The Effectiveness of the Ohio School Leadership Institute

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ABSTRACT

Superintendents are the leaders of school districts across the nation, but very few states offer any type of formal leadership development once a person attains the superintendent position. During the 2014-2015 school year, 28 superintendents across the state of Ohio were chosen to participate in the Ohio School Leadership Institute (OSLI), which is a cohort sponsored by the Buckeye Association of School Administrators (BASA) and is facilitated by the Center for Creative Leadership Studies based out of North Carolina. The cohort met over the course of the school year in four different sessions for two and a half days each. The institute’s goals are for superintendents to become aware of and hone their strengths and weaknesses when it comes to leadership styles and behavior. The leadership institute also purports to build an ongoing collegial network in the cohort. Despite these claims, the OSLI program has yet to be studied for its effectiveness and for possible replication of the program to states nationwide. This research will point out the scarcity of programs in place nationwide for practicing superintendents to be engaged in a formal leadership program and the potential for programs such as OSLI, which blends leadership theory with practice.

Key Words: Leadership, Superintendent, Cohort
Dedication

Dedicated to Chris, Gabe, and Luke
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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

Superintendents are the leaders of school districts across the nation, but very few states offer any type of formal leadership development once a person attains the position of “Superintendent.” As Orr pointed out in 2007 that "Public school systems in the USA are primarily locally controlled, semiautonomous governmental entities led by a public school superintendent- who serves as the chief educational officer (CEO) and a locally elected or appointed school board” (p. 327). The job of a superintendent calls for a variety of skills because of the variety of people a superintendent serves including students, staff, parents, and community members. Since superintendents deal with so many different constituents, it proves difficult to teach a person what it takes to be a superintendent until one reaches the position. This is true not just in the U.S. but elsewhere, too. For example, Orr (2007) reports that Holdaway and Genge, in a 1995 study of Canadian superintendents, found that “The leadership pressures and educational demands made of public school superintendents in the USA are increasingly shared by superintendents and CEOs in public educational systems in other countries” (p. 328). Furthermore, the leadership pressure of superintendents today has been increased due to the microscopic lens public schools have been put under from national and state levels. One example of this increased scrutiny of public schools would be the way the State of Ohio is now grading districts on a scale of “A-F” in many different areas including: graduation rate, gap closing, value-added of different subgroups, and more.

Other challenges faced by superintendents include poor test scores, student safety, attracting good teachers, teacher evaluations, state mandates, and finances. All these challenges require a strong leader to help a district move forward in a positive direction.
Likewise, a superintendent is challenged to demonstrate leadership skills on the state and national level in regard to education legislation. Researchers suggest the importance of educating state and national politicians to make policies that promote education, not hinder its goals and process. In 2001, Fullen (as cited in Bredeson, Klar, & Johansson, 2011) predicted that, as a nation, schools would be moving away from standardized testing; however, states have not shifted away from standardized student achievement. Instead educational systems have been forced by politicians to test, test, test. In order to guide state and national politicians in forming policy on education, superintendents must take on politically charged leadership roles. Too often politicians in the current climate are not listening to superintendents for a myriad of reasons. One reason could be the lack of leadership skills or the ineffective style that a superintendent uses when dealing with a legislator.

That impact a superintendent can have cannot or should not occur singularly, however. In an era of fast-changing education policy pushed down from the national and state policymakers, it is important for superintendents to be able to share some of the leadership responsibility in a school district. In other words, superintendents cannot be effective as total autocrats. Moreover, “cooperative, participatory leadership should be the norm” (Laub, 2010-2011, p. 44). Laub argued that autocratic leadership is a strategy of the past and that superintendents must focus their leadership efforts on adaptability, flexibility, and collaboration. District leaders need to empower staff members into leadership roles, because collaborative leadership can transform a school district in a powerful way to give students an excellent educational experience. As Schechter (2011) pointed out in an article published in the *Journal of School Leadership*, the role of the superintendent has changed from being a manager to being an instructional leader. Schechter stressed that administrators of school districts need to look at the
importance of collective learning for their staff members. This collective learning type of leadership is a style that is important when it comes to the quick changes that districts have been facing recently due to legislative mandates such as the cutting of funds to public schools and increasing funds for private for profit schools.

As an instructional leader, the superintendent must leverage the collective leadership of his or her organization. In other words, staff members must see a model of leadership that allows room for them to be agents of change alongside the superintendent. This type of instructional leadership can be difficult for some superintendents who want to be in control of everything, but when a leader can learn to use collaboration within their district to form a professional learning community, that superintendent has found a very powerful way to lead the district. Schechter (2011) agreed and argued: “In particular, contemporary superintendents must generate collective learning opportunities for principals at the district level and must facilitate, support, and provide resources for collective learning at the school-building level” (p. 481). The superintendent must develop their leadership skills to motivate employees in the school system to educate students to the greatest extent possible.

As a result of the pull of various constituents as well as the close attention given to public schools, superintendents are in need of training that allows them to maximize their leadership and relationship-building skills. Unfortunately, that training is often difficult to attain. Researchers note that “Superintendents are interested in their professional growth and development, but resources available appear to be insufficient” (Orr, 2007, p. 328). Furthermore, “Much has been written on the importance of increasing leadership capacity in schools and managed systems for leadership development; however, little focus has been given to creating conditions to facilitate the emergence of leadership” (Dickerson, 2012, p. 55).
Currently, almost all leadership training takes place in superintendent graduate programs; however, on-going professional development in the form of a leadership cohort for practicing superintendents seems, at least on the surface, to be a good strategy for helping superintendents balance the demands of the position. A superintendent leadership cohort program for practicing superintendents is backed by The Center for Creative Leadership. Moreover, “They [The Center for Creative Leadership] identify self-awareness, systemic thinking and creativity as the capacities most needed for effective leadership, all of which must be learned developmentally, over time” (Orr, 2007, p. 329). As this research suggests, it is practically impossible to hone leadership skills and styles of superintendents when they are graduate students. These leadership skills must be developed when a person serves in the role of superintendent.

The state of Ohio has such a program that is application-based and available to select practicing superintendents. This program, called the Ohio School Leadership Institute (OSLI), has been in place for over 20 years. The goal of the OSLI is to provide on-going support and leadership training to practicing superintendents in Ohio.

The OSLI for superintendents began with legislation passed by Ohio’s House and Senate, with input from the Buckeye Association of School Administrators. The BASA web site states, “The Ohio School Leadership Institute (OSLI) was established under Ohio House Bill 152 in 1993 to provide ongoing professional development opportunities for local educational leaders---leaders that will transform today’s schools into tomorrow’s dynamic learning communities” (para. 1). The main objective of the OSLI program is for the participants to gain a better understanding of themselves as leaders: participants should ultimately know the leadership style and leadership traits they possess upon completing the institute. In addition, participants are exposed to research based on current leadership practices and then are given a chance to reflect
and incorporate those practices into their own district. The institute operates on the premise that the success of a superintendency is a precursor to the success of a school district. Buck (1991) argues that “Whatever the future holds for education in America in the 21st century, the superintendency is the position that will make it happen” (p. 311). Laub (2011) adds “Leadership equates to bravery, it is not for the timid or faint of heart” (p.46). Superintendents lead districts and must be cognizant of how to help build their own leadership skills to further advance a school district.

Each year since 1994, the OSLI has welcomed around thirty superintendents per year to its ranks. During the first few years, two cohorts were run which is why the 2014-2015 school year is the 29th cohort. These superintendents represent diverse schools and backgrounds from high poverty to wealth and rural to urban school districts. Furthermore, the institute does not target new superintendents; instead, participants include superintendents who are retired/rehired as well as those who are new to the position and hold only a few years of experience. This diverse population of participants is chosen by the BASA Executive Director, and they begin their cohort training each year during the month of October. The cohort meet for four sessions over the course of the year. Each session consists of two and a half days of professional development training; thus, participants meet for a total of ten days. Topics of discussion include: leadership traits, perceived leadership, and case studies. The cohort model also allows for role-playing and group work to occur. Participants “graduate” in the month of April but often maintain close ties with their cohort members since they have opportunities to reconnect at statewide functions. Overall, according to the BASA invitation sent to participants, those involved in the institute will learn the leadership qualities that have brought organizational
success and individual success to superintendents. Likewise, BASA claims that participants will learn which negative leadership traits can lead a superintendent to failure or dismissal.

Despite its decades-old legacy, the OSLI, seems to be a one-of-a-kind program in the United States. Research suggests that no other state has a similar program providing professional development in leadership to active superintendents from within that same state. According to Orr (2007), few professional development programs exist for superintendents in the country and the ones that do are mostly made up of new superintendents. Specifically, Orr (2007) states that “few programs exist to support new public school superintendents in the USA and Canada” (p. 328). And while “Leadership preparation has become one of this decade’s primary approaches to educational reform and improvement of student achievement” (Orr 2011 p. 115), current research in this area focuses mainly on graduate cohorts going into administrative roles, such as that of a principal. Likewise, the majority of current superintendent-leadership research has revealed findings regarding new active school administrator cohorts or educational leadership cohorts found in graduate schools of universities—but no information on active superintendents in the field. In addition, studies have been conducted regarding the qualities and characteristics of strong superintendent leadership as well as the qualities and characteristics that communities and boards of educations are looking for in a superintendent—but not cohort models of leadership training for seasoned superintendents. Information regarding the success or failure of professional development in leadership for active superintendents has the potential, then, to impact how districts as well as states view and support such ventures.

Providing a superintendent leadership cohort for acting superintendents—as seen in the OSLI model—can help superintendents blend leadership theory with practice. As Barnett (2005)
writes, it is difficult to transfer leadership ideas into the workplace as a graduate student. Learning about leadership as a student can be too obscure, which is why it is so crucial to have leadership cohort programs for practicing superintendents. These cohorts make it much easier for superintendents to see how different types of leadership can impact their own district. Orr (2007) points to a study conducted by a major university on the east coast consisting of six superintendents from Connecticut, New Jersey, New York, and Rhode Island. These individuals had less than three years of superintendent experience. This cohort met on five different weekends and a week-long session over a single calendar year. As a learning style, “The program was learner-centered, action-oriented and reflection-rich, for self-reflection and various forms of assessment and feedback” (Orr, 2007, p. 335). The leaders of the sessions were two former superintendents, a professor from the university, and three graduate students, along with other faculty and experts depending on the topic. The results obtained from the survey of the program format for the participants were positive. The participants found that collaborative inquiry and the bond that was formed as a cohort was helpful to them professionally and personally. Orr (2007) concluded that, “The program’s design and impact should be compared to other more conventional new superintendent programs (or the absence of a program) to determine the strength and nature of the program’s contribution to advancing the superintendents’ leadership development” (p. 345).

**Rationale & Significance of the Study**

This researcher served in administration as a high school principal for eight years and has spent nearly a decade as a school district superintendent. During the 2012-2013 academic year, this researcher had the opportunity of being selected as one of 30 superintendents across the state of Ohio to participate in the Ohio School Leadership Institute, sponsored (and funded) by the
Buckeye Association of School Administrators (BASA). Although OSLI is sponsored by BASA, it is coordinated by the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) Studies based out of Greensboro, North Carolina. The Center sends two facilitators to lead each of the two and a half day sessions over four different meetings. These meetings help superintendents discern their personal leadership qualities and how those qualities can be improved.

Since the institute meets every couple months, the participants have time to reflect on previous sessions and prepare for the upcoming session. The time for reflection and time to implement new strategies in a superintendent’s district can lead to valuable discussion for the next OSLI session. Furthermore, in the OSLI program, each superintendent is not only looking at improving leadership skills through assessments, engaged learning, and reflection, but he or she is also engaged in obtaining a 360 degree assessment dealing with the perception superiors and subordinates have of the superintendent’s performance (Center for Creative Leadership, 2014, Session II, p. 6). The 360 degree assessment is a series of questions asked in a survey, which after compiled, shows the participants the areas of strengths and weaknesses in leadership. The assessments are sent out by the CCL to the board members, principals, and secretaries in an email, which is supplied by the superintendent. The superintendent is to follow up with the board members, principals, and administrative assistants to make sure they complete the assessment. After the on-line assessments are completed, part of the next session deals with what the CCL calls, “love letters from home”. This compilation of assessments are given to each superintendent and then one of the facilitators from CCL or BASA meet with each participant individually to discuss the assessment results.

