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Superintendent and School Board Attitude and Beliefs Alignment and its Relationship to Student Achievement

by

Justin John Blasko

Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

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Superintendent and School Board Attitude and Beliefs Alignment and its Relationship to Student Achievement

by

Justin John Blasko

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirement of the degree of

Doctor of Education

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2016

Approved by _____

(Dr. Thomas Alsbury, Chairperson of the Dissertation Committee)

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(Dr. William Prenevost)

Program Authorized to Offer Degree SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Date August 12, 2016

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(Dr. Rick Eigenbrood, Dean, School of Education)

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Signature Justin A. Blake

Date September 16, 2016

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In the lowest moments, faith in our Lord lifted my spirits and helped me to move forward: Philippians 4:13 "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." All glory should be laid at His feet as I would not have succeeded without my faith.

Seattle Pacific University

Abstract

Superintendent and School Board Attitude and Beliefs Alignment and its Relationship to Student Achievement

By Justin J. Blasko

Chairperson of the Dissertation Committee: Dr. Thomas L. Alsbury
School of Education

Research examining the relationship between school boards and student achievement continues to expand. Many studies have focused on the influence of school board attitudes and beliefs concerning governance. These studies have demonstrated statistical differences between reported attitudes of high achieving school districts and low achieving school districts. This study focuses on the relationship between the school board and superintendent. It specifically addresses whether aligned responses to a governance survey demonstrate a statistical relationship with student achievement.

The study relied upon ex-post facto data available through the Washington State School Directors Association (WSSDA). WSSDA has collected survey data since 2011 using the Board Self-Assessment Survey (BSAS). Phase one of the study identified a sample of school board and superintendent teams meeting pre-determined criterion. Identified teams were then determined to be “aligned” or “unaligned” based on the school board composite BSAS responses compared to the superintendent mean responses. Phase two of the study statistically analyzed aligned and unaligned school board and superintendent teams with corresponding district-level student achievement data. Washington state reading and writing high school proficiency exam (HSPE)

as well as the year 1 end of course (EOC) mathematics exam data from 2014 represented student achievement.

Keywords: School board, superintendent, governance, student achievement, alignment

Chapter 1

Introduction to the Study

Increased accountability focused on student achievement has been a part of the Washington state educational landscape since the early 1990s. Throughout this timeframe, educational research was increasingly designed to measure the effect of curricular initiatives, teachers, administrators, superintendents, and school boards on student achievement. Legislative mandates intended to ensure increased student achievement resulted in school reform focused primarily on improving the capacity of teachers and principals at the school level (No Child Left Behind, 2001; Washington State Educational Reform Act, 1993). Most recently, states across the country, including Washington, legislatively redesigned teacher and principal evaluation requirements and processes in response to the federal Department of Education's competitive Race to the Top (2009) grant continuing the school based focus for improvement. The revised federal policy included punitive economic sanctions for states choosing not to conform to student achievement requirements as measured by summative achievement testing.

Studies have confirmed the relationship between effective teaching and improved student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2009; Haycock & Hanushek, 2010; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005). In addition, researchers identify superintendents and district administrators as crucial components of effective systems specific to student achievement and overall school improvement (Alsbury, 2008 a; Alsbury, 2008 b; Myers, 2011; Plotts & Gutmore, 2014; Simpson, 2013; Waters & Marzano, 2007). Empirical evidence also points to specific attitudes and beliefs of school boards in high functioning systems demonstrated to support student achievement (Alsbury, 2008 a; Delagardelle, 2006; Iowa

Association of School Boards, 2000; Lorentzen, 2013). These studies concluded that school boards influence student achievement and, therefore, high achieving school systems require high functioning school boards (Land, 2002; Lutz & Merz, 1992). While a focus on school boards may seem innovative, history demonstrates earlier efforts to improve school board governance and overall effectiveness to improve student achievement (Carol et al., 1986; Danzberger et al., 1987; Land, 2002).

In order to employ a fully systemic response to improve student achievement, superintendents must prepare their school boards to govern in a manner demonstrated to positively influence student achievement. Efforts to build the capacity of school board members has manifested in different strategies for working to increase student achievement through governance. The National Association of School Boards (2012) reported that more than 20 states require training for school board members. Beyond this training, superintendents are left to determine how to influence their board to govern in a manner supporting the improvement of student achievement in their school districts (IASB, 2000; Land, 2002; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005).

As studies continue to demonstrate a relationship between school boards and improved student achievement, questions emerge for how a superintendent should lead, guide, and support the local school board in adopting research based governance demonstrated to influence student achievement. An examination of superintendents and school boards is needed in order to determine whether alignment of attitudes and beliefs of superintendents and school boards demonstrate a statistically significant relationship to student achievement.

The information collected from this study could be utilized by superintendents to support their school boards in aligning local practice to research based school board characteristics which are demonstrated to support improved student achievement. In addition, superintendent certification programs could include the findings in preparing individuals for the rigors and responsibility of school district leadership, specifically related to working with and supporting the school board in focusing on improving student achievement. Furthermore, state support organizations and associations whose primary purpose is to support superintendents and school boards could utilize this research in building capacity for the districts they serve.

Studies of effective school boards continue to demonstrate the relationship between board attitudes and beliefs and student achievement. The primary purpose for schools has been intensely refocused on student achievement (Lashway, 2002). Continued studies examining school boards and their influence on student achievement are vital for supporting boards working to improve the school system in their local community.

Statement of the Problem

Superintendents must prepare their school boards to govern in a manner focused on improving student achievement; a strong superintendent/board relationship characterized by alignment in attitudes and beliefs is a key attribute of effective board governance and superintendent leadership (Eadie, 2003; National School Board Association, 2015; Washington State School Directors Association, 2014). Empirical evidence has demonstrated significant relationships between certain board attitudes and beliefs and student achievement. In order for school boards to systemically contribute to

the mission of providing all students with opportunities to succeed academically, they must understand how their attitudes and beliefs can influence the likelihood of strong student achievement in their school district.

The responsibility to build knowledge and capacity of the school board rests with the superintendent. While partnering with the board president in championing this work is essential for long term success, ultimately the task centers on superintendent leadership and guidance for a board to govern in a manner aligned to evidenced based practices (Eadie, 2003). The problem this study addresses is determining whether or not alignment of superintendents' and school boards' attitudes and beliefs is significantly related to student achievement. The research question addressed through this study is: Does superintendent and school board alignment of attitudes and beliefs, as measured by the Washington State School Directors Association (WSSDA) Board Self-Assessment Survey (BSAS), demonstrate a statistically significant relationship with student achievement? A non-experimental quantitative analysis of superintendents and school boards participating in the WSSDA BSAS from 2011 - 2015 informed this study.

Purpose of the Study

This study investigates the existence of alignment of superintendent and school board attitudes and beliefs, as self-reported on the WSSDA BSAS, and whether a statistically significant relationship exists between aligned attitudes and beliefs and student achievement. Data will be examined in two phases; phase one will identify school districts meeting the study criterion and determine the level of alignment of superintendent and school board responses on questions organized around five WSSDA school board standards. Alignment will be determined by comparing mean

superintendent responses with their composite school board quorum responses on the BSAS. Phase two analyzes alignment data with Washington state high school proficiency exam (HSPE) and year 1 end of course (EOC) exam results to determine if a statistically significant relationship exists between aligned superintendent and school board responses and student achievement.

Research Question

Does Superintendent and School Board alignment of attitudes and beliefs, as measured by the Washington State School Directors Association Board Self-Assessment Survey, demonstrate a statistically significant relationship with student achievement?

Theoretical Framework

Wirt and Kirst's Decision-Output Theory (1992), has endured over time as a theoretical construct explaining the inner workings of local school board governance. The Decision-Output theory offers insights into observed actions associated with the school board political arena resulting from the empirical examination of the systemic process of school board elections, policy creation, and general governance. The Decision-Output Theory describes the functioning of a school board from an economic perspective emphasizing political pressure exerted from the inputs of community demands and support as well as other outside influences such as interest groups, legislative action, limited/finite resources, and economic realities. This theory suggests that the board acts within the construct of the political system to discern the appropriate response to the inputs provided by these influential forces. This input response then loops back into the cycle as the community reacts and ultimately responds to the board determined output.

Figure 1 demonstrates the cycle of community input, political processing of the input within the governance structure of the district, and the associated output response.

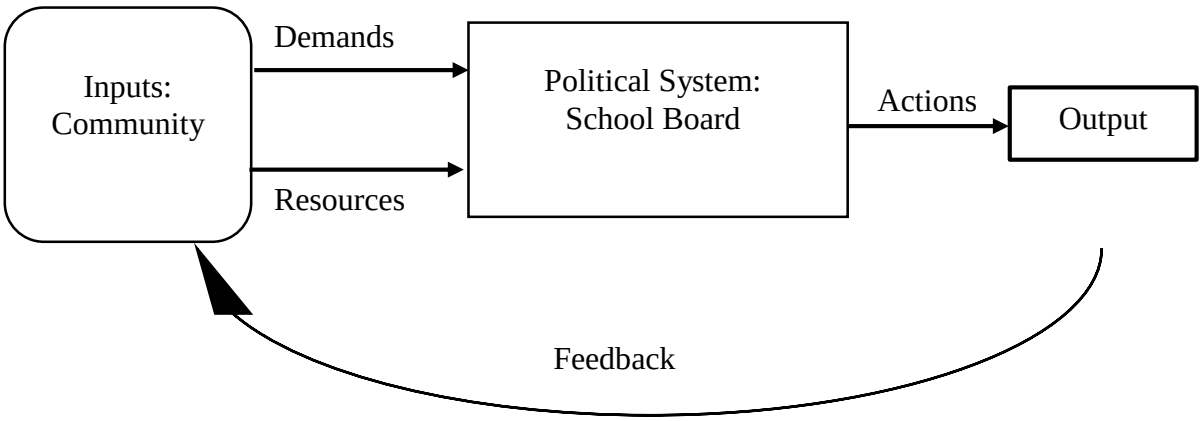

Figure 1. Simplification of Decision-Output Model in School Board Governance

Source: Adapted from *The Political Dynamics of American Education, third edition* by Wirt & Kirst, 2005

Application of the Decision-Output Theory for this study suggests that boards who view their responsibility as upholding the commitment to improve student achievement govern in a manner directed by this mission. When dealing with inputs from external influences, boards determine how best to address the inputs while upholding their commitment to the mission of improving overall student achievement in the district. This study contributes to the decision-output model by examining the alignment of values and beliefs associated with school board governance as reported by both superintendents and school boards on the WSSDA BSAS. Alignment between a superintendent and their school board team could reduce the circumstances identified by Wirt and Kirst's research which create tension between boards and superintendents when determining appropriate responses to inputs. In addition, since the BSAS is designed to measure WSSDA School

Board Standards, the development of which was based on empirically researched board behaviors (P. Gore, personal communication, February 14, 2015; WSSDA, 2009), superintendents working in aligned relationships with their school boards are more likely to behave in a manner associated with educational best practice intended to increase overall student achievement.

Research Design

This study utilized descriptive statistical methods to analyze school board and superintendent responses to the WSSDA Board Self-Assessment Survey, determine alignment among superintendent and school board responses, and measure potential statistical relationships between superintendent and school board team alignment and student achievement. The initial phase of the study relied on ex post facto data of superintendent and school board responses to the WSSDA BSAS from 2011 – 2015.

The study population includes all 295 school boards and superintendents in Washington State. A purposeful sampling selected only districts where superintendent and corresponding school board quorums completed a web-based survey (BSAS) deployed by WSSDA between 2011 and 2015. Phase one of the study identifies school districts meeting the study criterion. Identified district school board quorum composite results are compared to superintendent results in each of the five WSSDA school board standards to determine potential alignment in attitude and beliefs regarding board governance. Phase two compares aligned school board and superintendent teams with unaligned teams to determine whether or not aligned responses on the BSAS are statistically related to student achievement results.

The BSAS is an online survey intended to measure school board governance as defined by the WSSDA board standards. The BSAS utilizes Likert scales and is organized around WSSDA's five board standards. Twenty-two benchmarks are distributed among the five board standards and measured with 69 key indicators making up the 69 questions of the survey. The survey was deployed in 2011 to support Washington state school boards in implementing the WSSDA School Board Standards adopted in June of 2009 (P. Gore, personal communication, February 14, 2015). It was statistically validated through factor analysis prior to initial deployment by the Baker Educational Research Consulting Group.

The phase one data analysis purposefully selected school districts meeting the study criterion and determined school board and superintendent team alignment. Aligned superintendent and school board teams were compared with unaligned teams examining potential statistical relationships between alignment and student achievement. Washington State high school proficiency examination (HSPE) reading and writing results as well as year 1 end of course (EOC) exam data represented student achievement for this study. Likert scales collected through the BSAS measuring WSSDA board standards were comparatively analyzed determining alignment between school board and superintendent responses. Aligned superintendent and school board teams were compared with unaligned teams in phase two of the research study. The independent t-test statistical analysis determined the potential empirical relationship between aligned superintendent and school board teams and student achievement, as measured by 10^{th} grade Washington state High School Proficiency Exam and the Year 1 (algebra) End of Course (EOC)

exam. Washington State HSPE examinations and Year 1 EOC results were collected from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) website.

Confidentiality

Superintendents and boards included in this study were not identified by name, district name, or region of the state to maintain strict confidentiality. In addition, the purposeful sampling of superintendents and school boards identified as aligned superintendent and school board teams resulted in a small sample demanding further sensitivity. Districts, board member identification and superintendent names were replaced with pseudonyms.

Data Collection Procedures

Washington State School Directors Association encourages annual participation and completion of the Board Self-Assessment Survey. Electronic links to the survey are sent out to superintendents and school board members along with reminders to complete the survey during the survey's open window. Results of the BSAS from 2011 – 2015 were provided by WSSDA. In addition to the BSAS data, descriptive statistical data was collected through the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction website including HSPE and Algebra EOC student achievement results.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited by the self-selective sample of superintendents and school boards serving in Washington State school districts who participated in the Washington State School Directors Association Board Self-Assessment Survey from 2011 - 2015. In addition, the sample was further limited to those school districts demonstrating consistent superintendent participation, along with a quorum response of board members to the

BSAS. Research conclusions must be generalized cautiously. First, the WSSDA BSAS has a limited utilization mainly focused on Washington state school districts. Additionally, the BSAS is made up of Likert scales which rely upon individuals to respond honestly and accurately. Finally, the Washington state High School Proficiency Exam and the Algebra EOC assessment, used in this study to represent student achievement, is deployed in Washington State in order to meet ESEA requirements; statistical relationships to other comparable student achievement measures are not available at the time of this study.

Significance of the Study

This analysis of superintendent and school boards in Washington State may be significant in theoretical, substantive, and practical levels concerning the complex concept of school district governance related to superintendents and school boards and its relationship to student achievement.

Theoretically, this study contributes to Wirt and Kirst's Decision-Output Theory. This is especially evident in Delagardelle's interpretation of output as improved student achievement as described in her 2006 dissertation. This study's relationship to the Decision-Output theory is evidenced through the examination of alignment around attitudes and beliefs as reported through the WSSDA BSAS, and subsequent potential relationships between board/superintendent alignment and improved student achievement. When boards and superintendents are aligned in their governance attitudes and beliefs, their decisions in the political arena may influence overall student achievement. This application of student achievement as the continuous variable further

supports Delagardelle's identification of student achievement as a potential output within the Wirt and Kirst Decision-Output theoretical construct.

This study substantively adds to the body of research examining the relationship between superintendent and school board attitudes and beliefs with regard to student achievement. Furthermore, it demonstrates how superintendent and board alignment relates to overall student achievement. The WSSDA BSAS has previously been used to study school boards and academic achievement in the State of Montana. Lorentzen (2013) used Pearson *r* statistical methods to demonstrate a relationship between school board response on a modified BSAS and student achievement. Identifying alignment between superintendents and their school boards and subsequently examining aligned board/superintendent responses with measured changes in student achievement potentially supports conclusions made by Lorentzen around school boards' relationship to student achievement.

