methodology becomes necessary, you must notify the IRB Coordinator **prior** to initiating any such changes or modifications. At that time, an amended application for IRB approval may be submitted. Upon completion of your data collection, you are **required** to complete a *Research Study Termination* form to notify the IRB Coordinator, so your file may be closed.

Sincerely,



Julie B. Cole  
Director of Research Services and Sponsored Programs