These assessment from home are matched up with the superintendent’s self-assessment of leadership style and skills. The feedback from the 360 degree assessments is meant to help
superintendents grow as leaders. Next, another part of the assessment deals with the introvert or extrovert part of a superintendent’s personality. For example, people in a school district, both inside and outside public schools, find it easier to discuss problems with an extrovert superintendent than with an introvert. However, extrovert superintendents can be inundated with trivial matters in their district due to being so accessible to the public. As a result, superintendents need to develop leadership styles that blend a delicate balance of being personable with people in the school district while not being distracted by every little problem that may occur throughout the course of a school year in each building. For example, there is a danger that the extrovert superintendents would be contacted if the heat in Classroom 25 was turned too high for one day in December or if the lunch line ran out of chocolate milk. Leadership discernment can help an extrovert superintendent to know that those are not the types of problems he/she should be focusing on during a typical workday. Instead, a superintendent should be notified when a bus is in an accident or if a student is being suspended for a fight.

Along with the 360 assessment and self-assessment, the OSLI helps build a bond in the cohort among the superintendents. Everyone eats together for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. The camaraderie that occurs in these settings, along with hands-on leadership activities are implemented in order to build relationships. These leadership activities are about solving problems together as a group and showing that leadership is not all about being a dictator. Subsequent discussions revolve around the importance placed on the CEO of school districts as well as the scarcity of resources and time dedicated to developing leadership styles and skills for these individuals.

Obviously, not every superintendent in Ohio participates in the program, even though all Ohio superintendents could probably improve their leadership skills to some degree. Time
constraints stand as one of the main reasons superintendents choose not to participate in the OSLI or other leadership programs. For example, many superintendents are busy with daily decisions and tasks that need to be accomplished; therefore, they find it difficult to leave the district for leadership development. Still, the fact that BASA funds the program is often a great selling point for superintendents and their boards of education who must give their blessings for superintendents to participate in OSLI since participation means time away from the school district. Another reason some superintendents and their districts do not participate in leadership opportunities is because of the cost of such programs. In the case of OSLI, BASA foots the bill. However, if this were not the case, the cost would be prohibitive when one factors in the price of the host venue, hotel costs, food, workshop fees, and mileage.

Despite its 20 year history and its numerous participants over those 20 years, the OSLI has never been studied for its effectiveness. Instead, its current positive reputation is based on anecdotal information. Therefore, the OSLI program needs to be studied to discern whether or not it is achieving its goals of developing strong school leaders and providing on-going support to those leaders. In addition, since superintendents nationwide have few professional development opportunities, the potential to possibly replicate the OSLI nationwide has appeal. One would believe that school districts would put forth much energy and resources to help develop the CEO of their school districts as superintendents need support in honing in their leadership skills. The OSLI stands as a potential way to invest in a district’s superintendent and his/her professional development.

Purpose of Study

In order to discern the effectiveness of the Ohio School Leadership Institute, a mixed method approach was used to ask both open ended and closed questions in a survey designed to
elicit feedback on the OSLI program. The study looks at the OSLI program participants over the course of the 2014-2015 school year, over the four sessions which lasted for two and a half days each throughout the year. A survey and interview were conducted to provide data regarding the “before” and “after” perceptions of the superintendents in regard to the leadership program. The qualitative piece of the study provided a more in-depth approach through the open-ended questions in a survey of all participants; likewise, qualitative data were gathered from interviews with superintendents from six different districts that participated in the program. The creation of the survey was critical, because obtaining the feedback from the superintendents may be the most important aspect for accuracy of the overall study.

During the collection of the data for the OSLI study, special attention was given to the perceptions the members had about the cohort program. Did the relationships that were formed during OSLI help them in building a network of superintendents to turn to for ideas or advice? Did they gain valuable insights into the way other superintendents led their district through times of difficulty? The surveys and interviews provided insight into how well the program led superintendents on improving areas of weakness in their own leadership skills and styles. For example, the survey measured the self-perception of superintendents in their abilities to be leaders in different categories, with the perception of that ability being measured before and after the OSLI program. The categories of leadership included communication, professional development, staff relations, and instructional leadership. The answers to the surveys and interviews provide insight into the specific elements of the OSLI program and whether or not the institute should be continued in Ohio. In addition, the qualitative data provide data on whether or not the OSLI model should be replicated in other states. Finally, this data is important for
Ohio and other states in discerning strategies for supporting superintendents in their goals to become effective leaders.

**Theoretical Framework**

Theories of interpersonal styles and assessment of those styles, which can be traced to Carl Jung, provide the theoretical framework for this study. In his 1921 publication, *Psychological Types*, Jung theorized that four principal psychological functions impact human perception of the world. These include: sensation, intuition, feeling, and thinking. Jung’s first two principal psychological functions, sensing and intuition, are known as perceiving functions. The final two, thinking and feeling, are known as judging functions. Jung theorizes that each person uses one of these four functions more prevailingly and efficiently than the others; however, any of the four functions might be utilized at any given time dependent upon circumstances (Phillips, 1979). Later, researcher Katharine Cook Briggs and her daughter and fellow researcher, Isabel Briggs Myers took their extensive study of Jung’s work and turned his theories into application—first, by creating a questionnaire during WWII to help identify the types of wartime jobs that would best fit women entering the workforce. By 1962, Briggs Myers had developed this testing to the point of publication (Cindric, 2016). Today the test is known as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. This test expands Jung’s notions of human perception to a series of dichotomies: 1) extroversion-introversion; 2) sensing-intuition; 3) thinking-feeling; and 4) judging-perception. Jay Nisberg then took the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and made its language applicable to the workplace. His simplified model includes these four types that correspond with the original work of Jung: thinker, feeler, intuitior, and doer (Tichy & Nisberg, 1976).
The Ohio School Leadership Institute utilizes the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator test to inform superintendents of not only their own perceptive inclinations but also the way that others perceive them in the workplace. For example, if the results of the Myers-Briggs establishes a superintendent as “sensing” or a “feeler,” then that person is more likely to trust information that is present, tangible, and concrete. On the other hand, individuals who score as “intuitive” (“intuitor”) find abstract, theoretical information to be more trustworthy and are more conceptual and visionary in their thinking. The clashing perceptive inclinations just described align with “extraverted and introverted attitudes;” these “conflict and don’t reconcile easily; thinking and feeling don’t see eye to eye; and sensation and intuition perceive very different worlds” (Galipeau, 2013, p. 36). The incorporation of the Myers-Briggs as part of the OSLI demonstrates a core commitment to aid attendees in acquiring a metacognitive understanding of their leadership styles so that they, in turn, might be more intentional in their leadership in order to circumvent conflict. Said another way, if a leader discerns that he/she has a particular perceptive inclination (as suggested by the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator), then that leader will be better able to surround him or herself with team members who demonstrate other perceptions and viewpoints, thus intentionally creating stronger, more cohesive leadership teams. Furthermore, teams that work from an awareness of different perceptive indicators may experience less conflict. Simply put, whatever a superintendent’s dominant perceptive function is impacts the way that superintendent leads a school district and the way that superintendent is perceived by his/her constituents.

**Mechanical Framework**

The work of Orr, 2011, helped inform this study’s mechanical framework. Orr’s work focused on a new superintendent cohort with a structure similar to that of the OSLI. Her
research suggests the success of superintendent cohorts that focus on collaboration, cooperation, leadership-building, and shared leadership training. However, no studies have corroborated Orr’s work to this point. Like the organization studied by Orr, the OSLI meets in a similar fashion with different sessions and time between those sessions for reflection on personal leadership. In addition, like Orr’s study, the OSLI program includes a mixed-methods approach with surveys that were taken by superiors and subordinates in each superintendent’s district. These surveys as well as follow-up interviews with superintendents provided numerous data points regarding the superintendents’ and their constituents’ perceptions of leadership. With that said, this study goes beyond that of Orr in a number of ways. Most specifically, the Orr study consisted of only six superintendents; this study of the OSLI program consisted of 28 superintendents as well as administrative assistants and principals (as explained in Chapter 3), increasing its validity and reliability.

Bogdan and Biklen’s (2003) *Foundations of Qualitative Research in Education* also impact this study’s mixed methods approach. The researchers describe five essential characteristics of qualitative research that feature predominately in the design of this study: first, the researcher must observe the setting of the research. Thus, the researcher attended each of the OSLI gatherings from October 2014 to May 2015 in order to observe superintendents as they interacted and participated in OSLI training (See Chapter 3 for a detailed explanation of these observations). Second, Bogdan and Biklen (2003) charge researchers to describe the data in its richness through words and pictures; this occurs in Chapter 4 via explanations and graphs. Next, Bogdan and Biklen call for researchers to witness the day-to-day interaction of the subject. While the researcher could not do this personally, surveys and interviews were conducted with those who interact with the superintendents on a daily basis within the work environment.
Finally, Bogdan and Biklen caution that any theorizing begin only after data has been collected and that researchers should strive to make meaning through dialog between researcher and subjects (2003, p. 4-7). With these caveats in mind, the researcher crafted open-ended survey questions and added follow-up interviews to the study design in order to capture in-depth responses through dialog researcher-subject dialog.

**Research Questions**

The focus of this particular study is to discern whether or not the OSLI cohort leadership model is effectively meeting its intended goals of supporting superintendents in becoming better leaders. The OSLI believes school districts can also benefit when superintendents are supported in both in their professional lives and personal lives, since participation in the program often leads to self-reflection of a participant’s current leadership style and traits. And while much anecdotal evidence exists to support the notion that OSLI meets its goals, no data exists to corroborate this belief. Thus, this study sets out to answer the following questions:

- To what extent do participants of OSLI obtain personal growth by gaining significant self-understanding?
- To what extent do participants of OSLI gain professional growth through exemplary best practices in leadership training experiences and modeling?
- In what ways, if any, has the OSLI program supported superintendents in developing a leadership team designed to integrate continuous improvement of the organization and in student achievement?
- In what ways, if any, has the OSLI program as a cohort contributed to the building of relationships and professional networking opportunities among participants?
**Definition of Terms**

The following terms are integral to the work conducted in this study:

*Leadership*. As Bennis and Nanus (1985) stated that leadership is defined in terms of the power relationship that exists between leaders and followers (Laub, 2011).

*Superintendent*. “The current view of the superintendent is that of chief executive officer to the board. As a result, the superintendent serves as the professional advisor to the board, leader of reforms, manager of resources, and communicator to the public” (Carter & Cunningham, 1997, p. 24).

*Cohort*. A cohort in the context of leadership preparation is an efficient means to deliver leadership programs for a group of students (Brown-Ferrigno & Muth, 2003, p. 27).

**Delimitations**

The fact that the OSLI group being studied actively chose to be part of the OSLI is a delimitation of the study. Said another way, this group of individuals sought out professional development training; therefore, this group might be more inclined to benefit from the training. In addition, the group studied represents a cohort model from a single state, Ohio. While these superintendents come from large, small rural, suburban, and urban schools, they are all coming from the same state with the same set of standards for school districts. The involvement of Buckeye Association of School Administrators as the organization that sponsors the Ohio School Leadership Institute and the Center for Creative Leadership that facilitates the Institute are elements to consider in this study. Each organization may have possible impacts on the responses of the superintendents. The cohort model and the possibility for groupthink when answering questions in a survey at the conference could impact the survey results and reflections of the respondents.
Limitations

The study focused on one state with 28 superintendents in one cohort. There are over 600 superintendents in public schools across the state; thus, 28 superintendents is a small fraction of the actual number of superintendents in the state of Ohio. Furthermore, the research focused on only one cohort over one school year. In other words, this was not a long term of OSLI’s impact on participants.

Researcher Bias

The researcher conducting this study participated in the Ohio School Leadership Institute (OSLI) during 2012-13, and found the institute to be helpful in a number of ways, in particular in helping the researcher discern his strengths and weaknesses as a leader. Participants in OSLI cohorts become very close, and part of the value of the institute is that superintendents learn much from their peers who share the same professional leadership position. The researcher experienced this camaraderie as part of OSLI.

In addition, the researcher has been told by the leaders of this program that it is the only program of its kind in the country; thus, an assumption undergirds this research: that other states could potentially replicate OSLI’s approach to training, developing, and supporting superintendent leaders.