Practical application of this study supports superintendents and school boards in aligning governance practices to influence increased student achievement. Boards trained to govern in a manner supportive of student achievement can reframe governance decisions through the lens of continuous academic improvement. Through aligned attitudes and beliefs, superintendents and school boards work together in their overarching responsibility to improve the effectiveness of the school system as measured by student achievement. This type of environment would allow a superintendent to act in a manner aligned with their beliefs and knowledge of scholastic best practice and make sound decisions for student learning. Alignment in attitudes and beliefs of superintendents and school boards can be emulated to improve the overall effectiveness

of school systems. Improving the governance practice of school boards in a manner consistent with research could increase the likelihood of a school boards' attitudes and beliefs influencing overall student achievement. This study could be used as a comparative analysis for additional studies examining efforts of superintendents to work with their school boards to improve student achievement. Parties interested in this study could include superintendents, elected public school boards, the Washington State School Directors Association, the Washington Association of School Administrators, university superintendent credential programs, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, and other entities interested in improvement of public school systems through superintendent leadership and effective school board governance.

Previous research has identified differences in attitudes and beliefs of elected school board members serving districts with high student achievement when compared with the attitudes and beliefs of school board members serving school districts demonstrating lower student achievement (IASB, 2000). This study empirically identifies alignment within the attitudes and beliefs of superintendents and school boards and explores its statistical relationship to student achievement.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

This chapter is organized into four sections. The sections are intended to support the research question addressing whether the alignment of attitudes and beliefs of school boards and superintendents, as measured by the Washington State School Directors Association (WSSDA) Board Self-Assessment Survey (BSAS), demonstrate a statistically significant relationship with student achievement. The first section provides a brief historical perspective of both school boards and superintendents. The next section examines Wirt and Kirst's Decision-Output theory; a longstanding theory dealing with the interactions of school boards, school superintendents, the community, and the political arena. The third section reviews the development of the WSSDA school board standards. The BSAS was designed to assist school board implementation of the WSSDA developed *Washington School Board Standards: A framework for effective governance*. Section four examines studies related to the relationship between school boards, superintendents and student achievement. These four sections provide the foundational context supporting the significance of this study in the areas of theory, relevance and practicality.

School Boards and Superintendents

School boards. School board governance can be traced back to the earliest colonial communities (Moody, 2011). Early educational efforts in these communities were typically overseen by locally designated men. Danzberger (1992) explained how, historically, towns were organized by "selectmen" (p. 41) designated to administer all aspects of community life including decisions for the schools. As towns grew larger,

responsibilities for operating the schools shifted from the selectmen to an appointed committee charged exclusively with school oversight. Membership consisted of lay individuals vested with the authority to make decisions regarding the operation of local public education (Land, 2002). These colonial committees were the earliest iterations for what we know today as school boards.

Massachusetts, first as a colony and later as a state, was instrumental in creating the earliest public education system in America. Cubberley (1948) reviewed three landmark acts leading to the formal creation of local schools. First, the Massachusetts law of 1642 required parents and "masters" to provide for training in learning and labor. In addition, children were to gain the skills needed to "read & understand the principles of religion and the capital laws of this country" (Cubberley, p. 364). Cubberley went on to suggest this as the first act of a colonial legislative body requiring all children to learn to read.

Reflective of current successes with legislatively mandated educational policy, the Massachusetts General Court realized the act of 1642 was not effectively meeting the intended educational outcomes. In reviewing the possible reasons for the disappointing results, the Court determined that access to education was the root cause for the ineffective results of the 1642 Law and enacted the Massachusetts Law of 1647, more commonly known as the "Old Deluder Satan Act". The Act required towns of 50 or more households to employ a reading and writing teacher, and towns with 100 or more households to support a grammar school intended to prepare students for the university. Cubberley (1948) explained the significance of this follow up legislation as "the first time among English-speaking people, there was an assertion of the right of the State to require

communities to establish and maintain schools" (p. 365). He concluded that the Massachusetts Laws of 1642 and 1647 were foundational in the development of America's state run public school systems. Providing even more specification and further guidance for the education of Massachusetts citizens, the Law of 1789 was the first legislation in America to legally recognize the school district and school committee (Moody, 2011). Passage of this law resulted in most towns acting to create school committees through appointment whose purpose was to oversee the operation of the community school systems (Cubberley, 1948). These appointed school committees were another progressive step leading to our current elected school boards.

History demonstrated that school boards were one of the initial elements of our emerging democracy. Conceptually, they were designed to reflect the attitudes of local constituents in their governance decision making and provide ethical stewardship of collected taxes. Public schools and the boards vested with the legal authority to oversee their operation were strongly supported by our nation's forefathers and considered a key element in the longevity of a successful democracy (Cubberley, 1948; Danzberger, 1992; Fraser, 2010; Glickman, 1993; Lutz & Iannaccone, 2008; Moody, 2011; Urban & Wagoner, 2009).

Today, approximately 13,800 school boards continue to oversee schools in most every state (NSBA, 2012; Resnick & Bryant, 2010). They have evolved to espouse common attributes including the continuation of local control to ensure the preferences of the surrounding population; separation of education decisions from general governance; small boards overseeing relatively large districts; oversight typically provided by non-educator community members focused on policy and dependent upon a professional

educator – a superintendent – to manage the educational affairs of the district; and a representative democracy characterized by at-large elections (Land, 2002).

Superintendents. While the roots of school boards are generally accepted and agreed upon by scholars and historians, the development of the role of superintendent is not nearly as well documented (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2001; Moody, 2011). The role of superintendent, in its earliest manifestations, was likely a response by the previously discussed school committee to assist them in oversight of growing and expanding school systems (Norton, Webb, Dlugosh, & Sybouts, 1996). Most accounts claim the first superintendent to have been appointed in Buffalo, New York in 1837 (Moody). Others contended that because this individual was a lay person and lacked a salary, a more accurate precursor to today's superintendents were the appointed "agents of public schools" who were employed in 1839 throughout Kentucky's larger cities (Norton et al., 1996). By 1890, the formal position of 'superintendent of schools' was documented in 39 major city school systems throughout America (Moody).

Callahan (1966) examined the role of school superintendent from its inception to the mid 1960's and framed the evolution of responsibilities in four major movements. The first phase occurred between the conclusion of the Civil War and 1910 and defined the role of superintendent as the scholarly leader. The superintendents of this phase were exclusively male, viewed their roles as teachers of teachers, and were most often discussed in educational journals. They focused their efforts on educational needs and innovation. The second phase, from around 1910 – 1930, was described as the superintendent as business manager. Callahan's 1964 seminal work *Education and the Cult of Efficiency,* examined in greater detail this time period and the shift of scientific

management practices into public education, while also establishing the Superintendent Vulnerability thesis. His observations of this time described superintendents being manipulated by strong boards and other wealthy and powerful constituents, forcing a move to efficiency in order to demonstrate competency and align educational practice to the business models of the time period in order to preserve their employment. The third phase occurred from 1930 – 1954. This timeframe was described as the superintendent as an educational leader in democratic schools. Nationalism was strongly evident in light of recent world conflicts; Callahan (1964) identified the dominant literary theme advocating superintendents as instructional leaders in democratic institutions. The final phase suggests that superintendents ought to be more of an applied social scientist. That is, superintendents are subject to economic and political realities requiring them to understand and apply social science principles to school administration in order to effectively manage the overall system of schooling and respond to the needs of the students and adults within this system.

Many of these themes remain relevant today as the role of superintendent continues to be foundational to the structure of local school districts. The National School Board Association (NSBA) reports approximately 13,800 superintendents throughout the United States. These superintendents are charged to work with boards to meet the needs of their local communities under intense scrutiny of effectiveness most often measured by student achievement results on high stakes tests (American Association of School Administrators, 2015; Glass et al., 2001; NSBA, 2012). As Lashway (2002) comments "…standards based reform has created a consensus on at least one point: Student achievement is the ultimate measure of educational value" (p. 1).

School boards and superintendents share a historical significance and continue to be an integral aspect of the public school system in America. Research examining effective governance and its relationship to student achievement supports the long-standing and continued relevance of school boards and superintendents. Application of demonstrated best practice concerning superintendent and school boards' attitudes and beliefs could result in stable governance and improved student achievement.

Decision – Output Theory

Wirt and Kirst's Decision-Output Theory (1992) offer insights into observed actions associated with the school board policy creation and decision making. The theory explained the political arena through empirical examination of the systemic process of school board elections, policy creation, and general governance. The Decision-Output Theory examined school board politics through a heuristic framework developed by Easton (1965). Easton originally defined community support and demands as 'inputs' which are factors contributing to the 'outputs' defined as actions or decisions emerging from the political system. The political decisions in the form of outputs are responded to by the community and the resulting response, positive or negative, feedback and become new inputs for the political cycle. Politicians determining outputs can improve the resulting community response by incorporating the newly received input into future political decisions resulting in refined output. The more responsive politicians are to received input, the more likely the resulting community feedback results will be positive. The systems heuristic nature is determined by the decisions made within the political arena and the resulting response of the community feedback.

Wirt and Kirst extended Easton's framework to describe the functioning of a school board from an economic perspective emphasizing political pressure exerted from the inputs of community demands and support as well as other outside influences such as interest groups, legislative action, limited/finite resources, and economic realities. The Decision-Output theory suggests that the board acts within the construct of the political system to discern the appropriate response, referred to as output, to the inputs provided by the external influential forces. In addition to the community inputs, a school board must also mitigate the response based upon finite district resources some of which include time, financial resources, and human resources.

The determined output response loops back into the cycle as the community reacts and ultimately responds to the board determined output – usually policies or other directives related to the operation of the local school system. The community response becomes a new input providing additional insight for board members in understanding and addressing the will of their community. Effective boards, as defined by the Decision-Output theory, are those who are able to adapt their political actions and create output aligned with community values and beliefs.

Delagardelle's 2006 dissertation extended the Decision-Output theory to identify student achievement as a focus output. She described student achievement as one of the most expected and anticipated outputs of a school system according to the community. Further explanation detailed specific linkages affecting student achievement. Delagardelle's focus on student achievement provided a more detailed examination on the factors influencing board governance and ultimate realization of improved student achievement (Figure 2).

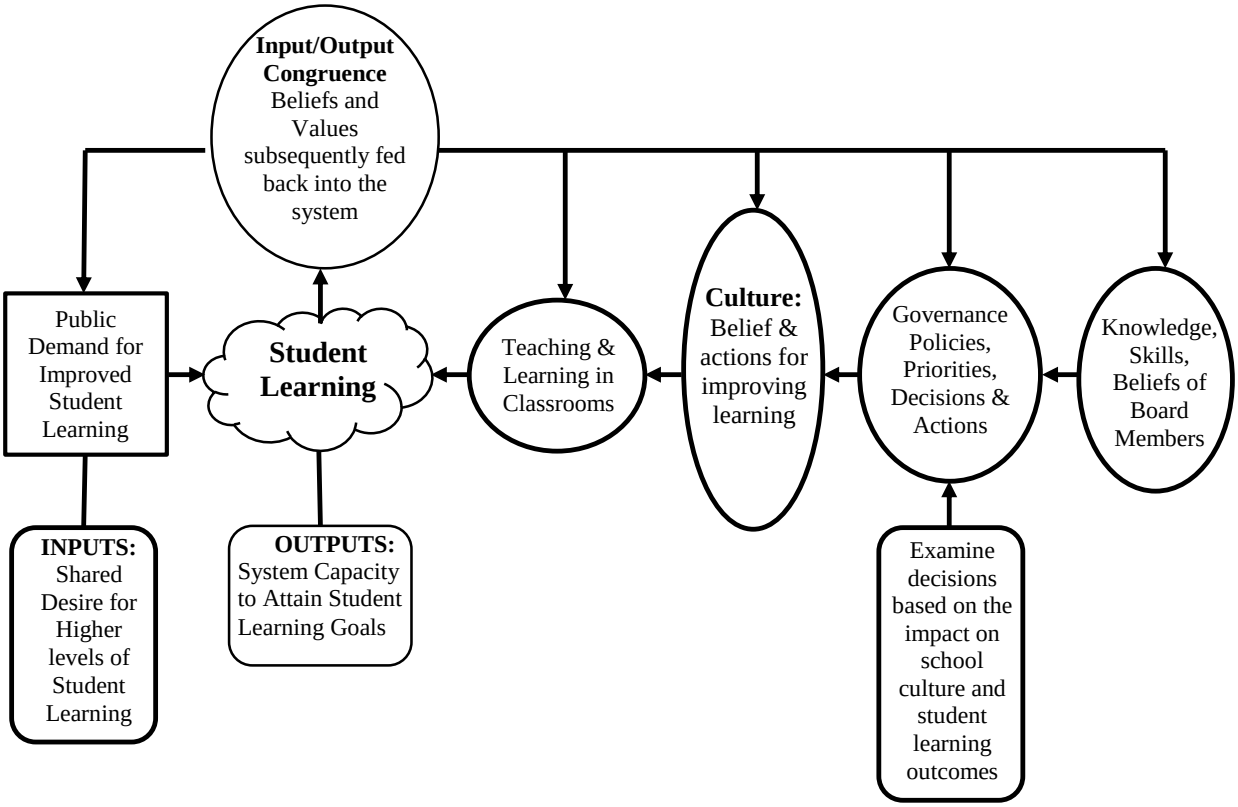

Figure 2. Linkages Influencing Student Achievement in the Decision-Output Theory

Application of the Decision-Output Theory for this study suggests that boards who view their responsibility as upholding the commitment to improve student achievement govern in a manner directed by this mission. When dealing with inputs from external influences, boards determine how best to address the inputs while upholding their commitment to the mission of improving overall student achievement in the district. This study contributes to the Decision-Output theory by examining the alignment of values and beliefs associated with school board governance as reported by both superintendents and school boards on the WSSDA BSAS. This study extends

Delagardelle's (2006) work by adding the superintendent's beliefs as a contributing influence for the improvement of student achievement through governance. Alignment between a superintendent and their school board team could reduce the circumstances identified by Wirt and Kirst's (2005) research as creating tension between boards and superintendents when determining appropriate responses to inputs. In addition, since the BSAS is designed to measure WSSDA School Board Standards, the development of which was based on empirically researched board behaviors (P. Gore, personal communication, February 14, 2015; WSSDA, 2009), superintendents working in aligned relationships with their school boards are more likely to behave in a manner associated with educational best practice demonstrated to increase overall student achievement.

This study extends Delagardelle's (2006) identification of knowledge, skills, and beliefs of board members as a key linkage in contributing to the outcome of student achievement by including the superintendent attitudes and beliefs as an influencing factor. More specifically, the alignment between superintendent and their school board member's attitudes and beliefs were examined to determine if aligned governance teams demonstrate improved student achievement. Phase one of this research examines the reported beliefs of both the school board and the superintendent to determine whether a statistical correlation exists. Statistically correlated superintendent and school boards will be deemed aligned. Phase two utilizes Washington state student assessment results in order to determine if aligned school board and superintendent teams demonstrate a statistical relationship with improved student achievement.

WSSDA School Board Standards

The role of the superintendent and school board relationship can be charted through professional journals and associations; it is clear that the subject has a congruence of support and agreement by both researchers and practitioners as to its critical nature in the overall effectiveness of a school system. As standards based reform has emerged as the overriding focus for public education, recommendations and frameworks for responsibilities of boards and superintendents were created based on empirical studies and popular professional literature. These frameworks are intended to support school boards and superintendents in governing a school district in a manner aligned to best practice research and case studies.

The Washington State School Directors Association created the *Washington School Board Standards: A framework for effective governance*. The standards were adopted by the WSSDA board of directors June 27, 2009:

> The standards identify the elements of good governance and effective board leadership as drawn from best practices and current research. They provide shared understanding of what constitutes good governance. They also validate and affirm the importance of the school board's role in ensuring student success…The standards encourage boards to focus on student achievement as their primary responsibility. (WSSDA, 2009)

Two sets of standards were adopted; standards for school board governance, and standards for individual school directors. School board standards are organized around five core principles, they include:

1. Responsible school district governance.
2. Communication of and commitment to high expectations for student learning.

3. Creating conditions district-wide for student and staff success.

4. Holding the district accountable for student learning.

5. Engagement of the community in education.

The school board standard framework further describes effective school board practice by providing benchmarks and key indicators for each of the standards.

Individual school director standards are also organized into five standards: (a) values and ethical behavior, (b) leadership, (c) communication, (d) professional development, and (e) accountability. Individual school director standards include critical attributes further describing behaviors associated with each of the five standards. Examples of the introductory prompt and a critical attribute from each standard is provided below:

To be effective, an individual school director:

1a. Places students' needs first.

2a. Contributes to thoughtful governance discussion and decisions by being well informed, open minded and deliberative.

3a. Builds and maintains positive connections with the community and staff.

4a. Commits the time and energy necessary to be informed and competent.

5a. Is accountable to the community. (WSSDA, 2009)

WSSDA continued to support alignment with the school board standards through the creation of the school board self-assessment. Washington state school boards and superintendents are encouraged to utilize the web-based Likert scaled assessment annually in order to understand the current alignment of the board to the standards and

focus attention on areas indicating low alignment with the school board standards. The self-assessment deployed in 2011. Alignment of school board/superintendent teams around the WSSDA standards as measured by the BSAS is one of the elements examined in order to determine a relationship between aligned school board/superintendent teams and student achievement.

School Boards and Student Achievement

Land (2002) described educational research focusing on school boards and their effect on student achievement as follows: "The school board literature is rife with conclusions and recommendations based on personal experience, observations, and opinions. School board experts frequently rely on anecdotal evidence, rather than data from carefully designed research studies, to support their conclusions" (p. 33). The following studies demonstrate the growing field of research aligned with Land's recommendation for carefully designed research on school boards and student achievement. Each of the included studies analyze school board attitudes, behavior and student achievement.

The Lighthouse study (IASB, 2000) focused on school board behaviors of high achieving school systems compared to districts with lower student achievement. Additional replication research is growing the number of studies confirming these two foundational research findings and strengthening the empirical evidence related to school boards and their influence on student achievement. Shelton (2010) utilized survey protocols directly connected to the Delagardelle's Lighthouse Project extension study of 2006. His research demonstrates findings of particular importance due to his use of Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM) which accounts for shared variance between

multiple variables including socioeconomic status, superintendent responses, and school board responses related to overall student achievement. HLM is generally considered to be a more reliable statistical method when dealing with hierarchical data (Woltman, Feldstain, MacKay, & Rocchi, 2012). Lorentzen's dissertation study (2013) demonstrates an application of the Washington State School Director Association (WSSDA) Board Self-Assessment Survey (BSAS) in determining the relationship between self-reported school board governance beliefs and student achievement. The BSAS is the survey utilized in the determination of aligned school board/superintendent teams for this study.

The Lighthouse Inquiry. The Lighthouse Inquiry (Rice et al., 2000) was initiated by the Iowa School Boards Association with the purpose of identifying differences between high achieving school districts and low achieving districts with similar demographics and characteristics. The initial Lighthouse Inquiry examined two questions: "Are school boards in high-achieving districts different from those in low-achieving districts? If so, how can all school boards become more like those in districts with high achievement" (Lamonte & Delagardelle, 2009, p. 27)? The original study involved the examination and comparison of select high achieving school districts to similar districts with lower academic achievement. Differences were identified using the terminology 'moving district' for the high achieving school systems and 'stuck district' to describe low achieving school systems. A moving district was further defined as having a school demonstrating unexpected high achievement. A stuck district was clarified as having a school with unexpectedly low achievement. In order to determine moving and stuck districts, researchers utilized a database provided by the Council for School

Performance. Three years of data were utilized as a baseline for identification of studied districts with a fourth year of data confirming the stuck or moving trends initially selected. Researchers noted that other schools within the stuck and moving districts demonstrated typical or like achievement results as compared with the under achieving and over achieving schools (Rice et al., 2000).

The districts identified consisted of six rural, low-socioeconomic systems in the state of Georgia meeting criteria established for the study. The criteria established intended to strengthen generalization of results to match the majority of school districts in Iowa. Six school districts were identified through this initial screening – three moving districts and three stuck districts. Initial pairings were established between stuck and moving districts (Rice et al., 2000)

Six researchers conducted blind interviews with the selected school districts. Researchers interviewed a broad sample of district constituents including school board members, superintendents, and school based personnel. Interviews with superintendents and school boards focused on broad topics such as district initiatives, school descriptions, and overall governance practice. School based interviews were intended to gather details about school programs, climate within the buildings, school based governance practice and connections to district based initiatives overseen by the superintendent and the school board. In total, 159 individual interviews were conducted (Rice et al., 2000)

The data set collected was analyzed using a framework intended to identify differences in district responses. In order to reduce the possibility of bias by the research team, the data was analyzed without identifiable information included. In addition, a consultant was brought in as part of the data analysis team. The framework consisted of

concepts including: emphasis for building a human organizational system; perspective on how to create support around personnel as they carry out their assigned roles; perspective on how education gets better, how to make initiatives and how to support them; an understanding for designing human resources development for improving the knowledge and skills of personnel; a sense of how to support school sites in the renewal process; a sense of how to generate community involvement; and a sense of integrative leadership – how to develop direction (Rice et al., 2000)

The Lighthouse Inquiry (Rice et al., 2000) identified similarities and differences in all six of the school districts identified for the study. A secondary analysis conducted after reassigning pairs confirmed initial findings. Researchers determined that differences from the secondary analysis all districts were used to support and strengthen the findings. They included: peaceable relationships between school board and superintendent; board opinion of the superintendent was fairly high; confusion around the concept of site-based decisions and policy and the role of the district policymakers and leaders; categorical programs were not labeled as concerns; and the majority of board members and staff (75-80%) were locally raised either in the district, an adjacent county, or a similar county within the region.

Differences identified through the framework included the following:

- Emphasis for building a human organizational system: Moving districts demonstrated a knowledge by the school board of the student achievement results and other more general issues and challenges within the system. Stuck districts put more responsibility on the superintendents with regards to student achievement; many reported

that all or most all decisions regarding student achievement were the sole responsibility of the school district. School boards in stuck districts did not address student achievement issues. In addition, both school board members and superintendents made excuses for low student achievement.

- Perspective on how education gets better, how to make initiatives and how to support them: Moving districts reported multiple initiatives specifically focused on student achievement and plans to support staff in implementing the changes. Stuck districts reported few initiatives focused on student achievement.
- An understanding for designing human resources development for improving the knowledge and skills of personnel: Moving districts viewed staff as an integral part of district success and voiced a responsibility for supporting them in their roles. Stuck districts mostly ignored staff needs and exhibited an attitude of staff being responsible for their own learning and adapting to change.
- A sense of how to support school sites in the renewal process: Moving districts used terms like trust, respect and ownership when describing school staff. Stuck district boards and superintendents tended to be suspicious of school based teams.
- A sense of how to generate community involvement: Moving districts reported the perspective of the community as an integral partner in

supporting student learning. Stuck districts reported the community as unsupportive of the district and student learning.

- A sense of integrative leadership – how to develop direction: Moving districts tended to view their roles as problem solvers and part of the solution. Stuck districts tended to blame others for the failures of the district.

The extension of the original research involved working directly with superintendents and their school boards in strengthening their capacity and overall leadership capabilities based on findings from the original research. Results were examined over three areas: changes in beliefs, changes in student learning, and an examination of the district's working culture utilizing a pretest and posttest construct (Lamonte & Delagardelle, 2009). This study was the basis for Delagardelle's (2006) doctoral dissertation and helped to strengthen the original lessons learned from the initial phase of the Lighthouse research project. In addition, Delagardelle adapted Wirt and Kirst's Decision-Output theory (1992) as her foundational theoretical construct suggesting consideration of student achievement as a measurable outcome of school board/superintendent governance.

Seven identified performance areas were supported throughout the second phase of the Lighthouse study. They included:

- People working together to improve the educational system for students
- Shared understanding of a common learning culture
- Support aligned with student learning needs

- Development of people as professionals
- A goal of equity across the system
- Strong community involvement and shared responsibility for improvement
- Distributed leadership throughout the system overseen by strong and dynamic leaders (Delagardelle, 2006)

This study demonstrated that strengthening and supporting the seven leadership components led to improvement in all three examined areas: changes in beliefs, changes in student learning, and changes in the district's working culture (Lamonte & Delagardelle, 2009).

The third study expanded the original two phases throughout the nation and included the examination of state school board associations and board-superintendent teams. The study focused on how these groups developed and supported board leadership for improving student achievement. This has increased the exposure and subsequent awareness of the Lighthouse Model providing additional districts the opportunity to implement empirically derived school board attributes and behaviors in strategic efforts to improve student achievement and led to many state school board organizations adopting school board standards/frameworks (Lamonte & Delagardelle, 2009; Resnick & Bryant, 2010).

This research study examining school board and superintendent alignment and the potential statistical relationship to student achievement relies on the BSAS in order to determine school board and superintendent team alignment. Aligned school board/superintendent teams will be examined in order to determine if the identified

aligned attitudes and beliefs demonstrate a statistical relationship with improved student achievement. Results of this study will extend the literature concerning attitudes and beliefs of school boards and the empirically demonstrated relationship with student achievement. Attitudes and beliefs measured by the WSSDA BSAS were derived through literature review of board governance research. The Lighthouse Inquiry was a seminal study included in the WSSDA determination of board governance standards.

Shelton 2010 Study of Kentucky School Systems. Building off of Phase 2 of the Lighthouse Inquiry, the basis of which made up Delagardelle's 2006 doctoral dissertation, Shelton (2010) deployed a modified survey for his own doctoral study. With permission, Shelton used the same survey from Lighthouse Phase 2 with the addition of four questions related to the relationship existing between the superintendent and the school board. This modification shifted Shelton's analysis of the results from that being a school board's specific influence, as Delagardelle reported in Phase 2, to school board's and superintendent's results.

Shelton (2010) designed a sequential mixed method study in order to assess two research questions: (a) what are the similarities and differences of superintendents and board members in the values and beliefs they exhibit as related to student achievement and (b) what are the relationships between the above and actual changes over time in district level student achievement in mathematics? His study consisted of three phases: 1. Data collection through non-random/convenience sampled survey collection 2. Analysis of phase 1 data in order to determine factors to apply to student achievement data results 3. Qualitative data collection and analysis.

Shelton's study is important as it applied traditional statistical methodologies, Pearson product-moment, to determine strength of relationship between variables. In addition, he utilized Hierarchical Linier Modeling (HLM) to compare differences between school boards and superintendent factors influencing student achievement and was able to include incomplete district survey responses (that is, those district responses with less than a quorum of board members or no superintendent response). HLM accounts for shared variance that exists within hierarchical structured data (Woltman et al., 2012). Utilization of HLM allowed Shelton to include socioeconomic status as a variable in addition to the school board and superintendent attitudes and beliefs related to the analysis of relationship to student achievement. Quantitative results included the following:

- The more time a superintendent reportedly spent on issues related to student achievement 8th grade math scores increased
- Superintendent reported areas of importance and relationship demonstrated no effect on 8th grade math scores
- Changes in superintendent leadership had an immediate impact on that year's 8th grade math results. Subsequent years demonstrated high rates of 8th grade math improvement
- Reported time spent on activities by superintendents demonstrated a significant relationship to 8th grade math achievement improvement over time

- Reported school board time spent on activities, importance and relationship had no statistical significant effect on 8th grade math growth
- Discrepancy between school board reported time spent and superintendent time spent (i.e., superintendent reporting more time spent than school board) resulted in higher rates of 8th grade math achievement growth

Triangulation of the quantitative results was achieved through the qualitative phase of the study. Superintendent and school board focus groups, identified through peer selection by both Kentucky school boards and superintendents, were established and interviewed using structured interview questions. The school board and superintendent groups were convened separately. Analysis of the interviews demonstrated that superintendents definitively believed it to be their responsibility to improve student achievement. Both school boards and superintendents predicted that reported time and perceived importance would have the greatest impacts on student achievement results. In addition, both groups reported that relationship was important as long as time and importance of student achievement was also included (2010).

Conclusions from Shelton's (2010) study are as follows:

1. School boards with higher levels of education spend more time on matters of student achievement
2. Superintendents reporting more time on student achievement items had corresponding district 8th grade mathematics scores higher than those superintendents who reported less time

3. School boards with higher levels of education identify the role of the board as policy creating and the superintendent as policy implementing
4. Strong similarities existing between school board and superintendent values and beliefs related to student achievement
5. None of the school board reported survey factors demonstrated a significant correlation with 8th grade mathematics scores

Shelton (2010) concluded his study by calling for more intensive study on school boards, superintendents, governance and other factors influencing student achievement. Replication of previous studies demonstrating correlation between school board survey responses and student achievement could be conducted using the statistical methodology of this study. He also cautioned that this one study should not be cause for action but should, instead, be added to the continuing literature specific to public school governance and its effect on student achievement.

This study continues the pursuit of knowledge and understanding for the role sound governance practice plays in supporting improved student achievement. It examines the alignment of superintendent and school board attitudes and beliefs and the potential relationship existing between aligned school board/superintendent teams and improved student achievement. Boards and superintendents could utilize the findings of this study to inform their practice and model their attitudes and beliefs around high achieving governance behaviors.

Lorentzen 2013 Study of Montana School Systems. Application of the Lighthouse Inquiry findings are prevalent throughout the country and manifest through

recommendations for effective board practice from both federal and state school board associations (AASA, WSSDA, IASB, NSBA). The Washington State School Directors Association (WSSDA) set out to support and strengthen school board alignment to effective practice by creating a Board Self-Assessment Survey (BSAS). The BSAS is intended to be utilized by boards and superintendents annually in order to assess their application of identified 'best-practice' or effective board strategies and behaviors. A more extensive and detailed analysis of the WSSDA BSAS is provided in chapter three. A recent doctoral dissertation study was conducted in Montana using the BSAS to examine board governance characteristics, labeled 'boardsmanship', and their relationship to student achievement.

Lorentzen (2013) deployed the BSAS through invitation to all 121 high school districts in the state of Montana. Seventy-four board members responded to the survey representing 27 school districts. This provided a 22.3% response rate for the study. Fowler (2013) stated that there is not a generally agreed upon standard for minimum response rates. However, Fowler referenced examples from governmental agencies requiring 80% response rates and other academic entities requiring a minimum of 70% response rate for face to face interviews to provide context for standards existing in governmental agencies. Lorentzen suggested additional research and does not attempt to generalize beyond the reported findings.

The BSAS results were compared to 10th grade Montana State Criterion Reference Test results for the participating districts. Statistically significant correlations were established using Pearson's *r* analysis for several elements of 'boardsmanship' and student achievement. These included: 1. Providing responsible school district

governance, 2. Setting and communicating high expectations for student learning with clear goals and plans for meeting those expectations, 3. Creating the conditions district wide for student and staff success, 4. Holding the school district accountable for meeting student learning expectations and 5. Engaging the community. Based on the findings of his study, Lorentzen (2013) concluded that school boards in Montana do influence student achievement through their governance practice.

Examination of the relationship between school board and superintendent alignment and the relationship to student achievement extends Lorentzen's (2013) findings. The results of this study could provide an additional element for superintendent and school board teams to strive to achieve in their effort to improve student achievement. It adds to the literature supporting effective governance as an empirically determined strategy for improving student achievement.

Summary

Chapter Two provides context for the relevancy of the research goals for this study. First, it demonstrates the historical background for both school board governance and superintendent leadership. This background is important in understanding the critical role school boards and superintendents have played in shaping the educational system in America and the leading influence they can provide in supporting student learning in school districts today. Next, the theoretical construct of Wirt and Kirst's (1992) Decision Output model provided a framework for understanding the role of school boards in determining how to best meet the needs of students. Additionally, the extension of Delagardelle's (2006) assertion of student achievement as the quintessential output within the Decision Output construct links this study to the model. This study extends

Delagardelle's work by inserting the influence of superintendent and school board alignment specific to governance as a contributing factor for improving student achievement. Finally, an examination of research studies specifically focused on school boards' influence on student achievement provide additional background for the relevancy and importance of this study.

Chapter 3

Methodology

This study examines school board and superintendent alignment and its potential relationship to positive changes in student achievement. Non-experimental quantitative statistical methodologies are utilized in order to examine relationships existing between variables. This chapter is organized in sections describing the overall research design including the research question, research design, variables, hypotheses, population, data collection, instrumentation and data analysis.

Research Question

The following research question guided this study: Does superintendent and school board alignment, as measured by the Washington State School Directors Association (WSSDA) Board Self-Assessment Survey (BSAS), demonstrate a statistically significant relationship with student achievement? Previous empirical studies demonstrate the observed influence of school boards on student achievement. Demonstrating a quantitative relationship between school board and superintendent alignment and student achievement would support continued focus on the influence of governance behaviors and overall student achievement.