Yet another bias held by the researcher is the belief that more superintendents simply need to focus on leadership. Questionable decisions are made at school districts on a daily basis; the researcher often wonders if the person making the questionable decision had on-going professional development for leadership. If not, might on-going professional development or leadership support, like that of the OSLI, have changed the outcome of the situation?
In order to mitigate bias, surveys for this research were crafted with open-ended (non-leading) questions. In addition, the administrative assistant to each superintendent was surveyed as well as the principals who serve under the superintendent. Names of each school district and each person were removed from these surveys to protect the anonymity of the respondents. This should have increase the comfort level in regard to respondents’ responses. Again, the questions given to the administrative assistants and principals were non-leading and open-ended. By posing questions that are non-leading, participants should have a greater opportunity to be honest as to whether or not the superintendents, as well as those who work for them, see a positive, negative, or neutral change in leadership as a result of participating in the OSLI cohort. Finally, data was coded for patterns of repetition as well as anomalies—not just data that supported the researcher’s assumption of positivity.
CHAPTER II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to provide context for the OSLI study, this literature review delves into a number of issues related to OSLI’s goals. First, the literature review discusses the importance of leadership in the position of superintendent in a school district. Second, the literature review considers research into the desired leadership traits of a superintendent as determined by pertinent stakeholders such as a district’s school board members, teachers, parents, and students. This discussion includes the importance that stakeholders place on the superintendent as CEO/head politician of school districts: however, the discussion also reveals the difficulties in implementing professional development opportunities in order to advance leadership styles and skills for these individuals. Finally, this literature review considers the importance of cohort learning for those engaging in professional development opportunities.

Importance of Leadership in the Superintendency

The daily work of a practicing superintendent can be time-consuming and stressful. As a result, it is often easy for superintendents to lose focus of the leadership aspect of managing a school district. Dickerson’s, 2012 article discusses the importance of developing leadership at all levels of a school district through appreciative inquiry. This initiative was conducted in Vancouver with twenty-two schools. Findings demonstrated the importance of providing means for members in the organization to be able to step back and view the district from a “big picture” vantage point. In doing so, members of an organization (including its leader(s)) are better able to realize their individual roles and how those roles contribute to the overall success of the organization (Dickerson, 2012). An application of this principle suggests that if superintendents were afforded the time and opportunity to “step back” and look at the “big picture,” then the superintendent would better serve his/her district by focusing on the most important aspects of
the position. Orr, in her 2007 study, likewise underscores the importance of carving out time for superintendents to reflect on their position in the organization and to grow as leaders. According to Orr (2007), goals for new superintendent professional development should include: 1) More rapid socialization of into the superintendent role and commitment to a superintendent career; 2) Development of transformational leadership opportunities; 3) Engagement in educational leadership opportunities. All superintendent participants in Orr’s (2007) leadership/professional development study stayed committed to their roles as superintendents and to their districts; furthermore, the collaboration was successful in providing transformational and educational leadership.

Along with discerning their own roles as leaders in organizations, superintendent participation in professional leadership development opportunities allows superintendents to recognize when to delegate responsibilities. In an era of fast-changing education policy pushed down from the national and state policymakers, it is important for superintendents to share some of the leadership responsibility in a school district. In other words, the leadership skills of the superintendent alone do not make for a successful district. In the words of Laub (2010-2011), “Bricks and mortar make a building; they do not make a school district. Humans and human interactions make a school district” (p. 46). Thus, individuals beyond the superintendent must contribute to the leadership of a school building: superintendents cannot be effective as total autocrats. Moreover, Laub (2011) continues to point out that autocratic leadership is a construct of the past and that superintendents must really focus on being adaptive and flexible. District leaders need to try to empower staff members into leadership roles, because collaborative leadership can transform a school district in powerful ways. In addition, collaborative leadership also translates into a well-rounded, excellent educational experience for students.
As Schechter (2011) notes in an article published in the *Journal of School Leadership*, the role of the superintendent has changed from being a manager to being an instructional leader. Schechter (2011) continues to point out that administrators of school districts need to look at the importance of collective learning for their staff members. This collective learning is a type leadership style that is important when it comes to the quick changes that districts have been facing recently due to legislative mandates—such as the cutting of funds to public schools and the increasing of funds for private for-profit schools that take money away from public schools. In other words, collective learning allows the superintendent involved to draw from the experiences of other superintendents in order to make wise decisions regarding his/her own district when funding is tight.

Just as the superintendent cannot rely on his/her own experiences in making decisions regarding a district, the superintendent cannot do everything by him or herself to create substantial change in a district. There must be a sense of leadership among all staff members in a district, so that collectively the group works to help one another for the greater good of educating each student. For example, “…Shields (2010) emphasizes the need for superintendents to ‘stop working in isolation’ and ‘develop deeply dialogic communities in which [they] focus on how to move an equality agenda forward; and enact transformative practices’” (as cited in Feuerstein 2013, p. 892). Said another way, superintendents must step out of their offices and engage in more than just the financial and curricular responsibilities of the position; they must invest in the human capital, and part of that investment includes charging others in the organization to utilize their own leadership skills. In that way, a district is more likely to enact meaningful change, since more participation in leadership equals more ownership
in a district’s success. According to Laub (2010), superintendents must “Delegate, realize that you are not an Atlas and that you cannot support the entire world” (p. 47).

Shared leadership can be difficult for superintendents who want to be in control of all aspects of the district; however, when a leader can learn to use collaboration within their district to form a professional learning community, that superintendent has found a very powerful way to lead the district. Schechter (2011) agrees and has argued: “In particular, contemporary superintendents must generate collective learning opportunities for principals at the district level and must facilitate, support, and provide resources for collective learning at the school-building level” (p. 481). Meanwhile, superintendents must continue to take into account the aspects of their own communities. According to Bredeson, Klar, and Johansson (2011), “It is not unreasonable to suggest that superintendents must uniquely enact their roles in accordance with such contextual factors as district size, community demographics, organizational culture, history, geography, and local political realities” (p. 5). Furthermore, the superintendent must develop his/her leadership skills to motivate employees in the school system to educate students to the greatest extent possible. As Bredeson, Klar and Johannsson (2011) argue “….leadership absent context was [is] meaningless” (p.7). In addition, Tucker pointed out in a 2005 article from the research of Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003) that there is a “substantial relationship between leadership and student achievement” (p. 3).

Bredeson, Klar, and Johansson (2011), citing studies by Fuhrman (2003) and Goetz and Massell (2005), report on accountability systems in school districts across the US which indicate that superintendent leadership is a major factor in determining how districts respond to the increased demands for academic achievement. Bredeson, Klar, and Johansson (2011), state that “It is not unreasonable to suggest that superintendents must uniquely enact their roles in
accordance with such contextual factors as district size, community demographics, organizational culture, history, geography, and local political realities” (p. 5). A study conducted by these same researchers demonstrated consistent findings for the superintendents in Wisconsin and Sweden in regard to their number one priority: student achievement. In order to reach that goal, respondents concurred that superintendents must have a clear vision; likewise, building relationships is critically important in the role as superintendent as leader. Overall, Bredeson, Klar, and Johansson’s article on contextual leadership points out the importance of leadership within the context of a particular school. Therefore, superintendents must be aware of their school system idiosyncrasies and make sure that as they lead, they are using appropriate leadership styles and skills for all the different settings to be able to be effective in their district. Said another way, superintendents who respond to the context that they are in can help promote the vision their school district (as well as their community) and, as a result, promote a better educational environment for students.

Along with juggling the human capital of a school district, superintendents face the ominous task of managing the financial elements of a school district. Bredeson and Kose (2007), using surveys a decade apart, report that state and federal mandates have increased the importance of teaching and learning in the minds of superintendents; however, school finance ultimately takes up more time and focus for superintendents. Feuerstein (2013) notes that “. . .for today’s superintendents, the constraints are remarkably similar to those faced by superintendents at the beginning of the 20th century; adopting the ideology of efficiency and accountability remains one of the few available strategies for increasing credibility and influence” (p. 871). This “efficiency” and “accountability” often come in the form of how a superintendent stewards the monies in his/her district. In a study done in 2009 regarding school
finance, Bird, Wang and Murray looked at the manner in which superintendents make decisions regarding finances. They found that “The responding superintendents relied heavily on their on-the-job training and currently operate much differently than when they started their superintendency” (Bird, Wang, & Murray 2009, p. 1).

In other words, the superintendents in the Bird, Wang, and Murray study relied on trial-and-error versus professional development in making financial decisions for their districts. A superintendent’s daily financial decisions are scrutinized by the public, which means that—to some extent—levies are passed “on a daily basis” since levy support largely rests on the interaction and trust built between the superintendent and the community. Bird, Wang, and Murray (2009) conclude: “Thus, the playing field of school finance provides the superintendent a unique opportunity to exert effective leadership and to build trust among stakeholders” (p. 141).

Obviously, then, it is critical that superintendents can navigate budgets and all financial elements of the position effectively. As a result, the combination of learning about leadership and finance is critical for superintendents (Bird, Wang, & Murray, 2009).

**Desired Leadership Traits Among Superintendents**

So what does it mean to be a leader? And what qualities are desired in the leadership of a school district superintendent? Since leadership is not the exclusive domain of education, the discussion of desirable leadership qualities is one that spans all fields and is applicable (with little variation) across disciplines. For example, in a study of healthcare workers, Sharlow (2009) argues that the four pillars of leadership are clarity of vision and purpose, acting with integrity, inspiring others to do their best, and fostering mutual understanding. Similar leadership qualities are demand among superintendents. The work of Kamrath and Brunner (2014) states that “In the opinions of the study’s community member participants,
superintendents must possess three important personal characteristics: strong communication skills, traditional power profiles, and visible involvement” (p. 439). In comparison, a study of superintendents in a four-state area by Jones and Howley (2009) found that three main leadership characteristics of superintendents are managerial leadership, educational leadership, and political leadership, respectively. A study by Forner, Bierlein-Palmer and Reeves (2012), focusing on seven rural superintendents of high performing districts, looked to align the leadership strategies utilized with the Waters and Marzano 2006 Effective Leadership Correlates. Their study revealed that the superintendents queried had 1) high goals for student achievement and instruction; 2) aligned board support; 3) continuous monitoring attributes; 4) autonomy; 5) a close relationship with the principal; and 6) the ability to effectively utilize resources (Forner, Bierlein-Palmer, & Reeves, 2012). The only area where the superintendents did not align with the Waters and Marzano correlates was in the area of collaborative goal setting. In this regard, the rural superintendents set goals for their districts individually; however, they also experienced close buy-in for their decisions, possibly because they enjoyed such close relationships with their staff members (Forner, Bierlein-Palmer, & Reeves, 2012).

Similarly, a study of superintendents and board presidents in Nebraska by Moody (2008) reveals that the most important characteristics of leadership in a school district include building public relations, effectively handling school finance, overseeing personnel management, leading curriculum development, implementing policy formation, and accomplishing goals set by board. The two categories that were most important for superintendents and school board presidents were school finance and superintendent-board relations. Likewise, Jones and Howley (2009) citing Johnson (1996) argue that in order to be successful, a superintendent must balance roles of educational leadership for staff with attention to political leadership for the district. In addition,
these authors suggest that superintendents must also keep the district on good financial ground and exhibit strong managerial practices. Finally, superintendents should demonstrate strong communication skills and make few errors in judgment (Jones & Howley, 2009).

Other studies of leadership suggest that to be effective, leaders must be reflective, and a leader must have the time to carefully consider his/her role in order to be a visionary who implements change. Laub (2011) suggests that “Change is a gradual, continual process, but it is a process that must be promoted, nurtured, and implemented” (p.47). Research by Bredeson and Kose (2007) shows that school boards from over 300 districts in a Midwestern state ranked budget and finance, personnel administration, and communication as the most important aspects when evaluating a superintendent. However, the same boards in Bredeson and Kose’s (2007) research, when surveyed on what they would be looking for in a new superintendent, included qualities of internal accountability, which include general leadership, professional accountability, delegating leadership, and being a visionary for change.

**Difficulties in Implementing Professional Development Opportunities for Superintendents**

School districts and state associations often struggle in their efforts to implement professional development opportunities (such as leadership programs) for active superintendents due primarily to time constraints among the superintendents, themselves. Many times it is difficult for superintendents to be away from their district, due to the daily responsibilities of the position. So while “…external policy initiatives focused on student learning outcomes have helped to legitimize individual superintendent’s personal/professional interest in leadership responsibilities in the areas of curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices” (Bredeson & Kose 2007, p.3), little time is available for engaging in such professional development. As noted by Bredeson and Kose (2007) “…Superintendents view curriculum and instructional leadership
(and to a certain degree evaluation of student learning outcomes) as important, but other responsibilities—especially legal and political issues—consume the time they would like to devote to instructional leadership” (p. 10). As a result, “much has been written on the importance of increasing leadership capacity in schools and managed systems for leadership development; however, little focus has been given to creating conditions to facilitate the emergence of leadership” (Dickerson, 2012, p. 55).

In addition, leadership programs, when done well, can be very costly for state organizations or school districts to support financially. The cost of the venue for and intensive leadership program (lasting more than a day) includes hotels, food, as well as payment for any professionals brought in to facilitate the professional development opportunities. This cost can make it difficult for a superintendent and a district to justify the expense that might be involved in participating in such a venture. According to Orr (2007), the few professional development programs that exist for superintendents in the country are put on by professional organizations that charge participation fees (p.328). Orr (2007) further points out that the best leadership development does not need to be expensive but needs to be away from the work place, have a balance between group and self-reflection, and support superintendents in putting learning into practice when they return to their home district. In explaining of the best practices in superintendent professional development, Orr (2007) makes reference to what was concluded by the Center for Creative Leadership: that strong superintendent professional development opportunities should “identify self-awareness, systematic thinking, and creativity as the capacities most needed for effective leadership, all of which must be learned developmentally, over time” (p. 329).
Unlike typical professional development programs that charge the superintendent or the school district for participation, the Ohio School Leadership Institute is free to participants in Ohio due to the emphasis BASA has placed on the program and the previous funding allocated for the program from the state legislature. BASA does not want cost to be a factor when a superintendent is contemplating becoming part of OSLI. This lack of participation fee makes OSLI unique among other professional development offerings for superintendents across the country. In addition, it should be noted that the OSLI program design suggests that participation in the program is not an end to learning leadership; instead, it is a springboard to continue building leadership traits as one continues in the superintendent journey. Unfortunately, in a ten-year longitudinal study of over 300 superintendents by Bredeson and Kose (2007), superintendents ranked professional growth low on the list of time priorities.

**How Leadership in Other Sectors Impact Superintendent Leadership**

Much overlap appears in the literature between educational leadership and business leadership; therefore, it comes as no surprise that Feuerstein (2013) points out that the Eli Broad Foundation has set up a program for business people to become superintendents. “Eli Broad, a wealthy businessman and philanthropist, started these programs because he believed that improved leadership and management were the keys to improving student achievement” (Feuerstein, 2013, p. 889). As with any other business endeavor, superintendents (as CEOs of their districts) must be able to adapt to changing leadership demands on a daily basis as the job changes with different situations. In addition, as Ireh and Bailey (1999) note: “… school leaders are confronted with situations in which their individual leadership style is in conflict with the organizational environment prevalent in their school system” (p. 22). This suggests that
superintendents must develop a flexibility of leadership that allows them to adapt personally or to make the needed internal changes in their organization in order for operations to run smoothly.

Comparisons can also be made between operating a school system to that of providing leadership in the political sector. For example, William Boyd argued “that successful school leaders hold the capabilities of a political strategist and that the actualization of this capacity is dependent on the political context of their time and place” (Brewer 2011, p. 461). Bredeson and Kose (2007) agree and add, “Once considered to be the instructional leader and teacher of teachers, more recently the discourse on the work of superintendents has shifted to politics and collaboration” (p.2). Bredeson and Kose (2007) further point out that superintendents are increasingly being pressured politically with conflicting interests along with problems related to financing the district coupled with additional student performance legislation from national and state governments. As a result, research into political leadership training and styles might be used to inform professional development opportunities for superintendents.

Similar to that of leaders in the business and political sectors, the position of the superintendent can be lonely and isolated, due to an inability for superintendents to discuss problems in the district with anyone. The reason for privacy on issues is often legal, and these issues are often difficult to solve; it is at these times that most superintendents would welcome input from others. Kamrath and Brunner (2014) point out in their study that superintendents many times feel lonely in a district because they have no peers to talk to; superintendents supervise everyone in the district and often can have few outlets for discussion on major issues beyond the district’s legal counsel. Furthermore, superintendents may find it difficult to build close ties with community members as such relationships are often viewed as politically
motivated. The result is that “it’s lonely at the top” can become an all too familiar refrain for those in the superintendent role.

The Cohort Model

Anecdotal as well as researched evidence suggests that providing a leadership cohort for acting superintendents can help lessen the isolation felt by many superintendents. Orr’s (2007) study of a leadership cohort of beginning superintendents found that “The formation of a cohort and the mixture of experiences in the project staff—experienced superintendents, faculty and graduate students—created an open and supportive group, as evidence by observations and feedback” (Orr, 2007, p.338). In addition, Orr (2007) points out the participants felt safe in an environment of other superintendents where they were able to express frustrations regarding their professional responsibilities. These group exchanges assured superintendents that their feelings were not unique; as a result, the cohort became a valued support mechanism for these new superintendents. Every cohort member was able to communicate informally with different participants in the cohort as well as the presenters. They were also able to rely upon experienced superintendents for advice on problems and issues (Orr, 2007). Findings from a University of Central Oklahoma study of graduate students published by Evans and Couts (2011), also suggests that cohort groups feel better connected to each other and more supported than those in non-cohort groups.

Similar to the work of Orr (2007), Tucker, Henig, and Salmonowicz (2005) in Educational Considerations discuss the results of a study dealing with an educational leadership cohort program of twenty-seven aspiring principals. This cohort was part of an 18-month study on dealing with administrative tasks and leadership capabilities. Study findings revealed that participants of the program exhibited an increased sense of confidence in the relationships that
were formed among members of cohort. Likewise, participants were more confident in dealing with administrative tasks because of knowledge as well as affirmation shared among those in the cohort.

Augustine-Shaw (2013) describes a beginning superintendent cohort learning program in the state of Kansas where new superintendents and their mentors meet in a large setting then meet monthly for development. Findings from Augustine-Shaw’s (2013) study of this group suggest that both the mentors and mentees believed the program was successful in helping meet the needs of new superintendents, noting that the face-to-face interaction and network-building at the large cohort meetings as a professional organization were helpful. Similarly, in Orr’s 2007 study of a beginning superintendent cohort leadership program, the participants viewed collaboration with fellow superintendents as the most valuable part of the cohort series.

As Tucker (2005) argues, participants have had many unexpected outcomes from being in a cohort such as finding themselves in a caring environment that builds strong positive relationships. In addition, a greater sense of confidence and communication with each other resulted from individuals’ participation in the cohort setting. Tucker’s (2005) study also demonstrated that the cohort program was successful in helping participants grow in their knowledge of being administrators. Furthermore, Evans and Couts (2011) note that participants stated that the cohort program helped them with the following: motivation, sharing ideas, celebrating together, support, assistance, depending on one another, networking, comforting, building friendships, collegiality, camaraderie, teamwork, and learning from one another about each school district as well as the cohort members’ work. In fact, Evans and Couts (2011) point out that, of all students participating in a graduate program to become principals, 98% of the participants believed that being a part of a cohort helped in their learning process (p. 59).
Specifically, superintendent leadership cohort programs for practicing superintendents have been recommended by The Center for Creative Leadership. Moreover, “They [The Center for Creative Leadership] identify self-awareness, systemic thinking and creativity as the capacities most needed for effective leadership, all of which must be learned developmentally, over time” (Orr, 2007, p. 329). However, the effectiveness of the transfer of leadership skills learned in the cohort model into actual practice remains difficult to corroborate. Barnett (2005) states, “While many scholars and practitioners espouse the need for school improvement, we lack substantive evidence of how these types of learning environments are created and maintained” (p. 13). In a study of graduate students, the same researcher notes the difficulty students had transferring leadership skills learned in the cohort setting into the workplace environment. Barnett (2005) explains: “Despite educators’ and the public’s desire to transfer knowledge and behavior from one context to another, there is little empirical evidence that learning transfer exists” (p. 6). Perhaps part of the problem is that learning about leadership as a student can be too obscure with few opportunities for students to put into practice the leadership skills learned. However, providing professional development in leadership among active superintendents might yield different results, since those currently serving as superintendents have a dynamic environment in which they can practice skills learned via the cohort process. According to Barnett (2005), “Perhaps the true legacy of leadership preparation programs is whether the knowledge skills can be transported to school organizations, especially ones dedicated to improving the learning outcomes for all students” (p. 13). In particular, the cohort model of professional development makes it much easier for superintendents to see how different types of leadership can impact their own district since superintendents are exposed to a range of problems, issues, and solutions thanks to the experience shared via the cohort model.
Furthermore, participants in a cohort model can vet ideas amongst participants before enacting a solution to an issue; in these instances, the cohort provides a safe environment for problem-solving prior to superintendents taking their solutions back to their school districts.

One of those problems many superintendents face is failing to manage resources effectively and efficiently, which may be the fastest way for one to lose his/her position in a particular district. Simply put, one of the major responsibilities of a superintendent is to make sure taxpayer dollars are used wisely. This involves leadership skills both within the school system and outside of the system into the community. The superintendent must work to pass levies and to justify that the district is being fiscally responsible. As mentioned early, levies are passed on a daily basis through the mutual trust and respect a superintendent fosters with his or her community members. “Thus, the playing field of school finance provides the superintendent a unique opportunity to exert effective leadership and to build trust among stakeholders” (Bird, Wang & Murray, 2009, p. 141). This role of the superintendent is continually gaining in importance in Ohio due to shrinking resources at the state level for so many districts. As Bird, Wang, and Murray (2009) point out, superintendents in the budget-building process can make small changes to budgets at best. Similarly, they argue that superintendents need to be taught school finance in harmony with educational leadership, since the two work in tandem. The combination of learning about leadership and finance, simultaneously, is critical to giving future superintendents the best education possible regarding budgetary issues. Bottom line, a superintendent must have a balance of financial, leadership, and relationship-building skills in order to manage the budgetary process effectively.

Beyond the issue of finances, Bredeson, Klar, and Johansson (2011), citing studies by Fuhrman (2003) and Goetz and Massell (2005), report that accountability systems in school
districts across the US indicate that superintendent leadership is a major factor in determining how districts respond to the increased demands for academic achievement. Bredeson, Klar, and Johansson (2011), state that “It is not unreasonable to suggest that superintendents must uniquely enact their roles in accordance with such contextual factors as district size, community demographics, organizational culture, history, geography, and local political realities” (p. 5).

The discussion follows that superintendents have many of the same problems in any district (for example finances), but the context of that district can impact the way a superintendent handles any specific issue from one district to another. The Bredeson, Klar, and Johansson (2011) study focuses on contextual leadership in six superintendents from Sweden and six superintendents from Wisconsin. “The interview data in this study support the conclusion that leadership absent context is meaningless” (Bredeson, Klar, & Johansson, 2011, p. 18). The study consistently demonstrated, that for the superintendents in Wisconsin and Sweden, the number one priority was student achievement. These superintendents also believed in the importance of a district having a clear vision. Furthermore, these superintendents cited building relationships as critically important in the role as superintendent and in being a leader. Bredeson, Klar, and Johansson’s (2011) article on contextual leadership underscores the importance of context in leadership among superintendents. The take-away is that a superintendents must be aware of his/her school system’s idiosyncrasies and make sure that as appropriate leadership is being utilized for the specific needs of that particular district and its constituents. Superintendents that actively and consciously respond to the context that they are in can help promote the vision and ultimately a better educational environment for students.

The tenure of superintendents can be short lived in many situations which can cause a district to be in constant flux as an organization. Research suggests, though, that the tenure of
superintendents at individual institutions might be longer if they were to develop contextual leadership skills in a cohort setting for support. In addition, Schechter (2011) citing Cooper (2000) explains that “reports of low superintendent tenure contribute to a sense of crisis regarding the superintendency” (p. 502). Many times a district with a long established superintendent has a budget that is under control and is able to promote change in a systematic way over time to avoid chaos in the district. Leaders in school districts such as these also exhibit characteristics of collaborative leadership, collective learning, and have strong contextual understandings of the districts in which they work. In other words, it is likely that these leaders are not autocrats. They have learned from and connect with others in making sound financial, academic, and political decisions regarding their districts.