Research Design

This non-experimental quantitative study investigates the potential relationship between school board and superintendent alignment, as measured by the WSSDA BSAS, and student achievement represented by the 10th grade Washington State High School Proficiency Exam (HSPE) results as well as the Algebra End of Course (EOC) examination. The study employs a two-step process in order to examine potential

statistical relationships between variables. Step one analyzes school board and superintendent responses to the 2013 BSAS in order to determine potential alignment between school board responses and superintendent responses. Step two examines possible statistical correlations between aligned school board/superintendent teams and overall district 10th grade MSP results. Results are then examined based on improvement from 2013 to 2014.

Variables

Categorical variable. School board and superintendent responses to the WSSDA BSAS, designed to measure board behaviors identified by the WSSDA School Board Standards, represent the foundation for the categorical variable of this study. The School Board Standards are (1) provide responsible school governance, (2) set and communicate high expectations for student learning with clear goals and plans for meeting those expectations, (3) create conditions district-wide for student and staff success, (4) hold school district accountable for meeting student learning expectations, and (5) engage local community and represent the values and expectations they hold for their schools. Alignment of school board and superintendent responses on the WSSDA BSAS establish aligned school board/superintendent teams. Aligned teams are the categorical variable for this study.

Continuous variable. Overall districts' academic achievement results, represented by the Washington State High School Proficiency Exam (HSPE) and the Algebra End Of Course (EOC) exam, are the continuous variables for this study. The HSPE was developed to measure Washington State academic grade level standards while satisfying No Child Left Behind requirements for multiple grade band summative

assessments. Results of the HSPE and the EOC are reported as four levels of performance: Level 1 – Below Basic, Level 2 – Basic, Level 3 – Proficient, and Level 4 – Advanced. This study combines the number of students achieving the Proficient and Advanced level creating an overall district composite score used to comparatively determine academic growth between 2013 results and 2014 results.

The January 2014 technical report prepared for the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) by the Educational Testing Services examines spring of 2013 HSPE and EOC exams. The analysis identified an overall standard error of measurement (SEM) value of 2.57 for the 10th grade reading test. The 10th grade writing exam overall SEM is 1.48. The reading and writing exam make up the High School Proficiency Exam (HSPE). The report examines the Year 1 Algebra EOC and calculates an overall SEM of 2.73. The February 2015 report provided the SEM for the spring 2014 administered HSPE and year one EOC results. The HSPE reading exam presents a 2.61 SEM. HSPE writing exam presents a 1.50 SEM. Year one EOC mathematics exam presents a 2.78 SEM value.

Correlations between HSPE results and school board/superintendent alignment are examined in order to determine if aligned governance influences HSPE student achievement. Student achievement data is examined in order to determine year-to-year improvement. Improving student achievement is that achievement which increases at or above the standard error of measurement. The largest reported standard error of measurement results we used to determine academic growth from the 2013 assessments compared to the 2014 assessment. A HSPE reading increase of 2.61% or more between the 2013 results and the 2014 results reflects improved for the purposes of this study.

Similarly, a 2.61 decrease reflects a drop in student achievement from 2013 to 2014. Scores within the 2.61 SEM between 2013 and 2014 will be identified as stagnant growth. These scores did not improve or decline, they remained essentially the same.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis. The hypothesis for this study proposes that a relationship exists between aligned school board and superintendent teams and overall district student achievement. School board and superintendent team alignment is measured through responses to the WSSDA BSAS. Student achievement is represented by results of the Washington State High School Proficiency Exam (HSPE) reading and writing exams and the Year 1 End of Course (EOC) exam. Examination of the data may reveal additional hypotheses related to the relationship between board and superintendent governance and student achievement.

Null hypothesis. The null hypothesis for this study suggests that there is no difference between aligned school board and superintendent teams and unaligned teams when comparing student achievement. Alignment is determined through examination of the WSSDA BSAS, and student achievement, represented by the reading and writing HSPE and Year 1 EOC exam. Further examination of the data may reveal additional null hypotheses specific to school board and superintendent governance and student achievement.

Population

This study examines superintendents and school boards from the 295 school districts in Washington State. Most Washington school boards consist of five locally elected citizens who reside within school district boundaries. Each of the districts studied

employ a superintendent who serves as the chief educational officer as well as the secretary to the school board.

Sample. This study relies upon data collected by the Washington State School Directors Association (WSSDA). Starting with the 2011-2012 school year, WSSDA began collecting survey responses to the Board Self-Assessment Survey (BSAS). The year 2013 was determined to include the most school board quorum responses with corresponding superintendent responses. A quorum is defined in the Revised Code of Washington 28A.343.390: *a majority of all members of the board of directors shall constitute a quorum*. For most school boards in the state of Washington a quorum consists of at least three out of five directors. Utilization of districts with quorum responses arguably demonstrates a higher likelihood of actual board action through governance since a majority of the school board is required to approve board action and direct district affairs.

School Boards and Superintendents participating in the WSSDA BSAS represent a self-selected sample. All 295 school boards in Washington State are encouraged to participate in the BSAS, however, there are no legal mandates requiring participation. The 2011 deployment of the BSAS was intended to support school boards to implement and align practice to the WSSDA School Board standards. In addition, results of the BSAS are part of the WSSDA Boards of Distinction application. The Boards of Distinction program recognizes school boards who have improved student achievement and demonstrate alignment with the WSSDA school board standards.

Data Collection

The WSSDA BSAS is provided annually to every school board member and superintendent in the state of Washington. Each October an email is sent out describing the self-assessment and providing a link to the online assessment. School board presidents can also request access to the BSAS at other times throughout the year. Participants are provided results including suggestions for improvement. Respondent results are archived through Anderson Data Solutions. Ex post facto data utilized for this study was provided through agreement with WSSDA.

Instrumentation

The WSSDA BSAS is designed to measure superintendent and board member alignment to the five WSSDA School Board Standards: (1) provide responsible school governance, (2) set and communicate high expectations for student learning with clear goals and plans for meeting those expectations, (3) create conditions district-wide for student and staff success, (4) hold school district accountable for meeting student learning expectations, and (5) engage local community and represent the values and expectations they hold for their schools. Further detail for each of the five standards is provided through 22 benchmarks of success. Each benchmark describes activities and actions aligned with each of the five standards and includes indicators designed to assist boards in assessing their alignment to each standard. Standard one includes six benchmarks. Standard two includes four benchmarks. Standard three includes five benchmarks. Standard four includes three benchmarks. Standard five includes four benchmarks. The 22 benchmarks are further defined by 69 key indicators which make up the items of the BSAS. The final version of the BSAS was first deployed in September of 2011 which included 69 survey items corresponding to the 69 key indicators. A

standards based board training curriculum supported boards in responding to their board self-assessment results (WSSDA, 2014).

Validity of the WSSDA BSAS. WSSDA contracted with the Baker Educational Research Consulting (BERC) group in order to refine the initial survey tool and validate the survey instrument. BERC researchers utilized exploratory factor analysis techniques to examine results generated from the first survey pilot conducted in November of 2010 and to inform a data reduction. The sample of participants included invited school board members from around the state representing small, medium and large districts, as well as consultants and superintendents. This factor analysis reduced the initial 144 questions to 87 by identifying redundancy within survey items. In April of 2011 a second pilot was conducted utilizing the 87 items. Further modifications were statistically identified at this stage and a final pilot was deployed in May of 2011. Results of the pilot process were statistically examined through multi-stage exploratory factor analysis in order to refine the survey instrument to its current structure of 69 items.

The final pilot conducted in May of 2011 generated the data set utilized by BERC researchers to demonstrate the validity of the instrument. Each standard represented a factor and was examined through principal component analysis resulting in components identified at Eigenvalues > 1.00. Four components loaded on standard one. One component loaded on standard two. Four components loaded on standard three. Two components loaded on standard four. One component loaded on standard five. A total of 12 components loaded on five standards leading BERC researchers to conclude the survey to be valid and demonstrated a school board's alignment to the WSSDA board

standards. The 69 question Board Self-Assessment Survey was launched in the fall of 2011.

Data Analysis

Phase one of this research study determined school board and superintendent team alignment. Alignment was determined through the comparative examination of results from the Washington State School Directors (WSSDA) Board Self-Assessment Survey (BSAS) for the year 2013. This sample year was selected for this study as it represented the highest incidence of superintendent responses. Board and superintendent teams whose BSAS results demonstrate alignment and those whose results do not will advance to phase two of this study examining the potential relationship between school board/superintendent alignment and improved student achievement.

Responses to the BSAS were assigned a numerical value representing the range of responses on the Likert-like scale. Starting with “don’t know” assigned a value of one, “never” assigned a value of two, “some of the time” a value of three, “most of the time” a value of four, and “always” a value of five. Averaged response values are determined for each standard. Board scores are reported as a composite score combining and subsequently averaging all board member responses establishing a mean score for each standard. Means derived from composite board results and superintendent responses were examined for each standard. Standard results from both the composite board score and superintendent scores each demonstrating mean scores ≥ 3.00 were considered aligned in that particular standard. Boards and superintendents reporting application of WSSDA board standards at least “some of the time” (assigned value of 3) demonstrates aligned practice for that standard. Each standard represents actions and behaviors empirically

demonstrated to positively impact student achievement (WSSDA, 2009). Alignment in all five standards represent aligned school board and superintendent teams for this study. Phase two statistically compares the academic achievement between aligned school board and superintendent teams and non-aligned school board and superintendent teams.

The independent samples *t*-test was identified as the most effective tool to examine the potential relationship existing between aligned school board/superintendent teams and student achievement. The independent samples *t*-test was determined to be the most efficient statistical methodology for this study since the continuous variable of student achievement, represented by HSPE and Algebra EOC results, were collected from the same population and was continuous data. This study assumes similar means amongst this population data since the data generates from the same tests, proctored during the same testing windows and includes results from students either in the same graduating class or same mathematics course. While there is always the potential of differences between means to be the result of chance alone, it is anticipated that large discrepancies between means of this population occur infrequently (Field, 2009). The binomial categorical variable was made up of aligned and unaligned school board and superintendent school districts. Included districts are located in the state of Washington and are part of the K-12 public school system. The null hypothesis states that an aligned school board and superintendent team demonstrates no statistical relationship with student achievement results. Therefore, we assume sample means to be similar in order to discover our stated hypothetical relationship between aligned school board and superintendent teams and student achievement.

The independent samples *t*-test requires data to meet six overall assumptions. Three of the six are based on the study design including (a) a continuous variable (student achievement assessment data), (b) a categorical variable (aligned and unaligned school board and superintendent teams), and (c) independence of observation (school board members and superintendents are distinctly related to one district with no opportunity to remark to another district's BSAS results. Also, student achievement is based on the corresponding district's results which are generated only from students attending the district). The other three assumptions require examination of the data prior to conducting the independent samples *t*-test operation. These assumptions include: (e) no significant outliers in either the categorical or continuous variables, (f) continuous variables should be normally distributed for each categorical variable, and (g) data should reflect homogeneity of variance. Each of the data assumptions were examined utilizing statistical measures in order to determine adherence to the assumptions. An examination for outlying data was conducted utilizing visual examination of boxplots. Normal distribution was examined using the Shapiro-Wilk test for normality. Homogeneity of variance was determined through the application of Levene's test of equality of variances.

Chapter 4

Results

This chapter details the results of a non-experimental statistical analysis comparing aligned school board and superintendent teams with unaligned teams and the potential relationship to overall student achievement for each of the sample school districts. This study relies on ex-post facto data compiled by the Washington State School Directors Association (WSSDA) through the Board Self-Assessment Survey (BSAS) deployed from 2011 through 2015. Additionally, Washington State High School Proficiency Exam (HSPE) reading and writing results, as well as Year 1 (algebra) End of Course (EOC) mathematics exam data represents district student achievement.

Phase one of the data analysis identifies the binomial categorical variable of aligned and unaligned school board and superintendent teams. Initially, a sample of superintendent and school board teams meeting the criterion for inclusion in the study was determined through the application of Microsoft Excel filtering capabilities. The criterion identified for this purposeful sample included both a superintendent responses as well as quorum responses from the corresponding district school board members. A quorum response required at least three out of five board members to respond to the BSAS. After identification of this sample was complete, a comparative examination of responses to the BSAS from both the superintendent and the quorum board members was conducted to determine aligned and unaligned school board and superintendent teams.

Phase two of the data analysis statistically examined the binomial categorical variable of aligned and unaligned school board and superintendent teams with the continuous variable of student achievement represented by corresponding HSPE and

EOC results. This analysis was carried out in order to determine if the proposed hypothesis that a relationship exists between aligned school board and superintendent teams and overall district student achievement was acceptable.

The first section of this chapter details phase one of the study including the initial sort of BSAS data identifying the school year with the highest incidence of superintendent and school board responses matching the determined criterion for this study. Additionally, the determination of aligned and unaligned school board and superintendent teams is presented in greater detail. Finally, general demographic information including student population ranges (less than 2000, 2000 to 10,000, and greater than 10,000) as well rural, suburban and urban designations further describe the identified sample.

The next section of this chapter presents the results of the statistical analyses examining the potential relationship between the binomial categorical variable of aligned and unaligned school board and superintendent teams and the continuous variable of student achievement. The categorical variable is based on superintendent and school board responses to the WSSDA BSAS. Responses by both the school board and the superintendent at or greater than 3 (some of the time) on the Likert-like survey for each of the five board standards examined through the BSAS were declared aligned teams. The continuous variable of student achievement was represented by the overall district results of 10^{th} grade reading and writing HSPE as well as the Year 1 EOC examination for each of the corresponding school districts in the identified sample.

Phase 1: Superintendent/School Board Alignment

The purpose of this phase of analysis is to determine the binomial categorical variable of aligned and unaligned school board and superintendent teams. The basis of this determination relies on the examination of the WSSDA BSAS and corresponding responses by school board and superintendent teams meeting the study criterion. The WSSDA BSAS was sent to all 295 school district superintendents and associated school board directors starting in the fall of 2011. Subsequent deployments have occurred annually through 2015. Five years of responses from school board directors, superintendents, as well as central office administrators make up the WSSDA BSAS data set. Responses from school board directors provide the majority of collected data. In total, there are 1,314 unique BSAS responses in the complete data set.

Purposeful sample. Microsoft Excel sorting capabilities presented data by year, respondent type, school district, and associated responses to the 69 items making up the BSAS. The initial data sort determined the highest incidence of superintendent response; the year 2013 presented the highest incidence of superintendent responses. The 2013 data collection consisted of 407 total responses representing 89 out of 295 school district. Thirty-three unique, fully completed, superintendent responses were collected throughout 2013. One district reported two unique, fully completed, superintendent responses with seven months separating the responses; therefore, superintendent responses for the 2013 year represented thirty-two school districts. The focus of the remaining data sorts centered on these 32 school districts.

The next criterion for inclusion in the study was a quorum response from school directors. An examination of the 32 school districts eliminated seven districts with less? than three school board directors responding to the BSAS; these districts did not meet the

quorum requirement of three or more directors responding to the survey. Twenty-five school districts met both the superintendent and quorum school director response criterion. Upon closer inspection, two school districts were removed due to more than five school board of director responses to the BSAS. The two districts were governed by five board of director school boards. The discrepancy in the number of responses by school board directors could not be mitigated through the data available to the researcher. Two districts had inadequate enrollment for reporting of Washington State HSPE and EOC exam. The state of Washington requires a minimum number of completed tests ($n >$ 10) in order to report a district composite score. These districts were removed from the sample. Finally, two additional school districts were K-8 districts; no HSPE or EOC results were available making them ineligible for the study. Nineteen school districts met all criterion for the study.

Instrument. School board and superintendent responses to the WSSDA BSAS were examined to determine aligned and unaligned teams. The BSAS is organized into five standards: (a) provide responsible school governance; (b) set and communicate high expectations for student learning with clear goals and plans for meeting those expectations; (c) create conditions district-wide for student and staff success; (d) hold school district accountable for meeting student learning expectations; and (e) engage local community and represent the values and expectations they hold for their schools. These standards are measured through 69 items making up the BSAS. The survey utilizes a Likert-like scale with the values 1 – 5. Respondents determine the responses to the 69 questions based on the following values: (1) don’t know; (2) never; (3) some of the time; (4) most of the time; and (5) always. Composite board quorum values were calculated for

each of the five standards. These composite results were compared with mean results of corresponding superintendent responses for each of the five standards. Board and superintendent responses greater than or equal to (3), some of the time, were considered aligned in that standard. Table 1 displays board and superintendent teams aligned in all five WSSDA standards; seven districts were aligned districts and twelve were unaligned using this methodology.