The Proposed OSLI Study

In regard to cohort training models, Orr (2007) points to a study conducted by a major university on the east coast consisting of six superintendents from Connecticut, New Jersey, New York, and Rhode Island. Each of these individuals had fewer than three years of superintendent experience. The cohort met on five different weekends and participated in a week-long session over a single calendar year. In terms of presentation style, “The program was learner-centered, action-oriented and reflection-rich, for self-reflection and various forms of assessment and feedback” (Orr, 2007, p. 335). The leaders of the sessions were two former superintendents, a professor from a local university, three graduate students, and other faculty and experts—depending on the topic being covered. The results obtained from the survey of the program format for the participants were positive. The participants found that collaborative inquiry and the bond that was formed as a cohort was helpful to them professionally and personally. Orr (2007) concluded that, “The program’s design and impact should be compared to other more
conventional new superintendent programs (or the absence of a program) to determine the strength and nature of the program’s contribution to advancing the superintendents’ leadership development” (p. 345). Simply put, learning from other superintendents in a cohort program can be very powerful, “The expertise of educational practitioners is a rich, barely tapped resource” (Schechter, 2011, p. 483).

The success of Orr’s research on the new superintendent cohort aligns very closely with research in this study regarding the Ohio School Leadership Institute. Like the Orr study, the OSLI participants meet in a similar manner with different sessions and time between sessions for reflection on personal leadership. Likewise, the OSLI program includes surveys that are taken by superiors and subordinates in each participant’s district that provide an analysis of stakeholder perception of the participant’s leadership qualities. For example school board members of participating superintendents are asked to complete an assessment regarding their perceptions of their superintendent’s leadership qualities. This outside perspective can prove enlightening for OSLI participants and their responses to the findings in these surveys will be an integral part of this study. Thus, while there are similarities between this proposed study and that of Orr (2007), a number of differences exist between the two. First, the Orr (2007) study consisted of only six superintendents, whereas the OSLI program typically consists of about thirty superintendents meeting in a somewhat similar manner with a new cohort brought in each year. Second, the population for Orr’s study was new superintendents, whereas the participants in the OSLI are superintendents with experience from one year to many years of serving as a superintendent.

For the purposes of this study, 28 superintendents participating in the 2014-15 OSLI program were surveyed. In addition, surveys were sent to the principals and administrative assistants of the superintendent participants. One goal of this study was to measure whether or
not OSLI participants transfer knowledge gained in the institute into the educational settings in which they work; thus, the importance of surveying the administrative assistants and principals for feedback to ascertain whether or not they witnessed a change in the superintendents’ leadership approaches from the start to the end of the program. Granted, a direct correlation between participation in the institute and superintendents’ decision-making processes in a school district may be difficult to discern due to the vast array of decisions that superintendents make. Obviously, other mitigating factors (outside of the OSLI) might influence a superintendent as well. For example, some decisions made by the superintendent may be made due to the impact of the institute; however, others might be made due to personal preference, personal experience, or as the result of conversations and input of superintendents (outside the OSLI construct) in a non-formal cohort setting.

Barnett (2005) underscores the challenge of researching learning transfer among school leaders due to the many factors that can affect this transfer, including community reluctance to change, nascent experience of new school leaders, complexity of school improvement initiatives, and difficulty implementing new initiatives in the public school setting. Likewise, Browne-Ferrigno and Fusarelli (2005) point out three challenges to transfer: 1) conceptual challenges in viewing the principal actions and student learning outcomes; 2) technical challenges in comparing achievement scores of a school or between multiple schools, and 3) relationship challenges that occur with change when teachers become defensive regarding the data of their own students. Therefore, this study goes forth with full acknowledgement of these challenges; still, the information gained from this study has the potential to inform superintendent leadership development in ways that may positively impact those serving in these roles.
Conclusion

Estimates from the Kentucky Education Professional Standards Board indicate that over 3,000 certified administrators are not looking to obtain an administrator position (superintendency) in the future (Browne-Ferrigno and Fusarelli 2005, p. 141). Furthermore, the tenure of superintendents can be short lived in many situations, which can cause a district to be in constant flux as an organization. Moody (2008) points out that the main reasons superintendents leave their positions include: public relations, school finance, and personnel management. In fact, as was mentioned previously, Schechter (2011) citing Cooper (2000) explains that “reports of low superintendent tenure contribute to a sense of crisis regarding the superintendency” (p. 502).

Perhaps, the answer is professional development opportunities such as the OSLI, where superintendents can develop leadership skills in a cohort setting for support, as well as gain knowledge from one another about the daily responsibilities of managing a school district. Ultimately, the value of the OSLI and whether or not it meets its goals of aiding participants in becoming better, more effective leaders is what drives this study. Promoting, fostering, and supporting good leadership is at the OSLI’s core. As stated by Laub (2010), “Leadership competencies have remained constant, but our understanding of what it is, how it works, and the ways in which people learn to apply it has shifted” (p. 43). That application of leadership among superintendents (and how they acquire leadership skills in the first place) is what keeps them vital in their positions and is what keeps their school districts vital as well. What remains to be seen is to what extent the OSLI develops, supports, and facilitates the transfer of these skills among its participants.
Summary

The leadership of the superintendent in public schools across the country is important to the overall success of the students in each of our schools. Superintendents must take time to focus on how their own leadership styles influence their district in a positive or negative way. This study points out the importance of superintendent leadership in a school setting. The OSLI program provides a structure in which each superintendent has a chance to look at his/her leadership style in a reflective way. In addition, superintendents are able to obtain feedback from the constituents in their district on the leadership perception the superintendent exhibits to those individuals. The Center for Creative Leadership staff facilitate the OSLI program and maintain that effective leadership is learned over a time period, not in one class or one experience. In the foreseeable future, public schools will continue to be looked at closely by community members and politicians for the success of schools. Therefore, it is critical to give superintendents, the leader of public schools, every tool possible to be successful.
CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY

As public education continues to be under the political microscope from a state and national level, it is increasingly important to have superintendents with excellent leadership skills. Some superintendents are better leaders than others, but every superintendent can become a better leader through training and reflection. The importance of this study focuses on the leadership training of active superintendents. In addition, this study is critical to showing a superintendent leadership cohort builds a strong bond among the group of practicing superintendents. This group becomes almost like a fraternity/sorority of superintendents; in turn, this “brotherhood” becomes a resource for cohort members who have questions or problems regarding a particular issue. Many superintendents experience a feeling of isolation in their professional positions. In any given community, the superintendent is the sole leader who feels the full responsibility of every person connected to the district. The responsibility and leadership of the district largely rests with this one person, and it is difficult for the superintendent to discuss matters regarding his/her district to anyone else in the district. As a result, superintendents need a network for support. This network is also needed for sharing and growing ideas. The OSLI program purports to provide such a network to a select group of superintendents in Ohio. The goal of this study is to see if the Ohio School Leadership Institute is effective in meeting its goals of providing transformative professional development for Ohio superintendents.

Since superintendents are, in effect, the CEOs of their district/organization, they should be given every opportunity to hone their leadership skills and to develop strategies for growing leadership teams to help with the weighty task of providing vision to a district. Many fast-paced changes have periodically impacted the state of Ohio when it comes to education—from Race to
the Top (RTTT), Ohio Teacher/Principal Evaluation system (OTES/OPES), Common Core standards, and PARCC assessments to next generation assessments and more. Superintendents cannot be experts in all of these areas; instead, they need resources and strategies to help lead others to professional growth in all of these areas. Through participation in programs such as OSLI, superintendents can examine how to distribute these responsibilities effectively among others in the district. For example, if a district was a Race to the Top School, that district could have had a transformation team of teachers and principals become leaders under the direction of a superintendent gaining collaborative ideas from others in the OSLI cohort. Providing and supporting opportunities for collaborative leadership among teachers, principals, and superintendents can be very powerful for a district. Furthermore, such opportunities foster a sense of ownership among district constituents.

Collaboration, professionalism, and ownership are cornerstones of the approach the Center for Creative Leadership facilitators take (along with BASA’s executive director and past director) in the work done to support superintendents through the OSLI. In addition, superintendents learn from each other through their exchange of knowledge and experience as part of this program. By its structure, the OSLI program is a highly participatory learning program. Its design allows for many small group (5-7) interactions as well as larger group (12-17) interactions and even whole group interactions with all 28 participants talking openly about leadership topics that have been helpful in their current or previous districts of employment. The participatory learning allows for the individual growth of each superintendent, and this active participation connects the cohort together forming strong bonds among its members.

Discussions among members are a very important element of the program. In an effort to achieve maximum discussion, BASA directors intentionally mix the group of 28 superintendents
so that introverts, extroverts, experienced, and inexperienced superintendents can interact with
and learn from one another.

Participants have reported, anecdotally, that involvement in OSLI diminishes feelings of
isolation in their professional work, since discussions among OSLI participants reveal that a
particular district’s problems are not necessarily unique. In other words, the problem facing one
district superintendent may be the same type of problem another superintendent is dealing with
or has dealt with previously. Thus, strategies can be shared. The institute also provides a space
for sharing ideas regarding conflict management and resolution in school districts. For example,
OSLI teaches that all districts have conflict and some conflict is never resolved completely. In
the case of sports activities, OSLI teaches that conflict with coaches and parents will always
occur to some degree in a school setting, since not every high school in the state can be a state
champion in every sport and playing time is subjective. The realization of notions such as shared
problems of ongoing conflict can help participating superintendents realize that the struggles
they face are not uniquely their own. Instead, nearly all (if not all) superintendents face similar
challenges. The key is to share best practices for facing and ameliorating these challenging
situations.

In summary, the OSLI program is a leadership program for superintendents in the state of
Ohio. While participants have reported, anecdotally, the benefits of the program, the OSLI has
yet to be studied in-depth to determine whether or not it meets its intended outcomes. Results of
this study have implications for replicating superintendent support across the United States. In
addition, this study will provide OSLI, itself, with a barometer for its effectiveness.
**Research Design**

This study was designed to discern the efficacy of the Ohio School Leadership Institute (OSLI) cohort leadership model in its intended goals of supporting superintendents in becoming more effective leaders. The Ohio School Leadership Institute purports that school districts can also benefit when superintendents are supported in both in their professional lives and personal lives, since participation in the program often leads to self-reflection of a participant’s current leadership style and traits. And while much anecdotal evidence exists to support the notion that the Ohio School Leadership Institute meets its goals, no data exists, until this study to corroborate the anecdotal claims. Thus, this study sets out to answer the following questions:

- To what extent do participants of OSLI obtain personal growth by gaining significant self-understanding?
- To what extent do participants of OSLI gain professional growth through exemplary best practice leadership training experiences and modeling?
- In what ways, if any, has the OSLI program supported superintendents in developing a leadership team designed to integrate continuous improvement of the organization and in student achievement?
- In what ways, if any, has the OSLI program as a cohort contributed to the building of relationships and professional networking opportunities among participants?

A mixed methods approach that derives from the work of Orr (2011) as well as Bogdan and Biklen (2003) underscores the research design of this study. Observation, interviews, and surveys were all elements of the data collection.
Participants

The first objective of the Ohio School Leadership Institute program is for the participants to gain a more comprehensive understanding of themselves as leaders: participants should ultimately know the leadership style and leadership traits they possess upon completing the institute. In addition, participants are exposed to research based on current leadership practices and then are given a chance to reflect and incorporate those practices into their own district. The institute operates yearly on the premise that the success of a superintendency is a precursor to the success of a school district. Buck (1991) argues that “Whatever the future holds for education in America in the 21st century, the superintendency is the position that will make it happen” (p. 311).

Each year, the setting for the Ohio School Leadership Institute cohort program is a hotel in Columbus, Ohio. The initial session is two and one-half days long with evening dinners and activities. This is followed by two full-day sessions later in the year. The sessions are repeated four times total; thus, the entire institute consists of approximately ten days, total, of leadership development. The cohort is together at almost all times during the day and in the evenings at each of the sessions.

Per the study design, surveys were given to all 28 superintendent participants, and follow-up interviews were conducted with 6 superintendents after each of the 4 sessions. The survey was distributed by email through Survey Monkey. Along with the survey of superintendents, principals, who work with each of the OSLI superintendents in this particular cohort, were also surveyed; 2-5 principals were surveyed depending on the size of the district. In addition, the administrative assistant to each superintendent was surveyed. The principals and administrative assistants were surveyed in order to provide perspective; specifically, their responses were
solicited to see if they perceived any new leadership strategies that the superintendents implemented during their time within the OSLI. Consequently, by design, the study did not rely solely on the superintendents’ perceptions of whether or not they had grown as leaders as a result of their participation in OSLI. The survey to administrative assistants and principals was given at the start of the Fall 2014 OSLI program and then given again at the end of that OSLI program cohort year in May 2015.

All participants (superintendents, principals, and administrative assistants) in the study were actively employed in a school district in Ohio at the time the surveys were distributed. The 2-5 principals interviewed from each district (depending on the size of the district) were selected using stratified random sampling. For example, one of the districts selected for the study was a district considerably larger than the others and had five principals in the district. The other districts averaged 2-3 principals. The principals who were ultimately surveyed for the study were blindly chosen from the combined pool of principals representing all of the districts (see Data Collection). All 28 administrative assistants to the superintendents were selected for the survey. As follow-up, six school districts had superintendents interviewed for a more in-depth case study through phone interviews. In all, approximately 150 people were contacted to be surveyed, and a total of 36 interviews were conducted for the study.

The researcher traveled to the site of the OSLI in Columbus, Ohio, to explain the study, to elicit participation, and to observe the superintendents in the 2014-15 cohort. The first session, held in October 2014, was entitled, “The Leader Within.” This session focused on the social identity of each superintendent including what is one’s given identity, one’s chosen identity, and one’s core identity. The second day of the initial session focused on leadership development concepts as facilitators aided participants in identifying three keys to leadership:
direction, alignment, and commitment. Each plays a significant role in making building successful leadership skills. Next, the group took the Myers Briggs Type Indicator assessment to determine if each individual were an introvert or an extrovert (Center for Creative Leadership, 2014, Session I, p. 21). The group was then divided into these two groups in a half-circle with participants lined up according to who was most extroverted to the most introverted. A discussion then ensued regarding the advantages and disadvantages of this indicator in the role of the superintendency. Furthermore, participants were challenged to consider how to effectively deal with the personal trait of being an introvert or an extrovert, knowing that one is not better or worse than another.

The next part of day two instruction included information of providing effective Situation Behavior Impact (SBI) feedback to others along with examples of how this feedback works in an organization. Following the SBI feedback, the superintendents participated in a hands-on activity to reinforce the SBI information. Next, the FIRO-B instrument was given to the participants. The Center for Creative Leadership workshops states that the FIRO-B instrument helps an individual understand their interpersonal needs and how those needs influence behavior. In addition, “the instrument helps a person examine how others’ behavior is interacting with their own, and how those interactions create connections and/or distance” (Center for Creative Leadership, 2014, Session I, p. 39). Completing this instrument can improve a leader’s ability to respond effectively to employees’ needs.

On the third and final day of the first session, instruction included discussion on leaders vs. managers, leadership and values, and leadership and ethics. Participants were challenged to set personal and professional goals. In addition, each person was paired with another who would serve as an “accountability partner”. Accountability partners check in on one another,
periodically, to ensure that each person is focusing on the personal and professional goals set to be accomplished during the time between OSLI session one and session two.

The second OSLI session met in the same location as the first (Columbus, Ohio). Day one consisted solely of an after-dinner meeting on the topic of team-building. That evening session also focused on benchmarking the competencies of a leader. These competencies include meeting job challenges, leading people, and respecting oneself and others. At the end of that first evening, each participant received a summary of the 360 feedback from his/her district. This feedback was solicited and gathered online; it included survey responses from principals, board members, and administrative assistants to the superintendent. The purpose was to provide each superintendent with a leadership profile, so that he/she might discern what strengths to maintain and grow and what weaknesses to ameliorate. Along with the responses from principals, board members, and administrative assistants, each superintendent could also solicit input from others in the district (guidance counselors, teachers, faculty, and staff) as he/she saw fit.

On day two of session two, each superintendent was invited to conference one-on-one with someone from BASA or the CCL in order to receive feedback on a private basis as to the strengths and weaknesses indicated in the 360 feedback. During these private conferences, participants received specific suggestions on how to grow as leaders. The afternoon session of the second day dealt with differences between leaders and managers, as well as Tuckman’s Stages of Group Development, which include forming, storming, norming, and performing. Next, another activity based learning experience was incorporated to reinforce ideas and concepts just covered. The next part of the day focused on problem solving and appreciative inquiry, followed by another activity at the end of the evening to bring the day to a close.
The last day of session two focused on managing energy not time; this energy includes physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual energy. Next, an activity-based session took place that allowed participants to reflect on when a team is needed to address challenges or initiatives in an organization and when such efforts are unnecessary. In addition, this session focused on maintaining team performance with team synergy and making sure groupthink is handled in a positive way. The last part of the session dealt with action planning among accountability partners so that each partner might be assured that 1) new personal and professional goals were set by each superintendent; and 2) previous goals were being assessed and prioritized based on progress between the second and third sessions.

The third session of the OSLI program convened in the same location as sessions one and two with a focus entitled, “Change and Conflict.” The first day of the session began at dinner time as with the other OSLI sessions. This particular evening session was concentrated on the concept of change and transition. Facilitators stressed that the communication of change suggests that superintendents must be able to state the purpose or vision for a district, paint the picture of how the goal will be attained, craft a plan for achieving the goal, and then demonstrate how each person in the organization will play a part to help reach the goal of change. Within the communication of change is an understanding that a transition must occur where the superintendent—in launching a change—must provide guidance to the district in sun-setting a previous idea, strategy, or way of accomplishing tasks in order to institute that change. This transition includes the role of the superintendent in moving the district into a “neutral zone” as he/she helps constituents make sense of why the change is needed. Once the neutral zone of change has been achieved, then superintendents (and their constituents) can work toward enacting the change in earnest.
At the beginning of day two of the third session, the superintendents take an assessment to ascertain where they are located on the Change-Style Indicator. The spectrum includes labels such as conserver, pragmatist, and originator. The way each superintendent responds to change is also discussed as a group; examples revealed that superintendents, at times, felt overwhelmed, feeling like an imposter, as if they were entrenched, or if they were learners when it came to change within their districts. From there, the session concentrated on managing complex change as an organizational leader. An activity was utilized to reinforce the understanding of change and transition as a group. This activity was followed by a discussion of the Conflict Competent Model, which is circular in nature that suggests change consists of cool down moments, slow down moments, and “engage constructively” moments. Specifically, facilitators introduced participants to the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument. (Center for Creative Leadership, 2014, Session III, p. 29). This instrument provides demonstration of how a precipitating event can initiate conflict; the way a superintendent handles the conflict—either with constructive responses or destructive responses—can de-escalate the conflict or escalate the conflict, respectively. The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument also enables superintendents to see how handling conflict in a particular way rates on a scale from assertive or cooperative. Between those assertive and cooperative are a number of other adjectives that help describe a superintendent’s leadership style in handling conflict. These include labels of avoiding, accommodating, compromising, competing, or collaborating to describe the superintendent’s decisions.

The final day of the third session, focused on an activity that allowed participants to reflect upon and measure resiliency. According to facilitators, resiliency is an important characteristic for superintendents to develop as leaders, since at various times throughout each
school year, unpredictable incidents and conflicts will occur. In order to be resilient, facilitators from the Center for Creative Leadership helped participants focus on particular aspects of resiliency including the acceptance of change, continuous learning, self-empowerment, a sense of purpose, personal identity, personal and professional networks, reflection, skill shifting, and the relationship of conflict and change to money. As with the first and second sessions, the final activity for the third session revolved around goal setting and accountability, with the focus again on setting at least one professional goal, along with a personal goal.

The fourth and final session of the OSLI cohort for this study was presented by two individuals from the Center for Creative Leadership. The focus of their presentation was “Power, Politics, and Influence.” The opening night of the session allowed for participants to reflect on the personal and professional goals that were set at the end of session three and how those goals had been met or if participants were still working toward those goals. Next, a case study and activity were presented to the group. The case study and activity revolved around power, politics, and influence and provided an overview of the work to come in the final cohort.

On day two of the institute, participants explored organizational politics and discussed the necessity of skills such as social astuteness, interpersonal influence, networking ability, and apparent sincerity among successful superintendents. The superintendents also took a political skill inventory to discern self-perception regarding the aforementioned skills. Next, a stakeholder analysis was completed as to the amount of agreement and trust a superintendent or any leader has in his/her position. The idea that all people are adversaries, bedfellow, allies, and opponents was also explored and superintendents discussed strategies for dealing effectively with each of these groups. In addition, day two of the final session allowed participants to take a look at the dynamics of power and influence. Facilitators explained that the difference between
positional power and personal power must be examined along with influence if superintendents hope to affect the behavior of others in a particular direction. As part of this discussion, the Discovery Learning Incorporated Influence Style Indicators was taken by the superintendents so that they might see if they fell into one of the following categories for asserting power and influence: asserting, inspiring, bridging, negotiating, and rationalizing (Center for Creative Leadership, 2014, Session IV, p. 24).

On the last day of the institute, the agenda was focused on “selling yourself without selling out.” Participants learned the importance of promoting oneself as a superintendent by capitalizing on certain personality traits and utilizing techniques espoused by OSLI in artful ways in order to connect with others and create opportunities. The group was then led through a look back on the entire OSLI program as a short reminder of each of the topics covered. Facilitators stressed that the institute’s goal was to help participants both professionally and personally as superintendents throughout the year; crucial to meeting the institute’s goal was the individual goal development and acquisition of each participant. The final exercise of the program was a short graduation ceremony where participants were each awarded a plaque and a picture of OSLI Cohort 29, so that everyone might have a keepsake of the bonds that were formed throughout the institute.

As part of the conclusion of OSLI Cohort 29, the researcher explained that aggregated results of the study conducted in collaboration with the cohort would be shared with participants upon the study’s completion.

**Instrumentation & Data Sources**

Orr’s 2011 study impacted the design of the survey and interview questions in this study of the OSLI. Specifically, Orr’s ideas were modified to meet the needs of the aforementioned
research questions regarding the efficacy of the OSLI. Additional questions were developed, as needed, to ensure that participants had a variety of opportunities to reflect upon and speak to the perceived efficacy or lack thereof of the OSLI. The combination of utilizing modified questions from Orr’s study while adding supplementary questions served to validate this study’s design. In a further move to validate the study, all survey and interview questions were tested on a pilot group prior to the study to discern whether or not the questions were clear and would elicit the quality as well as depth of responses desired. This pilot group included administrators who had previously participated in the OSLI; therefore, these administrators were helpful in clarifying wording and phrasing so that participants might respond with ease and precision. Likewise, to mitigate misunderstanding, participants were instructed orally and through written instruction to make note on the actual survey if they experienced any confusion in regard to understanding a question during the survey portion of the study. The researcher underscored this point in his attendance at each of the OSLI workshops held from October 2014 through May 2015. Any potential question confusion would be easy to pinpoint and ameliorate during the interview sessions since these were conducted in live-time with the researcher over the telephone. However, at no time during the study did any participant suggest difficulties in understanding the intent of the survey or interview questions designed for this study.

Surveys for the superintendents can be found in Appendices C-E of this document. Surveys for principals and administrative assistants of each of the districts can be found in Appendices H and I. Interview questions used with the six superintendents can be found in Appendices G and F.
Data Collection Procedures

In order to conduct research and gather data on the efficacy of the OSLI, the researcher first had to obtain permission from BASA Executive Director Dr. Kirk Hamilton. With Hamilton’s permission, the researcher traveled to the opening session of the Ohio School Leadership Institute in Columbus, Ohio in October 2014. The superintendents at the OSLI were the 29th cohort to participate in the program. Prior to distributing the study surveys, the researcher explained the study and its purpose to cohort 29. At this time, members of cohort 29 had the option to participate or to not participate in the study. All members of cohort 29 chose to participate. Signed consent forms were obtained from participants at this time and the surveys were distributed by the researcher. The completed surveys were collected by Dr. Jerry Klenke, Ohio School Leadership Foundation Director and Past Executive Director of BASA. The surveys were then returned to the researcher.

During sessions two and three of the OSLI, the researcher distributed the surveys in person, again, to each superintendent and thanked the members of cohort 29 for participating in the study. The surveys were collected and returned to the researcher in the same manner as they were in session one. In April, 2015, the researcher attended the final OSLI session to give the final survey to cohort 29. In this case, the researcher personally collected the surveys at the end of the program.