Table 1

School Board and Superintendent Team Alignment

Pseudo ID	Standard 1	Standard 2	Standard 3	Standard 4	Standard 5	Overall
A	ALIGNED	NOT	ALIGNED	ALIGNED	ALIGNED	UNALIGNED
B	ALIGNED	NOT	ALIGNED	ALIGNED	ALIGNED	UNALIGNED
C	NOT	NOT	ALIGNED	NOT	ALIGNED	UNALIGNED
D	ALIGNED	NOT	ALIGNED	ALIGNED	ALIGNED	UNALIGNED
E	ALIGNED	NOT	ALIGNED	ALIGNED	ALIGNED	UNALIGNED
F	**ALIGNED**	**ALIGNED**	**ALIGNED**	**ALIGNED**	**ALIGNED**	**ALIGNED**
G	**ALIGNED**	**ALIGNED**	**ALIGNED**	**ALIGNED**	**ALIGNED**	**ALIGNED**
H	**ALIGNED**	**ALIGNED**	**ALIGNED**	**ALIGNED**	**ALIGNED**	**ALIGNED**
I	ALIGNED	NOT	ALIGNED	ALIGNED	ALIGNED	UNALIGNED
J	**ALIGNED**	**ALIGNED**	**ALIGNED**	**ALIGNED**	**ALIGNED**	**ALIGNED**
K	ALIGNED	NOT	ALIGNED	ALIGNED	ALIGNED	UNALIGNED
L	**ALIGNED**	**ALIGNED**	**ALIGNED**	**ALIGNED**	**ALIGNED**	**ALIGNED**
M	ALIGNED	NOT	ALIGNED	ALIGNED	ALIGNED	UNALIGNED
N	ALIGNED	ALIGNED	ALIGNED	NOT	ALIGNED	UNALIGNED
O	ALIGNED	NOT	ALIGNED	NOT	ALIGNED	UNALIGNED
P	**ALIGNED**	**ALIGNED**	**ALIGNED**	**ALIGNED**	**ALIGNED**	**ALIGNED**
Q	NOT	NOT	NOT	NOT	ALIGNED	UNALIGNED
R	ALIGNED	NOT	ALIGNED	NOT	ALIGNED	UNALIGNED
S	**ALIGNED**	**ALIGNED**	**ALIGNED**	**ALIGNED**	**ALIGNED**	**ALIGNED**

Note: Bolded results indicate aligned school board and superintendent team alignment

Representativeness of the purposeful sample. The nineteen districts represented small, medium and large school districts: five large districts greater than 10,000 students; six medium districts between 2,000 and 10,000 students; and eight small districts with less than 2,000 students. The districts reflected the distribution of school districts between urban, suburban, and rural settings and aligned to the actual make up of Washington State's urban development and district distribution. More rural districts (10) were included than either the suburban (7), or the urban (2) in the sample. This is consistent with overall state data demonstrating most districts designated rural, followed by suburban, and then urban. Unfortunately, only districts affiliated with seven of nine ESD's were include in the sample. There were no school districts from ESD 112, headquartered in Vancouver, Washington, included in the study. Also, ESD 123, located in Pasco, Washington, was not represented. The sample does not geographically represent all areas of Washington State. Generalizations regarding statistical relationships should reflect this limitation. Table 2 demonstrates characteristics of the qualifying school districts including student population, setting, and geographical location based on the Educational Service District designation. Generalities are reported in order to protect the identification of individual school districts included in this study.

Table 2

General Attributes of School Districts Meeting Study Criterion

District	Student Enrollment	Setting	ESD
A.	2,000 – 10,000	Suburban	121
B.	2,000 – 10,000	Urban	121
C.	< 2,000	Rural	113
D.	< 2,000	Rural	189
E.	< 2,000	Rural	101
F.	2,000 – 10,000	Rural	171
G.	2,000 – 10,000	Rural	101
H.	2,000 – 10,000	Rural	114
I.	2,000 – 10,000	Suburban	189
J.	< 2,000	Suburban	189
K.	< 2,000	Rural	171
L.	> 10,000	Suburban	121
M.	< 2,000	Rural	105
N.	< 2,000	Rural	171
O.	< 2,000	Rural	114
P.	> 10,000	Suburban	101
Q.	> 10,000	Suburban	114
R.	> 10,000	Urban	121

S.	> 10,000	Suburban	121

Student achievement measure. Improvement to student achievement results between the 2013 and 2014 HSPE and EOC data were examined to determine whether aligned school board and superintendent teams demonstrated a statistical relationship when compared with unaligned district teams. Comparisons between 2013 composite district results and 2014 composite results determined whether a district was categorized as "improving" and "not improving". These designations were dependent on the standard error of measure (SEM) available through the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction website and the assessment technical reports page. The higher of the two reported values, one SEM from 2013 and one reported for 2014, was used to determine the ratings. Table 3 displays standard error of measurement values used to determine academic score change between years.

Table 3

Standard Error of Measure (SEM) Values Used in this Study

	HSPE Reading	HSPE Writing	Year 1 EOC
SEM	2.61	1.50	2.78

District composite scores reflecting gains more than the SEM value were designated improving districts. Composite scores that did not improve or decline more than one SEM value were labeled not improving. Those district composite scores demonstrating more than one SEM value less than the previous year's score were identified as declining

school districts. Achievement designations are displayed graphically in Figures 3, 4, and 5.

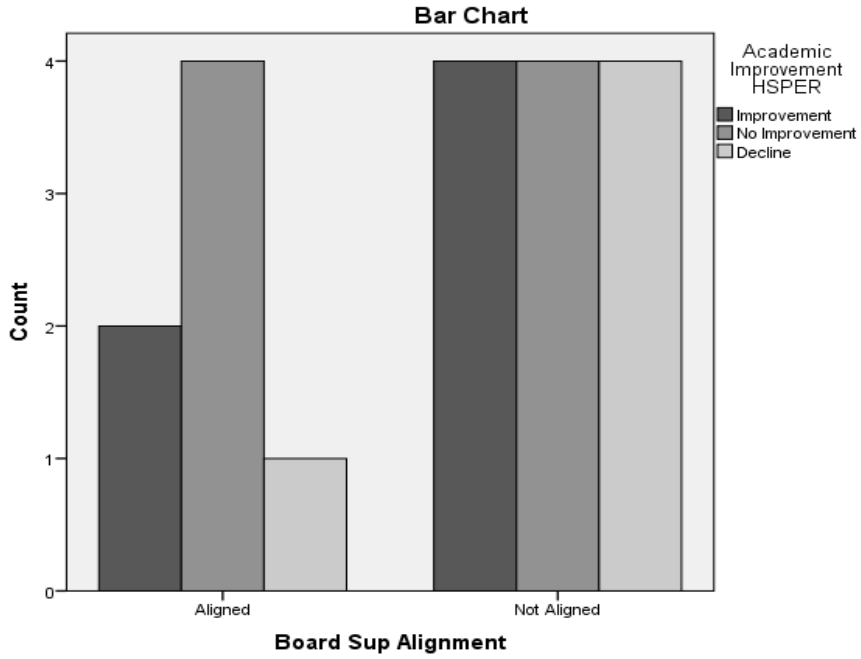

Figure 3

Academic Achievement Ranking for HSPE Reading

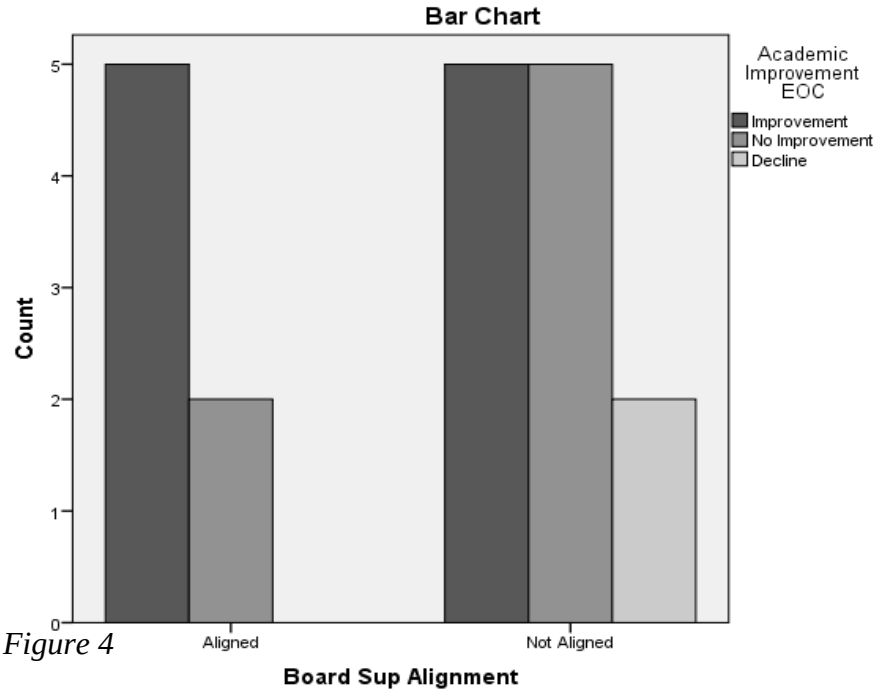

Figure 4

Academic Achievement Ranking for year 1 EOC Exam

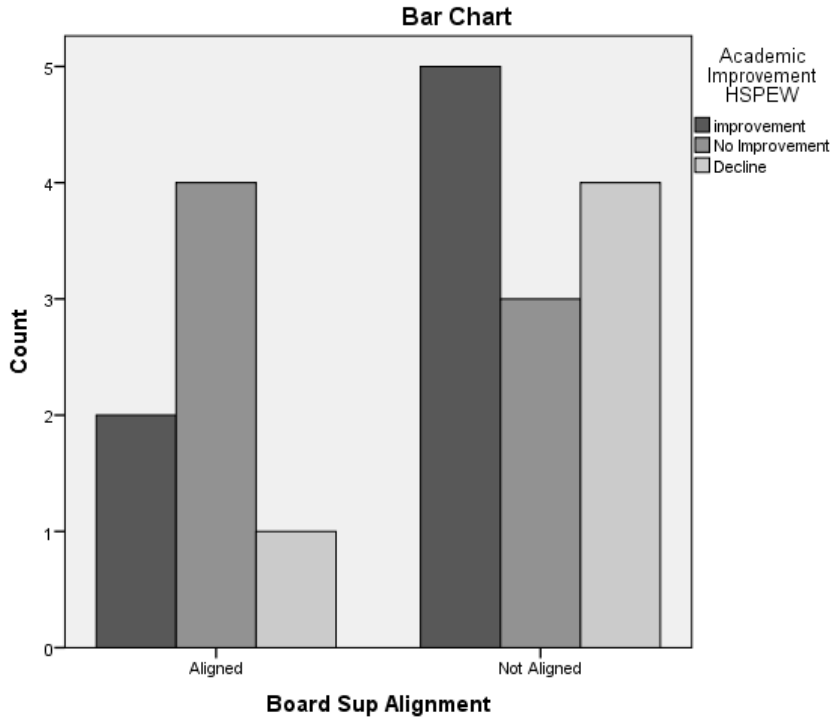

Figure 5

Academic Achievement Ranking for HSPE Writing

Phase 2: Student Achievement and Superintendent/School Board Alignment

This section presents the statistical analyses of the binomial categorical variable of aligned and unaligned school board and superintendent teams with the continuous variable of student achievement. Three unique continuous variables were analyzed in order to determine if statistical differences exist when comparing the means of the categorical variable. The Washington state 10th grade reading and writing high school proficiency exam (HSPE) and the year 1 (algebra) end of course (EOC) exam represented student achievement, the continuous variable for this study. Each exam was individually measured against the categorical variable of aligned and unaligned school board and superintendent teams. Assessment results from exams administered in the spring of 2014 were utilized for these analyses. The school districts were purposefully sampled from

responses to the WSSDA BSAS deployed in 2013. The student achievement exams were administered after the school board and superintendent responses to the BSAS. The assumption being that the actions of the school board and superintendent teams have an influence on the student achievement results if their aligned behaviors identified through the BSAS demonstrate a statistical relationship with student achievement.

Statistical analyses. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) reports results from statewide assessments through the Report Card tool located on the OSPI website. Reading and writing HSPE results, as well as year 1 (algebra) EOC exam results administered in the spring of 2014 were collected from this site for each of the 19 school districts identified through purposeful sampling in phase one. The results of the 2014 HSPE and year 1 EOC exam represent the continuous variables in the following analyses. The independent samples *t*-test was selected as the statistical procedure for this study. The independent samples t-test requires the study design and data set meet six assumptions prior to utilization. The first three assumptions deal with research design requiring a continuous variable; a categorical variable that is made up of two groups; and independence of observation between the categorical variables. Phase one of this study determined that data met these three assumptions. The remaining three assumptions required statistical examination in order to confidently carry out the independent samples *t*-test procedure.

The IBM software tool, SPSS, was utilized to examine the data and determine whether or not the assumptions were met for each of the three student achievement measures. The three assumptions are: there should be no significant outliers in the data set; the continuous variable should be approximately normally distributed; and there

should be homogeneity of variance in each group of the categorical variable. Visual box-plot analysis was utilized to determine whether or not outliers existed in the data set. The Shapiro-Wilk test for normality was administered in order to determine normal distribution. The Levene's test of equality of variance examined the categorical variable to determine homogeneity of variance.

2014 HSPE writing. Assumption 4 requires that no outliers exist within the HSPE writing data set. Inspection of the boxplot graph reveals no indication of outlying data for either aligned or unaligned school districts. Assumption 5 requires approximate normal distribution of the continuous variable for each level of the categorical variable. The Shapiro-Wilk test for normality results demonstrate normal distribution for both aligned and unaligned school districts (p >.05). Finally, the data shares homogeneity of variance for aligned and unaligned school districts, as assessed by Levene's test for equality of variances (p = .246). All three assumptions for the HSPE writing data were met allowing for confident utilization of the independent samples *t*-test.

Sample district 2014 HSPE writing results for aligned (M = 88.56, SD = 9.22) and unaligned (M = 82.14, SD = 8.48). Results of the t-test are as follows: Aligned school districts mean writing score was 6.42, 95% CI [-1.09 to 13.92] higher than unaligned school districts mean writing scores. These results were not statistically significant t (17) = 1.804, p = .089, d = -0.70.

2014 HSPE reading. Assumption 4 requires that no outliers exist within the HSPE reading data set. Inspection of the boxplot graph demonstrate this assumption to be met as there are no indications of outlying data for either aligned or unaligned school districts. Assumption 5 requires approximate normal distribution of the continuous

variable for each level of the categorical variable. The Shapiro-Wilk test results demonstrate normal distribution for both aligned and unaligned school districts ($p > .05$). Finally, there was homogeneity of variance for aligned and unaligned school districts, as assessed by Levene's test for equality of variances ($p = .498$). All three assumptions for the HSPE reading data were met allowing for the utilization of the independent samples t-test.

There were 7 aligned ($M = 84.56$, $SD = 9.22$) and 12 unaligned ($M = 78.44$, $SD = 9.90$) school districts included in this analysis. Results of the t-test are as follows: aligned school districts mean reading score was 6.42, 95% CI [-3.28 to 16.12] higher than unaligned school districts mean writing scores. These results were not statistically significant t (17) = 1.395, $p = .181$, $d = -.063$.

2014 Year 1 end of course exam. Assumption 4 requires that no outliers exist within the year 1 EOC data set. Inspection of the boxplot graph demonstrates this assumption to be violated as it indicates outlying data for an aligned school district. The EOC district composite score for the identified aligned school district was 63.1%. The next lowest aligned school district EOC composite results are 76.4%. Violation of this assumption required alternative methodologies to be employed in order to confidently measure the statistical relevance of the EOC data set.

Utilizing a statistical process demonstrated to reliably account for outlying data was determined to be one course of action for this data. The Mann-Whitney U test was substituted in place of the independent samples t-test. The Mann-Whitney U test is a non-parametric testing alternative for the independent sample t-test when assumptions are violated (Field, 2009). Additionally, outlying data was winsorized and the data set was

re-examined to determine if assumption 4, no outliers, was satisfied, along with the other assumptions, allowing for utilization of the independent *t*-test. Winsorizing data is a generally accepted method utilized to address outlying data determined to demonstrate differences from the other data set values (Ghosh & Vogt, 2012). These two methodologies were employed in order to deal with the identified outlying data.

The decision to winsorize the data was determined through examination of descriptive statistics specific to the outlier district results compared with the remaining six aligned school districts. The district's race/ethnicity data, as reported by OSPI, revealed over an 85% Hispanic/Latino student population make-up. This study focused on alignment between school boards and superintendents without accounting for other influencing variables. This district's student make-up, consisting of a high percentage of ethnic minority students, was determined to be a contributing factor in the outlying data results. For this reason, the resulting EOC value was winsorized to the next lowest value within the aligned school board and superintendent districts.

The Mann-Whitney U test was run to determine if there were statistically significant differences in year 1 (algebra) EOC exam results between aligned and unaligned school board and superintendent teams. EOC results for aligned and unaligned districts were distributed similarly, concluded by visual inspection. EOC results did not demonstrate statistically significant differences between aligned school board and superintendent teams (Mdn = 84.5) and unaligned teams (Mdn = 70.3), U = 22, z = -1.692, p = .100, r = -0.38, using an exact sampling distribution for U (Dinneen & Blakesley, 1973).

The EOC data set, after a winsorizing strategy was employed, was statistically examined through the independent samples t-test. The winsorizing strategy replaced the lowest data point value with the next lowest data point value (63.1 converted to 76.4). The assumptions were re-examined in order to determine if additional outliers would result from the winsorized data. Visual inspection of box plot revealed no new outlying data. The Shapiro-Wilk test demonstrated normally distributed data for both aligned and unaligned school districts ($p > .05$). Levene's test reported homogeneity of variance ($p = .086$). Results of the independent samples t-test reveal that aligned school districts ($M = 85.63$, $SD = 7.42$) demonstrate a statistically significant difference, $M = 13.67$, 95% CI [1.79, 25.55], t (17) = 2.43, $p = .027$, d= -1.16, in year 1 EOC mathematical exam results when compared with unaligned school districts ($M = 71.96$, $SD = 13.66$). Results of this *t*-test suggest that differences between means of districts with aligned school board and superintendent teams did not occur through chance alone. Table 4.4 represents the results of the independent samples *t*-tests for the 2014 reading and writing HSPE as well as the winsorized data (no outlier) for year 1 EOC.

Table 4

Results of t*-tests and Descriptive Statistics HSPE Reading, HSPE Writing, and Year 1 EOC Exam*

Outcome	Group						95% CI for Mean Difference	*T*	*df*
	Aligned			Unaligned					
	M	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*			
HSPE Read	84.56	9.22	7	78.44	9.90	12	-3.28, 16.12	1.395	17
HSPE Write	88.56	5.16	7	82.14	8.48	12	-1.09, 13.92	1.804	17

EOC	85.63	7.42	7	71.96	13.66	12	1.79, 25.55	2.43*	17

* $p < .05$.

Alignment and Improved Student Achievement

Examination of HSPE and EOC data revealed statistical significance only for aligned school districts, outlying data removed, for year 1 EOC results. The next analysis determined whether aligned school boards were statistically associated with improvement in student achievement. The dichotomous categorical variable of aligned and unaligned school board and superintendent teams were statistically examined with the district's corresponding improved and not improved academic achievement ranking categorical variable. A chi-square test was selected to examine the associations or independence of each variable.

Initial results of the Chi-square analysis demonstrated violation of assumptions as the expected counts were less than 5 in all group cells for HSPE writing, HSPE reading, and EOC when compared with academic improvement, no improvement, and declining results. In order to examine the potential statistical differences between school board and superintendent alignment and improving academic achievement, results from the no improvement and the declining results were combined creating a dichotomous nominal variable (Table 5).

Table 5

HSPE and EOC Improving and Not Improving Student Achievement Trends

District	Year 1 EOC	HSPE Reading	HSPE Writing
A.	Improving	Improving	Improving
B.	Not Improving	Not Improving	Not Improving

C.	Not Improving	Improving	Improving
D.	Not Improving	Not Improving	Not Improving
E.	Improving	Not Improving	Not Improving
F.*	Improving	Improving	Improving
G.*	Improving	Improving	Not Improving
H.*	Not Improving	Not Improving	Not Improving
I.	Not Improving	Not Improving	Not Improving
J.*	Improving	Not Improving	Improving
K.	Not Improving	Not Improving	Improving
L.*	Improving	Not Improving	Not Improving
M.	Improving	Not Improving	Improving
N.	Improving	Improving	Not Improving
O.	Improving	Improving	Improving
P.*	Improving	Not Improving	Not Improving
Q.	Not Improving	Not Improving	Not Improving
R.	Not Improving	Not Improving	Not Improving
S.*	Not Improving	Not Improving	Not Improving

* Denotes Aligned School Board/Superintendent Teams

Combining two of the three levels allows for a 2 X 2 table and utilization of the Fisher's exact test. Fisher's exact test is a suitable replacement for the chi-square test when cell frequencies are less than five (Field, 2009).

Outcome results for year 1 EOC exam indicated non-significant improvement to academic achievement in aligned school board and superintendent teams 71.4% (5/7),

when compared with 41.7% (5/12) for unaligned teams (p = .220). Results for HSPE reading demonstrated a non-significant improvement to academic achievement in aligned school board and superintendent teams 28.6% (2/7), when compared with 25% (3/12) unaligned teams (p = .634). Similarly, non-significant results were reported for improvement on HSPE writing assessment data when comparing aligned teams 42.9% (3/7) and 50% (6/12) for unaligned teams (p = .570).

The examination of aligned and unaligned school board and superintendent teams revealed no statistical relationships. Due to lower than 5 cell values, the Fisher exact test was utilized to determine significant results. For each of the academic assessments studied, aligned school board and superintendent teams did not demonstrate a significant difference when compared with unaligned teams and academic improvement.

Alternative hypothesis. After reviewing the multiple analyses of aligned and unaligned school boards and superintendent teams and student achievement, the question emerged as to whether or not aligned school board and superintendent teams demonstrated statistical differences when compared to school districts who did not participate on the WSSDA BSAS and student achievement.

Aligned school board and superintendent teams, as determined through the WSSDA BSAS, will demonstrate statistical differences when compared with like sized, free and reduced lunch percentage, and geographically located non-participating school districts and student achievement.

The previously identified seven aligned school board and superintendent teams were compared with school districts of similar free and reduced lunch percentages, student populations (relative size), and geographic location. Comparison districts were

selected from the same ESD location as corresponding aligned school districts. Additionally, the districts were determined not to have participated in the 2013 WSSDA BSAS. Seven school districts were purposefully sampled for this analysis.

Evaluation of the independent *t*-test assumptions demonstrated outlying data for both the HSPE writing examination as well as the year 1 EOC data. Visual inspection of the HSPE reading boxplot revealed no outliers. The Shapiro-Wilk test demonstrated normal distribution of the HSPE reading data ($p > .05$). Levene's test of equality confirmed homogeneity of variance ($p = .621$) resulting in all assumptions being met for the HSPE reading data.

Results of the independent samples *t*-test are as follows (Table 6): There were seven aligned ($M = 84.86$, $SD = 9.22$) and seven non-participating ($M = 86.37$, $SD = 6.85$) school districts included in this analysis. Aligned school districts mean reading score was -1.51, 95% CI [-10.98 to 7.95] lower than non-participating school districts mean reading scores. These results were not statistically significant t (12) = -.349, $p = .733$, $d = 0.19$.

Table 6

Alternative Hypothesis Results of t*-test and Descriptive Statistics for 2014 HSPE Reading Exam*

	Aligned			Non-Participating				
	M	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*		*t*
HSPE reading	84.86	9.22	7	86.37	6.85	7	-10.98, 7.95	-.349

* $p < .05$.

Due to the identified violation of assumptions for outlying data, the Mann-Whitney U test was utilized to determine if there were statistically significant differences in year 1 EOC exam results between aligned school board and superintendent teams and districts choosing not to participate in the 2013 BSAS. EOC results for aligned and non-participating districts were distributed similarly, concluded by visual inspection. EOC results did not demonstrate statistically significant differences between aligned school board and superintendent teams (Mdn = 84.5) and non-participating districts (Mdn = 80.7), U = 16, z = -1.087, p = .318, r = -0.29, using an exact sampling distribution for U (Dinneen & Blakesley, 1973).

The Mann-Whitney U test was utilized to determine if there were statistically significant differences in HSPE writing results between aligned school board and superintendent teams and non-participating school districts due to previously identified outlying data preventing the confident use of the *t*-test procedure. HSPE writing results for aligned teams and non-participating districts were distributed similarly, concluded by visual inspection. HSPE writing results did not demonstrate statistically significant differences between aligned school board and superintendent teams (Mdn = 88.1) and non-participating districts (Mdn = 90.7), U = 26.5, z = .256, p = .805, r = .07, using an exact sampling distribution for U (Dinneen & Blakesley, 1973).

The alternative hypothesis stating statistical difference between aligned school board and superintendent teams and non-participating school districts and student achievement failed confirmation through statistical analysis. The independent samples *t*-test as well as the Mann-Whitney U procedure were used to compare means and medians for the two groups. The analyses confirmed the null hypothesis that there is not a

statistical difference between aligned school board and superintendent student achievement compared with that of non-participating school districts.

Summary

This chapter presented statistical analyses examining the potential relationship between aligned superintendent and school board teams compared with unaligned teams and academic achievement. Alignment was determined through examination of the WSSDA BSAS results for the year 2013. School board and superintendent teams demonstrating at least a 3 “some of the time”, overall result for each of the five WSSDA board standards measured by the BSAS were identified as aligned teams. Student achievement was represented by 2014 reading and writing HSPE results as well as year 1 EOC results.

Statistical significance was determined when comparing aligned school board and superintendent teams and unaligned teams 2014 year 1 EOC results (p = .027). The independent samples t-test was used to examine this data after winsorizing identified outlying data. No other statistically significant findings were revealed through the analyses.

An examination of potential relationship between aligned school board and superintendent teams and academic improvement was conducted utilizing the chi square analysis. Cell values less than 5 resulted in the modification of the data into a 2x2 table examining the dichotomous variables of aligned and unaligned and improved and not improved. Fisher’s exact test revealed no statistical relationships through this analysis.

The alternative hypothesis emerged from initial data examinations. This suggested that aligned school board and superintendent teams would demonstrate a statistical

difference when compared with school districts choosing not to participate in the WSSDA BSAS. Districts of similar size, free and reduced lunch percentage, and geographic location were compared with previously identified aligned district teams. No statistical relationships were discovered through these analyses.

The next chapter summarizes the results of the data analyses and presents conclusions of the study as well as recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine whether aligned school board and superintendent teams differed from unaligned teams when compared to results on standardized achievement measures. Literature focused on the relationship between superintendent and school boards assert the necessity of a strong, healthy and functional working arrangement in order to improve a school systems overall student achievement (Alsbury, 2008a; Alsbury, 2008b; Goodman, Fulbright & Zimmerman, 1997; Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000; NSBA, 2015). This study identified "alignment" between school board and superintendent beliefs as a potential contributing factor for influencing student achievement.

Summary

Chapter one described the opportunity school boards share in shaping the educational system to reflect attributes of high achieving school systems identified for improving student achievement. Student achievement is described as the ultimate indicator of a school district's success (Lashway, 2002). Sound school board governance practice is presented as a necessary element of an effective school district focused on improving student achievement. Responsibility for preparing the board to act and behave in a manner reflective of effective governance rests with the superintendent. Alignment of attitudes and beliefs between school board directors and the superintendent presents as a potential indicator of effective board governance and subsequent improvements to student achievement. The following research question was developed for the study:

Does Superintendent and School Board alignment of attitudes and beliefs, as measured by the Washington State School Directors Association Board Self-Assessment Survey, demonstrate a statistically significant relationship with student achievement?

Chapter two presented a review of the literature regarding school boards, superintendents, and governance as it relates to student achievement. A historical exploration of school boards and superintendents is provided to build context for each role. The Decision-Output theory, developed by Wirt and Kirst (1992), is presented in order to explore a theoretical construct developed to explain the inner workings of school board governance. Delagardelle's 2006 dissertation expanded the Decision-Output model and asserted student achievement as the ultimate output. This study extends this assertion and examines school board and superintendent alignment, manifested through decisions made within the theoretical political system, as a contributing factor for improved student achievement.

The next section described the Washington State School Directors Association (WSSDA) school board standards, the development of the standards based on available school board research, and the subsequent design of the Board Self-Assessment Survey (BSAS) intended to support implementation of the board standards. Finally, three anchor studies were highlighted as the guiding framework for this study. The studies include the Iowa School Boards Association Lighthouse study (2000), Shelton's examination of superintendent and school boards' interaction on 8th grade mathematics performance (2010), and Lorentzen's examination (2013) of school board responses to the BSAS and corresponding relationship to high school student achievement results.

Chapter 3 presented the research design for the study. The study was deployed in two phases; phase 1 examined results from the WSSDA BSAS from 2011 – 2015 in order to determine a purposeful sample of school board and superintendent teams. Once identified, the sample was analyzed to determine aligned or unaligned school board and superintendent teams. Phase 2 statistically measured whether aligned school board and superintendent teams demonstrated differences when compared with unaligned teams when examining student achievement results. In addition, identified board and superintendent teams were examined for potential relationships between aligned teams and student achievement improvement when compared with unaligned teams.

Chapter 4 presented results of phase 1 and phase 2 of the data analysis in order to determine acceptability of the research question. Phase 1 identified 19 purposefully sampled school districts meeting the school board quorum requirement, a superintendent response, and Washington state Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction reported 2014 high school proficiency exam data as well as year 1 end of course mathematics examination results. Phase 2 statistically measured aligned and unaligned teams with corresponding student achievement data in order to determine if aligned school board and superintendent teams demonstrated a statistically significant relationship. In addition, a Fischer's exact test measured whether aligned and unaligned school boards demonstrated a statistical relationship with improving and not improving academic achievement results. Finally, an alternative hypothesis examined whether differences existed between the seven aligned school board and superintendent districts and school districts of similar student population, free and reduced lunch percentages, and geographic location who did not participate in the WSSDA BSAS.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the findings from the statistical analyses, discuss the discovered outcomes in relation to previous studies, and suggest implications for current school boards and superintendents as well as future research. Limitations are presented in order to accurately frame the findings of this study. The chapter concludes with a call for continued research on school boards, superintendents, and the influence of these roles on improving student achievement.

Findings and Analysis

This study focused on the governance relationship existing between the superintendent and the school board through examination of results for the Washington State School Directors Association (WSSDA) Board Self-Assessment Survey (BSAS). Examination of the 2013 results of the survey assigned categories within the purposefully sampled 19 school board and superintendent teams of "aligned" and "unaligned". These teams represented the binomial categorical variable for this study. Aligned and unaligned school board and superintendent teams were statistically measured against corresponding district student achievement results. Student achievement was represented with the overall district results from 2014 Washington State High School Proficiency Examination (HSPE) including reading and writing, and the year 1 End of Course (EOC) examination. These results comprised the continuous variable. The statistical methodology used to examine the potential relationship between the categorical variable and the continuous variable was the independent samples *t*-test.

The BSAS is composed of 69 questions representing 22 benchmarks distributed amongst five school board standards. The five standards are (a) responsible school district governance; (b) communication of and commitment to high expectations for

student learning; (c) creating conditions district-wide for student and staff success; (d) holding the district accountable for student learning; and (e) engagement of the community in education. The survey design uses the 69 questions to inform the five Likert-like scaled results for each of the five board standards.

The results of the completed BSAS are compiled and provided to participating school districts. The composite based graphs and charts describe the board's reported overall composite score for each standard. The intent of the BSAS is for school boards and superintendents to use the results in order to improve overall governance practices. This same methodology was utilized in this study in order to compare board composite results with superintendent responses. Board and superintendent teams with agreement between the board composite results and the mean superintendent results for each WSSDA board standard, at or greater than 3, were determined to be aligned. Teams with alignment in all five board standards were categorized as aligned school board and superintendent teams.

Seven aligned teams were identified through this process. These aligned teams were compared with the remaining 12 unaligned teams. The hypothesis assumes a statistical significant ($p < .05$) difference between aligned teams and unaligned teams. Results of the HSPE reading analysis demonstrated no statistical difference [t (17) = 1.395, p = .181] between means of aligned school board and superintendent teams (M = 84.56) and unaligned teams (M = 78.44). Similarly, results of the HSPE writing analysis revealed no statistical difference [t (17) = 1.804, p = .089] between aligned teams (M = 88.56) and unaligned teams (M = 82.14). The hypothesis was rejected for both HSPE reading and writing.