In regard to interviews, after each of the four sessions of the OSLI, the researcher called six superintendents, who had been selected through stratified random sample for follow-up interviews. These interviews were designed to provide additional in-depth follow-up to the surveys completed at each OSLI session. With interviewee permission, each of the 24 interviews
was recorded on the researcher’s computer using Audacity. Each interview lasted between four to ten minutes; these audio interviews have been archived on a server for preservation.

In order to obtain 360 feedback with input from administrative assistants and principals who worked with each superintendent, the researcher utilized Appendix B to contact 110 potential participants via an email sent through SurveyMonkey. Out of the 110 participants contacted, 39 consented to complete the pre-survey sent out in October 2014 (at the beginning of OSLI for cohort 29). These participants included those principals who were selected through stratified random sampling (as described on p. 42). A post-survey was sent out to the same group of 39 participants in April 2015 (at the end of the OSLI for cohort 29), and 29 participants provided post-survey responses.

Along with compiling data for the online surveys, SurveyMonkey was utilized to input data from the paper surveys that was quantifiable in nature. The responses from the interviews and the open ended responses were coded using a constant-comparative method that calls for data collection and the review of data for key words that suggest themes (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003).

**Research Questions**

The focus of this particular study is to discern whether or not the OSLI cohort leadership model is effectively meeting its intended goals of supporting superintendents in becoming better leaders. The OSLI believes school districts can also benefit when superintendents are supported in both in their professional lives and personal lives, since participation in the program often leads to self-reflection of a participant’s current leadership style and traits. And while much anecdotal evidence exists to support the notion that OSLI meets its goals, no data exists to corroborate this belief. Thus, this study sets out to answer the following questions:
• To what extent do participants of OSLI obtain personal growth by gaining significant self-understanding?

• To what extent do participants of OSLI gain professional growth through exemplary best practices in leadership training experiences and modeling?

• In what ways, if any, has the OSLI program supported superintendents in developing a leadership team designed to integrate continuous improvement of the organization and in student achievement?

• In what ways, if any, has the OSLI program as a cohort contributed to the building of relationships and professional networking opportunities among participants?

Assumptions

The researcher conducted this study under the assumption that participants responded to survey and interview questions in an honest manner. The participant surveys and interviews were intentionally short in length; no survey or interview should have taken longer than 15 minutes to complete. The intentional design of short interviews and surveys was to foster a more thorough reading and response rate by participants. Likewise, the researcher assumed that the respondents took the time necessary to give responses that were thorough and thoughtful. Almost all of the responses were completed during the participants’ normal work day or at the Ohio School Leadership Institute program, itself. The attention given to this aspect of the study design suggests that respondents had appropriate time to compose their responses.

An additional assumption held by the researcher was that the administrative assistants and principals felt uninhibited in answering questions about the leadership of their superintendent, since they were assured that their responses would be shared only in aggregate form with no identifiable information that could link a particular response back to a particular
school. A further assumption held by the researcher was that all of the participants understood the questions in the given format (written survey and oral interviews), and did not read into questions any perspective that may conflict with the real intent of the question. Also, none of the participants were compensated for participation in the program.

In regard to the superintendents, in particular, the researcher assumed that the superintendents would not feel pressured to answer in a positive way about the OSLI program, even though they are answering the questions at the institute. Since the OSLI’s goal is to support and improve leadership skills among superintendents, the researcher assumed that participating superintendents would give responses to help maintain and/or improve the OSLI for future superintendent cohorts. Similarly, the researcher assumed that the administrative assistants and principals, who participated in the study, would see the benefit of completing the survey, since over 90% of them reported that they believed superintendent leadership skills are critical for a school district.

Finally, the researcher held the assumption that participants in the study would see the value that their responses might add to the growing body of knowledge on leadership in the superintendency.

Data Analysis

Quantifiable survey results were transferred into SurveyMonkey or into a spreadsheet with care to ensure accuracy. Efforts were made to ensure results are kept confidential. Subjects were not named in the study, and data was reported in aggregate form. Interviewee and survey details were and will continue to be kept on a confidential list, and each interview and survey was given a number to help ensure confidentiality.
The qualitative data was also coded for confidentiality and reported out in aggregate form with emphasis given to the number of four or five point responses chosen for a survey item compared to the one and two point responses. This was done to gauge the response of strongly agree to strongly disagree on a Likert scale of 1-5. Data tables were used to demonstrate the results from each question as to the strength of strongly agree to strongly disagree within a certain data point. A recap was also provided of some of the most important survey questions in this study along with their respective percentage responses.

The open-ended questions and interviews were analyzed to code and generate themes from narrative data. These themes provided relevant data regarding the overarching research questions of this study. Likewise, the telephone interviews of the six superintendents were transcribed and then coded for common themes as seen in the open-ended survey questions. Each theme was then placed in proximity to the appropriate research question to demonstrate responses indicative of the study (See Chapter IV Results).
CHAPTER IV. RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of the Ohio School Leadership Institute in meeting its goals of supporting and facilitating leadership training among active superintendents. Surveys were given to superintendents in OSLI cohort 29 during each of the OSLI meetings which were held during the months of October, December, February, and April 2014-2015. 100% participation was obtained from all superintendents who were in attendance each session. In addition, follow-up interviews were conducted by the researcher by telephone with six superintendents after each OSLI session. Furthermore, online surveys were completed by the principals and the administrative assistants affiliated with each superintendent. The results of this study could be important to the future of the OSLI program and to all superintendents who decide to participate in the OSLI program. Superintendents can only be a part of the cohort program one time in their career, so this study may help future superintendents in their decision to participate. The results of this survey may provide justification to other states that are interested in implementing some type of leadership program similar to Ohio’s in order to support public school district superintendents in becoming stronger and more-informed leaders in their respective states.

The importance of leadership in a school district, as pointed out in chapter one of this dissertation, is critical with the myriad mandates coming to public schools from both national and state governments. Likewise, intense scrutiny of public education on local, state, and national levels suggests the on-going need for strong leadership among school district superintendents. Furthermore, as the literature review in chapter two indicates, a paucity of quality professional development programs and leadership activities currently exists for actively practicing superintendents, nationwide. The lack of programs for these superintendents is
compounded by a perceived lack of time for professional development among superintendents as these leaders juggle the demands of legislators, parents, students, faculty, and the voting public. Still, as Dickerson’s (2012) article points out, superintendents need time to develop leadership skills in order to discern the big picture for their school districts. Therefore, if superintendents can find professional development opportunities, it is imperative that those opportunities be of the highest quality, so as to maximize the superintendents’ time. The results of this study, then, may help Ohio superintendents to decide whether or not to invest approximately 10 days of an academic year at the OSLI. Again, results of this study are also valuable to those outside Ohio who have developed or may be developing high quality professional development opportunities for active superintendents.

**Instrument Validity and Reliability**

The quantitative and qualitative surveys along with qualitative open-ended interviews were created by the researcher (based on the work of Orr, 2011) and piloted on superintendents who had been participated in previous OSLI programs. The first and last surveys for superintendents each contained both closed and open ended questions. (See Appendices C and E). Surveys for the superintendents responding to sessions two and three contained only open ended questions. (See Appendix D). The questions were designed using simple language to mitigate confusion among participants during the response portion of the study. The OSLI cohort 29 superintendent participants who took these surveys and interviews reported no issues with question clarity. All of the surveys given to the superintendents were given by the researcher personally during the second or third day of the session.

The principal and administrative assistant surveys took place at the beginning of the OSLI program and at the end of the program with both closed and open ended questions given to
the participants. (See Appendices H and I). Stratified random sampling was used to choose the principal participants in the survey/interview portion of the study. In addition, six superintendents were chosen using a stratified random sampling scheme for the telephone interview portion of the study. (See Appendices F and J).

Grounded theory was used to examine the results of the surveys and interviews in this research study. Open coding was the framework used for locating themes in the responses to the survey and interview questions.

**Characteristics of the Sample**

Surveys and interviews of superintendents in OSLI cohort 29 were used to gather data on characteristics of the superintendent participant population. 28 superintendents participated in OSLI cohort 29. Table 1 below delineates the professional experience characteristics of the superintendent participants. Table 2 delineates the student enrollment range of the districts whose superintendents participated in the study.

**Table 1**

*Characteristics of the Superintendents*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0-5</th>
<th>6-10</th>
<th>11-15</th>
<th>16-20</th>
<th>21-25</th>
<th>26 or more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Years in Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years as a Superintendent</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Notes.* All of the numbers in the table are shown in actual numbers. There were a total of 28 participants in the OSLI program.
Table 2

**Characteristics of the Superintendents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enrollment of Students</th>
<th>500 or Less</th>
<th>501-1000</th>
<th>1001-1500</th>
<th>1501-2000</th>
<th>2001-2500</th>
<th>Over 2500</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District Enrollment for Superintendents in OSLI Program</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Notes.* All of the numbers in the table are shown in actual numbers. There were a total of 28 participants in the OSLI program.

Table 1 shows a breakdown of the superintendents with the range of experience in education from 5 to 43 years and the experience as a superintendent from 1 to 32 years. In Table 2, the enrollment range of the districts the superintendents serve ranged from 400 to 8,000 students, with the largest number of 11 superintendents serving in districts between 1001-1500 students.

The OSLI program is sponsored by the Buckeye Association of School Administrators (BASA), however, the program is facilitated by the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL). During each session two facilitators are sent from CCL to administer the OSLI program. The following data (Table 3) represents the opinions of the superintendents on the quality of the OSLI facilitators, along with the quality of the programming provided in the sessions.

Table 3

**Pre- and Post-OSLI Superintendent Survey**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The OSLI facilitators were effective in connecting with the participants.</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Notes.* All numbers are shown as percentages with 28 participants in pre survey and 26 participants in post survey. There were a total 28 participants in the OSLI program.
As Table 3 demonstrates, the participants in each survey across the four sessions saw virtually no change on the question on the effectiveness of the OSLI facilitators in making a personal and professional connection with participants. Over 95% of respondents in both surveys agreed or strongly agreed that the facilitators connected with participants.

Table 4

Pre- and Post-OSLI Superintendent Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I understand the goals of the OSLI program.</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. All numbers are shown as percentages with 28 participants in pre survey and 26 participants in post survey. There were a total 28 participants in the OSLI program.

At a rate of over 95%, the superintendents agreed or strongly agreed that they understood the goals of the OSLI program. These numbers remained constant from the first survey during the first session of OSLI to the last session of the program.

Table 5

Pre- and Post-OSLI Superintendent Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The learning goals of the OSLI program are clear and straightforward.</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. All numbers are shown as percentages with 28 participants in pre survey and 26 participants in post survey. There were a total 28 participants in the OSLI program.
As Table 5 indicates, participants rated the OSLI higher in the area of “clear and straightforward” learning goals on the final survey given in April as compared to the initial survey given in October. The numbers rose from 35% strongly agreeing in October to 73% strongly agreeing on the final survey.

Table 6

Pre- and Post-OSLI Superintendent Survey

Each OSLI session was purposeful.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre</strong></td>
<td>54</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post</strong></td>
<td>46</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Notes.* All numbers are shown as percentages with 28 participants in pre survey and 26 participants in post survey. There were a total 28 participants in the OSLI program.

From the opening OSLI session to the last survey, 96% or more of the superintendents in cohort 29 believed that every session of the OSLI program was purposeful. This question was designed to ascertain if each attendant perceived a clear purpose for each session.

Table 7

Pre- and Post-OSLI Superintendent Survey

OSLI facilitators were well prepared.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre</strong></td>
<td>86</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post</strong></td>
<td>88</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Notes.* All numbers are shown as percentages with 28 participants in pre survey and 26 participants in post survey. There were a total 28 participants in the OSLI program.
Survey results demonstrated that the majority of superintendents believed OSLI facilitators were well prepared for the institute. Numbers indicated that 96% agreed or strongly agreed that facilitators were well prepared.

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre</th>
<th>Post</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strongly Agree</strong></td>
<td>46</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Agree</strong></td>
<td>50</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Neither</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disagree</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strongly Disagree</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. All numbers are shown as percentages with 28 participants in pre survey and 26 participants in post survey. There were a total 28 participants in the OSLI program.

The superintendents seemed to agree or strongly agree that the subject matter covered at the OSLI was presented in a stimulating way at a rate of 88% or more in both surveys.

Research Question 1 To what extent do participants of OSLI obtain personal growth by gaining significant self-understanding?