Initial analysis of the year 1 EOC data identified outlying data from one of the aligned school board and superintendent teams. The results for the outlying aligned district's EOC examination were considerably lower than the next lowest aligned district's results. The identified outlier violated the parametric assumptions for application of the independent samples *t*-test. Two alternative options were initiated in order to complete the analysis of the EOC data. First, the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U statistical test was used to analyze the variables since this statistical function does not assume normally distributed data. This procedure resulted in no statistical significance ($u = 22$, $z = -1.692$, $p = .100$) identified between the median results of the aligned teams (Mdn = 84.5) and unaligned teams (Mdn = 70.3) with regards to the 2014 year 1 EOC results. The null hypothesis was retained signifying no statistical difference between aligned and unaligned team medians when compared with year 1 EOC math.

Next, the data set was winsorized by replacing the identified outlying district's EOC result with the next lowest aligned district result. The decision to apply winsorization to the aligned data set was determined through examination of descriptive statistics information revealing a high ethnic minority population for the outlying district when compared with the other six aligned school board and superintendent teams. A statistically significant difference in mean achievement scores between aligned and unaligned school board and superintendent teams, $t\ (17) = 2.43$, $p = .027$, $d = -1.16$ was discovered through this analysis.

This finding supports Lorentzen's 2013 study which found statistical significance between board responses and 10^{th} grade math from the Montana state criterion reference test (CRT). Lorentzen's results demonstrated a Pearson's *r* value of 0.427, $p = .030$

significance when he examined all 27 reporting districts. Lorentzen examined each WSSDA board standard independently. Significance was discovered when Standard 4 was compared to the 10th grade CRT math results.

Additionally, Shelton's 2010 study resulted in statistically significant results when examining 8th grade mathematics specifically in the variable of time. Shelton concluded that the amount of time, indicated by superintendents, spent discussing mathematical student achievement, resulted in statistically significant improvement to overall 8th grade mathematical scores. However, different results indicated no statistical growth when comparing combined superintendent and school board survey results.

Finally, these results support Delagardelle's (2006) assertion that community expectations regarding strong student achievement is an obvious output in light of the legislated standards movement. Her study extended the Wirt and Kirst (1992) decision-output theory by specifically identifying student achievement as an output resulting from external community input influencing governance decisions determined at the political level of the theoretical construct. Delagardelle demonstrated particular board attitudes and beliefs resulted in conditions supporting strong academic achievement when compared to school board responses in districts with lower academic achievement. Findings from Delegardelle's study contribute to many school board governance frameworks (IASB, 2000; NSBA, 2015; WSSDA, 2009).

This study contributes to Delagardelle's work by specifically examining school board and superintendent alignment. Alignment was determined by examining the results of the WSSDA BSAS, a board governance self-assessment survey. Additionally, the findings demonstrate statistically significant differences between aligned school board

and superintendent district year 1 EOC mean results. Aligned school board means trended higher than unaligned teams. These results demonstrate a specific example of strong student achievement supported by board and superintendent stated attitudes and beliefs around governance. This suggests that, in addition to board attitudes and beliefs, superintendent and school board alignment around these beliefs is important for school boards and superintendents working to support student achievement through governance. Figure 6 demonstrates key linkages suggested by Delagardelle and includes the influences of alignment between boards and superintendents as well as specifically showing the 2014 year 1 EOC exam as a student achievement result influenced by board and superintendent governance attitudes and beliefs.

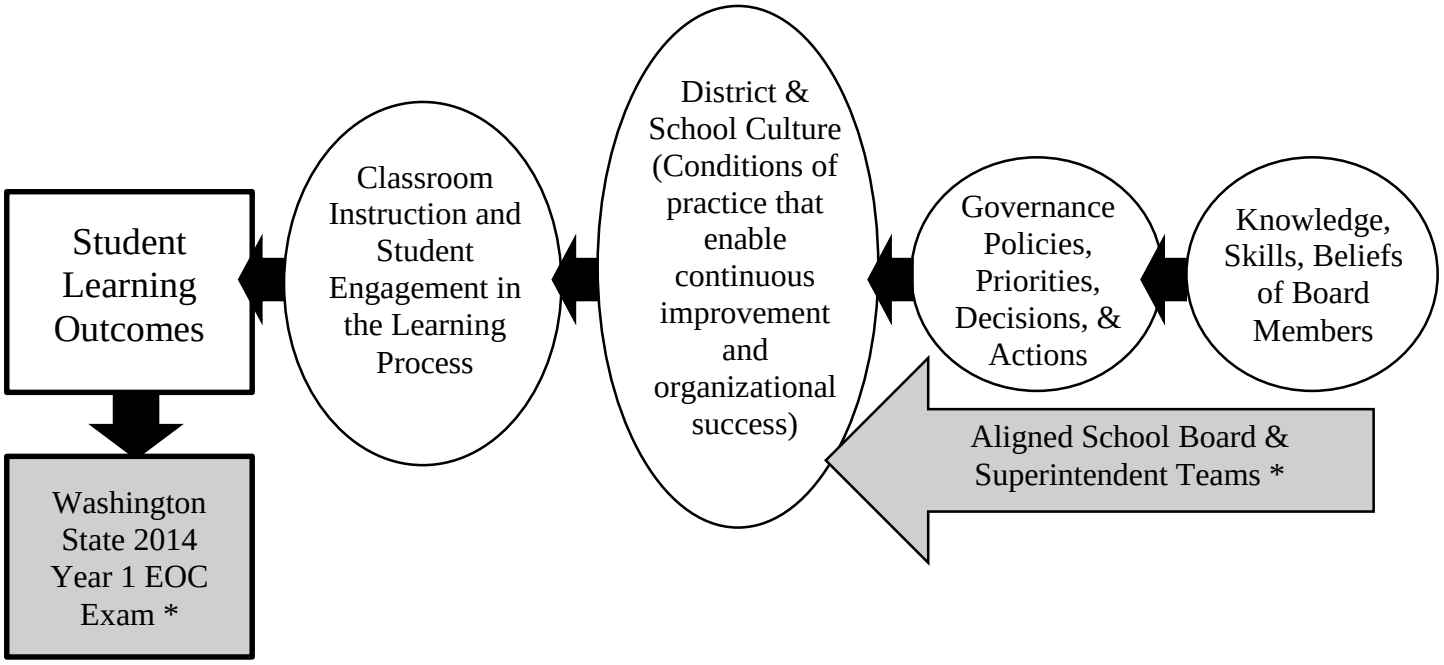

Figure 6

Key Linkages between School Boards and Superintendents and Student Achievement

Adaptation of Delgardelle's (2008) Model

Notes: * Additional components demonstrating this study's relationship to the linkages

Limitations

This study and subsequent results were limited by factors present in the research design. Two identified limitations are the sample of school board and superintendent teams and the utilization of the WSSDA BSAS. The identified limitations prevent widespread generalizations of the study results and should provoke additional questions for further research studies.

The sample of school boards and superintendents utilized for this study was limited by the initial distribution of the WSSDA BSAS to Washington school districts only. This self-selected participation survey is communicated each year through email to each board member and superintendent. The response rate for the studied year 2013 was inherently low to begin with representing a total of 89 out of the potential 295 school districts resulting in a 30% representative response. The sample was further limited by the amount of superintendent responses. The year 2013 was selected as it presented the highest incidence of superintendent response. However, this was considerably lower than corresponding board response. The initial sort for superintendent responses identified 32 completed surveys resulting in an 11% response rate. The sample was further limited due to the purposeful sampling requirements of high school HSPE and EOC results as well as a quorum school board response. These predetermined requirements reduced the final sample to 19 school board and superintendent teams resulting in a response rate of 6.4% for the study.

The WSSDA board self-assessment survey tool presented additional limitations for this study. The Likert-like survey inherently influences responses by school board directors and superintendents to the forced-choice format aligned to the pre-identified WSSDA board standard elements. Respondents are not provided the opportunity to self-identify additional factors or influences they would report as influencing governance decisions through open ended survey items. Utilization of the BSAS for this study does not address the question of what school boards and superintendents identify as leading factors or influences for improving student achievement. Instead, the survey measures how well school boards and superintendents are working towards application of the WSSDA school board standards. The standards themselves present a limitation as the development of the standards, while based on previous studies related to school board governance and student achievement, also relied on trade books and generally accepted assertions of best practice as related to school boards and the superintendents. Lorentzen (2013) asserted that the WSSDA BSAS is unique as far as its intended purpose to improve governance through the assessment of standards. How well the standards define high quality board governance and subsequent influence of student achievement is assumed to be aligned, therefore it is a limitation to the study.

The designation of the categorical variable is also a limitation to the study. Setting the level of alignment at a score of 3 or better was identified in order to ensure an adequate number of aligned school boards within the limiting sample of 19 school districts. Raising the level to 3.5 eliminated most of the 7 subset identified as aligned at the 3 score level. The Likert-like scale identifies 3 as “sometimes” within the study. It is

likely that governing in a manner only aligned to "sometimes" might not be enough to statistically relate to student achievement.

The limitations of the study present ample cause for cautious application and generalization of conclusions. Instead, the results should encourage more studies and focus on school board and superintendent alignment specific to governance. The continued pursuit of linkages between school board and superintendent attitudes, beliefs, and student achievement will encourage systemic focus on improving student achievement through governance practice.

Practical Implications

This research study focused on alignment between school board directors and superintendents. Identified aligned school board and superintendent teams were analyzed in order to determine whether or not aligned teams demonstrated a statistical difference when compared with unaligned teams and corresponding student achievement. While most of the examined data sets did not present statistically significant results. One subset, the adjusted year one EOC mathematics data, reported statistically significant differences in means between aligned and unaligned school board and superintendent teams.

Previous studies have focused on the importance of school boards and superintendents to work as a team (Thurlow Brenner, Sullivan, & Dalton, 2002; Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000; IASB, 2000; Waters & Marzano, 2007). Measuring effective teaming is most often accomplished through qualitative research methodologies. This type of research is time consuming and inefficient. Observing interactions between board members and superintendents, most likely at school board meetings, as well as studying communications via email and eventual decisions related to policy and other

board level assignments could provide clear insight into the workings of a school board and superintendent team. It would not be feasible to create a trained cadre of observers to regularly assess the level of teamwork between individual school district school boards and superintendents in this manner. This type of observation requires a high level of interrater reliability in order to generalize consistent and accurate assessments of practice. Providing this service to 295 school districts throughout the state of Washington is impractical and unlikely to be implemented.

This study developed a standard range of alignment based on composite board responses to the WSSDA BSAS and mean responses of superintendents. These scores were used to categorically designate aligned and unaligned teams. Aligned and unaligned teams were then statistically compared with corresponding district composite Washington state student assessment results. This quantitative approach utilized existing WSSDA data collected annually through online survey technology.

The widespread application of this methodology could be easily incorporated into WSSDA BSAS reports already communicated to participating school districts. This report could focus school boards and superintendent teams on identified areas within the five WSSDA board standard framework requiring professional learning and growth in order to improve overall alignment. The stated purpose of the WSSDA board standards is to "…encourage boards to focus on student achievement as their primary responsibility (WSSDA, 2009, p. 2)." Aligning superintendent and school board attitudes and beliefs around specific standards will increase efforts to improve student achievement through governance action.

While only one subset of data analysis resulted in statistically significant results, it is encouraging that the subset was associated with year one EOC exam data. This test specifically measures student aptitude in the area of Algebra and is timed to occur while students are completing Algebra coursework. Algebra has been demonstrated to influence increased student success (Gamoran & Hannigan, 2000). Further, students taking Algebra, as part of a rigorous course of study, demonstrated statistically significant post-secondary success when compared to students not enrolled in rigorous courses (Long, Conger, & Iatorola, 2012). Identifying a statistical link between aligned school boards and superintendents and overall results on the year 1 EOC supports WSSDA's assertion that the standards are intended to guide systemic efforts to improve student achievement. This systemic endeavor starts with governance practices demonstrated by elected school board directors and their selected superintendent. Aligning these practices to research based, student achievement associated attitudes, actions, and beliefs included in the WSSDA board standard frameworks, give school boards the greatest likelihood of establishing learning environments demonstrated to influence improved student success.

Enhancing the feedback provided by WSSDA to districts participating in the BSAS could energize the program and increase the number of districts who utilize this service. If participating districts improve overall governance practice, as measured through alignment on the BSAS, and these improvements are statistically linked with student assessment results, there is a higher likelihood that board and superintendent efforts around governance could positively influence student success. Improving student success through governance is a replicable strategy; as more districts experience success in efforts to address achievement through governance, others are likely to adopt the

utilization of the BSAS and associated WSSDA services. Increased participation in the BSAS will create additional pathways of support WSSDA can provide to local school districts in assisting board and superintendent teams to improve governance practices. These improved governance practices provide a systemic response for focusing efforts and actions aimed at improving student success.

Finally, the WSSDA school board frameworks provide clear and specific examples for how effective school boards should strive to govern. This framework was developed in order to support a school board's focus on student achievement. Along with other Washington state approved frameworks for each level of school district support structure including teaching frameworks, principals frameworks, and superintendent frameworks, the WSSDA school board frameworks supports the systemic efforts to improve student achievement within a school district. Figure 7 demonstrates the researcher's proposed interactive relationship between each of the frameworks, all intended to increase the likelihood of continuously improving student achievement results.

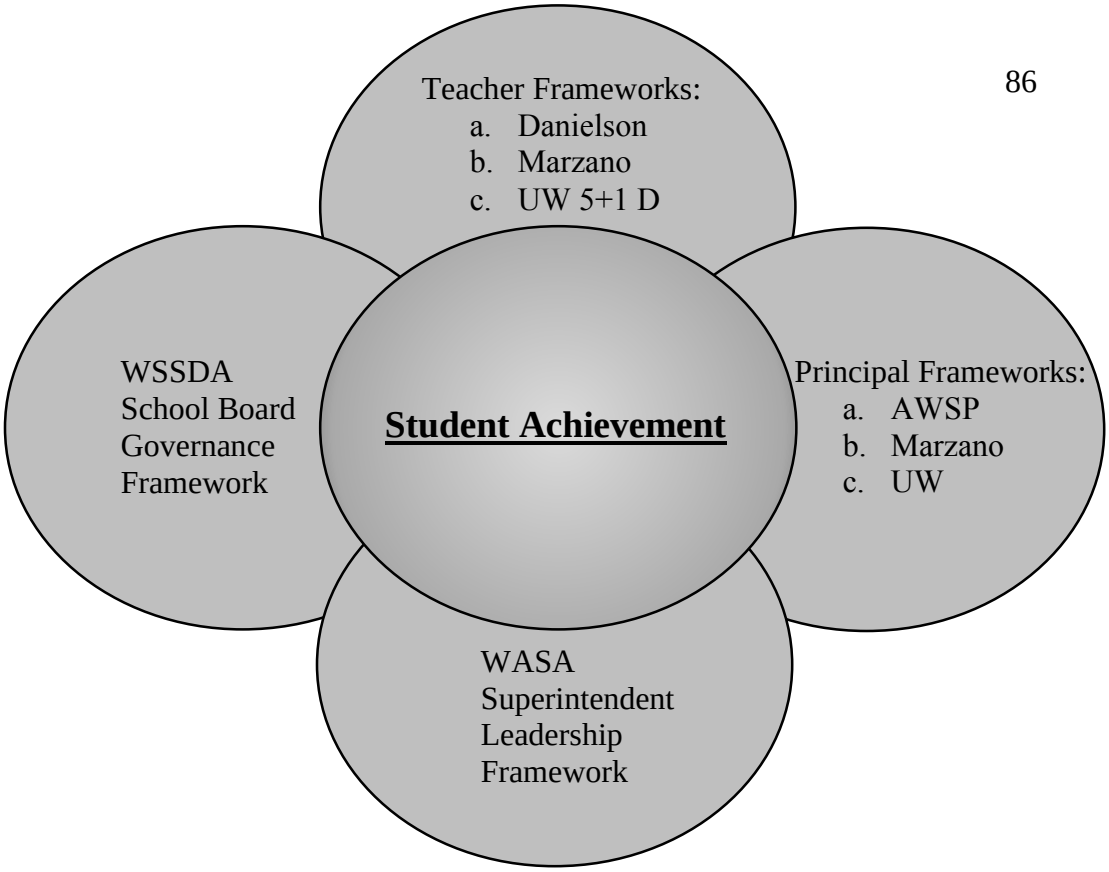

Figure 7

Interaction of Washington State Evaluation Frameworks Supporting Student Achievement

Future Studies

The WSSDA BSAS results provide a rich ex post facto data set with numerous possibilities for statistical exploration. Examples presented are intended to elicit interest in the school board governance field of study and encourage future examination of the WSSDA BSAS data. WSSDA's (2009) stated goal for the school board standards was "…the hope that every school board will use them as a target for high performance."(p. 1) Continued research intended to build on the understanding of the relationship between school board governance and overall student achievement through district improvement will encourage more local school boards to align their practice to research validated findings.

Shelton's (2010) study utilized hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) in order to examine multiple variables and determine the potential statistical variance accounted for each included in the analyses. The WSSDA BSAS data provides survey based Likert responses similar to the modified Delagardelle (2006) survey instrument Shelton utilized in his study. A replication of Shelton's HLM analyses using Washington student achievement data along with district demographics available through the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction and the WSSDA BSAS would provide the researcher a statistical model for determining the characteristics of relationships existing between student achievement and a multitude of factors. Available factors include free and reduced lunch percentages as well as ethnic breakdowns and many additional descriptive statistics.

The results of this proposed study could be compared with Shelton's results in order to build upon the discoveries from previous research. For example, Shelton's analysis discovered that a superintendent spending more time discussing 8^{th} grade math demonstrated statistically greater results than those superintendents reporting less curricular focus and discussion. An examination to determine if similar results holds true with Washington state superintendent and school board responses and associated student achievement would support previous conclusions and encourage curricular focus for superintendents and school boards.

The WSSDA BSAS instrument provides a rich opportunity for a follow up factor analysis as the survey has been deployed for five years. The original factor analysis was completed by the Baker Educational Research Company (BERC) during a pilot phase prior to initial deployment of the instrument in 2010. With over 1,300 completed surveys,

the BSAS data provides a large sample to examine various factor loading relationships existing in the 69 survey items and the five identified standards. The examination and potential re-validation of the BSAS instrument itself would support future findings of studies utilizing the BSAS data.

Replication of this study focusing specifically on school board results only would shift focus from alignment between superintendents and school boards to the relationship existing between board members. Analyzing levels of agreement within each of the five WSSDA standards independently with areas of academic achievement may also result in discoveries around relationships existing between specific independent levels of standard alignment and potential relationships with student achievement. This type of study would contribute to WSSDA's goal of supporting school boards and efforts to improve student achievement. If particular standards demonstrated strong relationships to improvement, concerted effort and focus could be implemented to support school board alignment in these identified areas.

The WSSDA BSAS data should be included in future studies. At this time, very few focused analyses have been undertaken with this ex post facto data set. Multiple research studies are certain to uncover valuable insights that could be utilized to support effective and impacting school board governance practice.

Final Thoughts

The WSSDA school board standards are sound, generally accepted governance practices. Many are based on empirically demonstrated attitudes, beliefs, and actions found to demonstrate statistical relationships with student achievement. Supporting local school board and superintendent teams to align their practice around WSSDA governance

standards provides a statewide systemic approach to improving student achievement for every student in Washington State.

In order to increase the likelihood of the widespread adoption and increased utilization of the WSSDA board standards and the BSAS the following recommendations are offered:

1. Deploy strategies to increase participation from superintendents. Comparison of attitudes and beliefs between school boards and superintendents is only possible through school board and superintendent team participation on the BSAS. A strategy as simple as including "superintendent" in the name of the self-assessment could increase participation rates by superintendents: *Superintendent* & Board Self-Assessment Survey (SBSAS).
2. Create a new marketing strategy for the WSSDA school board standards and associated BSAS. Studies of Washington state school boards have noted relatively consistent board turnover (Alsbury, 2003; Engle, 1999). Consider including the WSSDA board standards as a recommended training module similar to the required open public meeting training. This practice would ensure initial awareness of the board standards and support superintendents' and board presidents' efforts on-boarding newly elected board directors.
3. Continue to support and encourage academic research utilizing the WSSDA BSAS data. This longitudinal data set is a virtual treasure trove of undiscovered insights into school board governance,

> superintendent leadership, and systemic governance strategies intended to improve student achievement. As Land (2002) implored in the conclusion of her study: "Future research must examine what form of school board and educational governance works under which circumstances and for whom" (p. 39). The WSSDA BSAS data provides five standards, 22 components, and 69 elements organized around board governance. These items can be directly examined against corresponding district demographics as well as student achievement results catalogued by the Washington state Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI).

Adopting these recommendations could increase participation from school districts and strengthen the support provided to school boards working to positively impact the students in their local districts.

It seems improbable that improving governance in each of the five standards would not result in overall improvement of organizational culture within a school district. The five standards encompass widely accepted and advised organization optimization strategies. For example, standard one: *responsible school district governance,* includes ethical leadership, transparent decision making, open dialogue including encouraged divergent thinking during decision making, as well as working as a collaborative team. Standard two: *communication of and commitment to high expectations for student learning,* focuses on establishing a clear vision for intended outcomes of improvement efforts. This standard also espouses an unwavering commitment and belief in all students' ability to achieve at high levels. Standard three: *creating conditions district-*

wide for student and staff success, aligns resources specifically intended to support students in learning and build the capacity of staff to carry out the strategic plan ensuring commitment to success for each learner. Standard four: *holding the district accountable for student learning,* aligns policy around regularly scheduled district assessments designed as learning focused evaluations intended to support the overall vision of reaching every student. Strategic data analysis informs instructional decisions and systemic support. This specificity will ensure teacher imbedded professional development delivered accurately in order to meet identified student needs. Standard 5: *engagement of the community in education,* describes mobilizing community resources, soliciting a wide spectrum of community input prior to decision making, clear and consistent communication of school district actions, plans and outcomes, and overall accountability to every stakeholder. Consistent and aligned application of these identified components within the five standard framework provides a school board the greatest opportunity to achieve identified goals focused on improving student achievement.

This study supports the continued utilization of the WSSDA BSAS as a tool to improve school board governance. It also demonstrates the need for future research studies focused on school board and superintendent attitudes and beliefs, as measured through the BSAS, and the potential influence on student achievement. This work along with future studies examining BSAS data, will encourage school board and superintendent teams to utilize self-assessment results as a tool to improve and align practice with the WSSDA governance standards. Ultimately, this systemic approach carries the potential to improve overall district student achievement through effective board governance.

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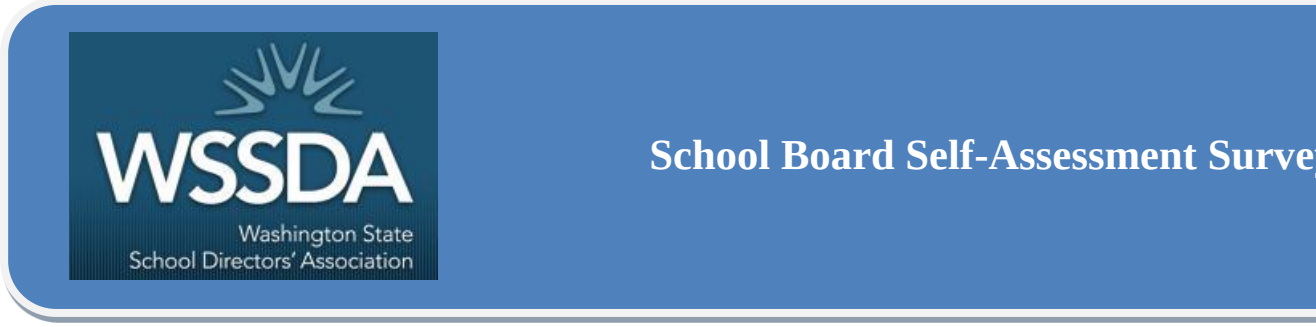
Appendix



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Welcome to the WSSDA School Board Self-Assessment Survey

The Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA) believes that high functioning school boards have a positive impact on the learning and development of each student. WSSDA strives to provide exceptional services to boards with the goal of strengthening governance practices of school boards across our state. To that purpose, we are offering a Board Self-Assessment Tool to provide feedback to boards that guides goal setting for continual improvement.

The Self-Assessment results reflect the collective responses of board members, building a profile of your boards' work in five strands of board practice, proven to support student achievement. The survey and reports are provided as a service from WSSDA at no cost to your district.

The demographic information and the collective data from the surveys provide the information necessary to increase knowledge regarding school boards and their effectiveness. Your participation benefits the work of your school board and that of others as we increase our knowledge base and apply it to serving boards across our state.

The following survey contains 82 questions and may take 20-25 minutes to complete. Thank you for your time and thoughtful efforts.

School Board Self-Assessment Surve

1. Select your School District:

2. What is your role?

- ❍ Board Member
- ❍ Superintendent
- ❍ Other, please specify

3. How long have you served in this position?

- ○ Less than 1 year
- ○ 1 to 3 years
- ○ 3 to 5 years
- ○ More than 5 years

To what extent does our board (select appropriate answer):

4. Base its decisions on what is best for students' success?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
□ 1	□ 2	□ 3	□ 4	□ 5

5. Commit to a clear and shared purpose?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
□ 1	□ 2	□ 3	□ 4	□ 5

6. Provide information to the public that supports board discussions and decisions?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
□ 1	□ 2	□ 3	□ 4	□ 5

7. Follow a defined process for gathering input prior to making critical decisions?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

8. Carry out annual assessments of its performance?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

9. Set goals for its improvement?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

10. Delegate authority to the superintendent to manage district operations and implement policy?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

11. Honor the roles and responsibilities of the superintendent?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

12. Use written protocols for its interactions?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

13. Govern using policies that align with best practice and research?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

14. Focus policy decisions on what is necessary for all students to achieve at high levels?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

15. Collaborate with colleagues across the region, state, or nation regarding current and emerging trends, issues, and policy solutions?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

16. Provide an opportunity for stakeholders, such as staff, students, parents, and community members, to make presentations to the board?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

17. Promote continuous improvement throughout the organization?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

18. Treat all individuals, including fellow board members, staff, students, and community members, with respect?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

19. Work with the superintendent to achieve mutual trust and commitment?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

20. Pursue professional development to improve board members' knowledge and skills by attending conferences, holding study sessions, etc.?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

21. Uses collaborative processes that result in well-informed problem-solving and decision-making?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

22. Together with the superintendent, share responsibility for the orientation of new board members and forming a new inclusive team?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

23. Through policies and actions expresses our belief that all students can learn?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

24. Through policies and actions, communicate high expectations for all students?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

25. Foster a culture of collaboration around the shared purpose of improving student achievement?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

26. Include stakeholders when developing and revising the district's vision?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

27. Communicate its rationale for decisions to the community?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

28. In collaboration with staff and the community, formulate and maintain a district plan with goals and outcomes?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

29. Base its ongoing work, such as policy development, decision-making, and budgeting, on the district goals?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

30. Continually monitor progress toward the goals and outcomes of the district plan?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

31. Together with the superintendent agree that high expectations for all students is the highest priority?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

32. Together with the superintendent review student achievement regularly?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

33. Ensure that facilities comply with current health, safety, security, and accessibility standards?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

34. Policy require regular evaluation and management of safety and security risks?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

35. Have policies that ensure hiring and retention of highly qualified staff?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

36. Have policies for evaluating staff based on student success?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

37. Policy support research-based, best practices for staff development?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

38. Have an established course of study for students and graduation requirements that align with high expectations for student achievement?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

39. Policy ensure students receive the curriculum, support and supplemental materials necessary for high achievement?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

40. Adopt a budget that supports quality staff development and resources for curriculum implementation?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

41. Have a process that includes community and parent involvement in selecting curriculum?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

42. Policy require rigorous and regular evaluation of curriculum and supplemental materials to ensure they align with state and district standards?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

43. Have a process in place to support evaluation and updating of technology?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

44. Have a long-term facilities plan in place for construction and maintenance?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

You are halfway through the survey. Thanks for your time and thoughtful efforts.

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45. Communicate an expectation that all classrooms will implement effective instructional practices?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
□ 1	□ 2	□ 3	□ 4	□ 5

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46. Provide for evaluation of district operations to ensure there is an efficient and effective learning environment?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
□ 1	□ 2	□ 3	□ 4	□ 5

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47. Keep the community informed about the district's financial status?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
□ 1	□ 2	□ 3	□ 4	□ 5

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48. Seek public input during the budget process?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
□ 1	□ 2	□ 3	□ 4	□ 5

49. Provide guidelines for budget development, including a clearly defined expectation for a reasonable ending fund balance?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

50. Adopt a fiscally responsible annual budget that is aligned with the district's vision and plan?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

51. Regularly monitor the budget and fiscal status of the district?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

52. Follow a schedule for the timely review of the district plan?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

53. Ensure a high degree of coherence between the district plan and school improvement plans?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

54. Annually review and make recommendations to the district plan and school improvement plans?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

55. Publicly recognize the efforts of schools in improving student learning?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

56. Have written goals for the superintendent that focus on specific outcomes for student learning?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

57. Communicate performance expectations for the superintendent to our community?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

58. Base decisions about the superintendent's contract on objective evaluation of his or her performance and achievement of goals?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

59. Require the effective use of data throughout the system to monitor student achievement and district performance?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

60. Regularly review and understand the criteria, assessment tools, and methods that measure student achievement and district performance?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

61. Regularly review data, including disaggregated student achievement data, to measure progress toward district goals?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

62. Regularly evaluate and adjust resources and strategies for closing achievement gaps to maximize their effectiveness?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

63. Advocate at the local, state and federal levels on behalf of students and the district?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

64. Model cultural, racial, and ethnic understanding and sensitivity?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

65. Establish policies and partnerships that promote and expand educational opportunities for all students?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

66. Follow an effective process for responding to questions, concerns, comments, or feedback from citizens?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

67. Ensure the public is well informed of the board's roles and responsibilities?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

68. Conducts its business in a transparent and accountable manner?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

69. Communicate proactively to disseminate information that addresses issues throughout the system and community?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

70. Communicate district performance to the public in clear and understandable ways?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

71. Seek community and staff input in its decision-making to gain community and staff support?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

72. Carefully consider community and staff input in its decision-making?

Don't know	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

Please select any applicable answers:

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73. I am familiar with Washington School Board Standards, including Benchmarks of Success and Indicators for Evaluation?

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No

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74. Which of these methods does the board use to study and gain a deeper understanding of issues?

- ❑ Work study sessions
- ❑ Work groups/Committees
- ❑ Board training & Conferences
- ❑ Public forums
- ❑ None of the Above
- ❑ Other

---

75. Prior to making critical decisions, our board systematically gathers input from:

- ❑ Students

- ❑ Staff
- ❑ Parents
- ❑ Community members
- ❑ Other stakeholder(s)
- ❑ Our board does not gather input
- ❑ Other

---

76. To ensure input from a wide spectrum of the community, our board provides ongoing opportunities for input from:

- ❑ Parents
- ❑ Students
- ❑ Staff
- ❑ Community groups
- ❑ Service Organizations
- ❑ Local governing bodies
- ❑ None of the above
- ❑ Other

---

77. In our district planning process, the board incorporates:

- ❑ Educational research
- ❑ Local issues

- ❑ District data
- ❑ Education legislative initiatives
- ❑ National trends
- ❑ Global trends
- ❑ None of the above
- ❑ Other

---

78. Our board uses the district vision and mission to guide and drive efforts in:

- ❑ Planning
- ❑ Decision-making
- ❑ Evaluation of district programs
- ❑ Evaluating district progress
- ❑ None of the above
- ❑ Other

The demographic information and the collective data from the surveys provide the information necessary to increase knowledge regarding school boards and their effectiveness. Your participation benefits the work of your school board and that of others as we increase our knowledge base and apply it to serving boards across our state. Your responses are confidential.

79. What is your year of birth

80. What is your highest level of education?

- ○ GED
- ○ High School graduate
- ○ Some college
- ○ 2-year degree
- ○ 4-year degree
- ○ Master's degree
- ○ Professional degree
- ○ Doctoral degree

81. Are you male or female?

- ○ Male
- ○ Female

82. What is your ethnicity?

- ❍ African American/Black
- ❍ American Indian/Alaska Native
- ❍ Asian
- ❍ Caucasian/White
- ❍ Hispanic/Latino
- ❍ Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander
- ❍ Two or more races

Board Self-Assessment Survey

Thank you for your time and energy!

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