One of the goals of the OSLI program is to have the participants obtain personal growth by gaining significant self-understanding. The following tables demonstrate responses elicited regarding personal growth and self-understanding.
Table 9

Pre- and Post-OSLI Superintendent Survey

I am concerned that my workload may distract me from the OSLI program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am concerned that my workload may distract me from the OSLI program.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. All numbers are shown as percentages with 28 participants in pre survey and 26 participants in post survey. There were a total 28 participants in the OSLI program.

One of the obstacles for superintendents to be a part of a leadership course is the workload of the daily operation of a school district as a superintendent. The concern that the workload may distract from the OSLI program was strong, with 61% agreeing or strongly agreeing that their workload may negatively impact their participation in the program. This number was up nearly 30% compared to only 35% who agreed or strongly agreed with the concern when taking the initial survey.

Table 10

Pre- and Post-OSLI Superintendent Survey

I am a compassionate and sensitive leader.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am a compassionate and sensitive leader.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. All numbers are shown as percentages with 28 participants in pre survey and 26 participants in post survey. There were a total 28 participants in the OSLI program.

The question reported on in Table 10 dealt with each superintendent’s self-perception regarding his/her characteristics as being compassionate and sensitive with staff on a personal level. Participants of the OSLI program demonstrated a 13% gain from the start to the end of the
OSLI program. Specifically, when responding to the question of being a compassionate and sensitive leader 60% agreed or strongly agreed that they possessed this trait at the start of the program. At the end of the program 73% agreed or strongly agreed that they possessed this trait. Since the personal aspect of being a leader can be important to building a relationship with staff, the answer to this question demonstrates significant insight into how OSLI participants perceive themselves as well as how they perceive the importance of these qualities in a superintendent.

Table 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. All numbers are shown as percentages with 28 participants in pre survey and 26 participants in post survey. There were a total 28 participants in the OSLI program.

This survey question in Table 11 was designed to gauge to what extent the superintendents reflected on their own leadership style and skills on a weekly basis. In the first survey, 39% agreed or strongly agreed that they reflected on leadership style and skills weekly compared to only 27% that agreed or strongly agreed in the last survey. The disagree or strongly disagree categories saw little change in weekly reflection from 47% in these categories in the initial survey to 43% in the final survey.
Table 12

Pre- and Post-OSLI Superintendent Survey

I have a good balance between work and personal life.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre Post</td>
<td>Pre Post</td>
<td>Pre Post</td>
<td>Pre Post</td>
<td>Pre Post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a good balance between work and personal life.</td>
<td>10 10</td>
<td>36 23</td>
<td>18 27</td>
<td>32 27</td>
<td>4 8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. All numbers are shown as percentages with 28 participants in pre survey and 26 participants in post survey. There were a total 28 participants in the OSLI program.

The survey question on attaining a good balance between work and personal life stayed fairly consistent between the two surveys remaining very even across all of the middle three categories from agree, neither, or disagree. In the pre survey, 46% of superintendents agreed or strongly agreed that they had a good balance between work and personal life. 33% responded in the same two categories in the final survey. Similarly, 36% disagreed or strongly disagreed that they had a good balance of work and personal life in the pre survey; this number remained almost constant (35%) in the post survey regarding these two categories.

Table 13

Pre- and Post-OSLI Superintendent Survey

I find it easy to build and mend relationships.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre Post</td>
<td>Pre Post</td>
<td>Pre Post</td>
<td>Pre Post</td>
<td>Pre Post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I find it easy to build and mend relationships.</td>
<td>4 12</td>
<td>68 69</td>
<td>21 15</td>
<td>7 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. All numbers are shown as percentages with 28 participants in pre survey and 26 participants in post survey. There were a total 28 participants in the OSLI program.
Table 13 demonstrates that 81% of the superintendents agreed or strongly agreed that they were able to build and mend relationships with staff by the time they had completed the OSLI program. This number was up from 72% in the initial survey of superintendents in the same categories.

Table 14

**Pre- and Post-OSLI Superintendent Survey**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Notes.* All numbers are shown as percentages with 28 participants in pre survey and 26 participants in post survey. There were a total 28 participants in the OSLI program.

As Table 14 shows, the encouragement of independent thinking among superintendents as a result of participation in the OSLI program did not change from the beginning to the end of the program, with over 95% agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement in both surveys.

Table 15

**Pre- and Post-OSLI Superintendent Survey**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Notes.* All numbers are shown as percentages with 28 participants in pre survey and 26 participants in post survey. There were a total 28 participants in the OSLI program.

One of the personal aspects of being a superintendent is fostering positive relationships with board members. Table 15 demonstrates that, in both surveys, over 90% of the
superintendents believed they had a positive relationship with the majority of their board members.

Table 16

Pre- and Post-OSLI Superintendent Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. All numbers are shown as percentages with 28 participants in pre survey and 26 participants in post survey. There were a total 28 participants in the OSLI program.

The question reported on in Table 16, above, measured how superintendents prioritized relationship building with staff members. The results were very strong in both surveys. In the initial survey, 80% superintendents stated that they either agreed or strongly agreed that they make building relationships a priority. This percentage remained constant at the end of OSLI demonstrating virtually no change from the start to the end of the program.

Open-Ended Responses

Session One

The first survey given to the superintendents provided the opportunity for many open-ended responses regarding what the participants hoped to gain personally from the OSLI program. When coding the responses under the theme of self-awareness and reflection, over one-third of the 28 superintendents responded that their main goal in participating in the OSLI was to gain a better understanding of self. One respondent stated that he wanted to learn more about himself and what “drove” him as a superintendent. Another superintendent stated he wanted to better understand himself to improve himself as a leader.
Another code that was used was that of *achieving a healthy balance between work and personal life*. The theme of balance emerged from more than 25% of the superintendents with one respondent stating: “the work and life balance issue is huge for me personally.” Another respondent stated that he was better able to set goals for balancing his work and personal life thanks to OSLI. Yet another superintendent added a comment dealing with balance stating, “I can help my family better in life and faith” thanks to a better work/life balance.

A third theme that surfaced for personal growth had to do with the bonding that occurred among the cohort of superintendents in the program. Using the codes of cohort, relationships, and friendship, from the opening survey to the final survey of, the notion of personal growth through building connections with other superintendents was strong with close to 50% of the superintendents providing responses that could be grouped under the cohort theme. Many responses relating to the importance of the cohort for personal growth noted connections gained through OSLI; these responses included statements such as: “the connection with peers was priceless.” Another respondent stated he had developed many friendships, and yet another superintendent stated she had not only developed many friendships, but had also met great colleagues to call when in need.

In the final survey given, OSLI participants were asked to comment on what they had gained most from the OSLI in regard to personal growth. Participants listed most frequently that the friendships and connections formed with the other superintendents in the cohort were what they gained the most from the program. To this point, participants stated that, in the future, they would be comfortable calling and talking to others in the cohort when they were having an issue in their own district. Several other superintendents stated that what they gained the most was increased focus on the importance of their own health and had developed personal goals of
eating better and exercising for a healthier lifestyle. Still others noted that they grew personally in that they now have increased focus on family life and were intentional in their actions with family members. Also in this final survey, 25% of the superintendents stated that reflecting on personal growth was important in helping them focus on how their personal leadership style can affect others. Respondents indicated that the first session of the OSLI was particularly useful in providing input on personal leadership style and traits.

Interestingly, while the respondents stated that they were pleased to have opportunities to reflect upon and foster personal growth, they still struggled with work/life balance. For example, Table 9 indicates that the superintendent’s workload distracted them from the OSLI program with 61% of the participants stating that they agreed or strongly agreed that the workload distracted them from OSLI goals. This can be compared to only 36% who believed, in the initial survey, that the workload would be distracting. Thus, while participants reported the benefits of reflecting on personal growth, they still struggled to balance work and personal life even after participation in OSLI. Furthermore, Table 11 demonstrates that weekly time to reflect on leadership skills actually diminished over the course of a superintendent’s involvement in OSLI.

Session Two

The open ended surveys from session two had a strong theme of a focus on self and taking care of oneself personally using the codes of *self-improvement, taking care of self,* and any comments pertaining to *self.* Some of the respondents noted that they wanted to do a better job of taking care of themselves with improved eating and exercise habits along with more time for family. One superintendent, when asked what he gained personally from the OSLI program in session two responded that he learned to “take care of myself and my family like I do my district.” Another responded that she had learned “to take care of yourself mentally, emotionally,
and spiritually.” Yet another participant in the OSLI program stated he had an increased awareness to “take care of myself with hobbies, time away from work, and exercise.”

Another theme—that of personal balance—emerged from the second OSLI session under the following codes: manage energy not time, find balance between work and personal life, and create lasting personal connections with others in the cohort setting. One of the responses in this area included the importance of finding balance between work and personal life in order to improve both areas simultaneously.

Session Three

Survey results from the third session from a personal growth basis included a strong theme of how to deal with conflict and the ability to manage conflict both professional and personal matters. Another theme that emerged was that participants reporting a better sense of self in dealing with conflict and an increased ability to personally connect with others when dealing with situations that involve conflict. In addition, many superintendents reported a better understanding of how dealing with conflict on a personal level can affect how an issue is resolved.

Superintendent Interviews

The interviews of the six superintendents that were randomly selected revolved around three different themes. The first theme for all of the interviews was focused on the ways in which the OSLI program had fostered participants’ ability to reflect on personal leadership styles as well as how those leadership styles impact a district. Codes of myself and leadership style were utilized for this analysis. The feedback from the 360 assessment, filled out by co-workers and board members, on a personal level was also important with this portion of the data collection. The ability to reflect on the leadership style seemed to be powerful in fostering the
superintendents’ abilities to consider their own thinking and approaches to a particular situation. Also powerful here was the superintendents’ abilities to perceive how others saw them. One superintendent stated, “I can be perceived as being standoffish, not engaged with personal interaction, and I am making effort to work on that.” This was in response to what this particular superintendent had learned personally after session two which dealt heavily on the 360 assessment. Others registered similar responses in regard to self-awareness.

As reported in the earlier surveys from sessions one through three, awareness on a personal level of the importance of health, exercise, and eating right was prevalent among the interview responses. Along those lines, two other superintendents responded that they were looking to have more balance between their personal and professional lives and to have a greater focus on their family life.

**Survey Results from Principals and Administrative Assistants**

An email was sent out to 110 principals and administrative assistants with a link to the study survey via SurveyMonkey, with a return rate of 39 individuals who completed the first survey and 29 who replied to the last survey. Below are the tables with the percentages for each response:

Table 17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My superintendent seems to build and mend relationships easily.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. All numbers are shown as percentages with 39 participants in pre survey and 29 participants in post survey.
Overall, the principals and the administrative assistants viewed their superintendent (in both surveys) as able to build and mend relationships easily, with over 74% agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement. However, in the strongly agreeing category, there was a drop from 44% in the pre-survey to 34% in the post-survey. In addition, an additional decrease in superintendent ability to build and mend relationships easily was noted across the course of the survey. This number went from 4% who disagreed in the first survey to 11% who disagreed on the final survey.

Table 18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. All numbers are shown as percentages with 39 participants in pre survey and 29 participants in post survey.

The principal and administrative assistants’ view of the superintendents as compassionate and sensitive leaders fell in the strongly agree and agree categories across both surveys from 85% in the initial survey to 79% in the last survey. There was also an increase in principals and administrative assistants disagreeing that their superintendent was a compassionate and sensitive leader from 2% in the initial survey to 7% in the final survey.
Table 19

*Pre- and Post-OSLI Principal and Administrative Assistant Survey about their superintendent*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Notes.* All numbers are shown as percentages with 39 participants in pre survey and 29 participants in post survey.

The superintendents’ abilities to balance work and personal life from the view of the principals and administrative assistants stayed consistent with 69% agreeing or strongly agreeing that superintendents had a good balance. In addition, there was a move from 13% disagreeing in the first survey that their superintendent had a good balance between personal and work life to 0% disagreeing in the final survey. The response of “neither” to the question of how well superintendents balance of work and life went from 18% in the pre survey to 31% in the final survey.

Over half of the open ended responses from the principals and the administrative assistants indicated that these individuals noticed an improvement among their respective superintendents over the course of the year in regard to leadership of the district. In particular, a theme that emerged was one of reflection with several of the respondents stating that their superintendent was reflecting more as a leader and looking to improve on weaknesses in general. The coding for the theme of reflection as a leader included terms such as *looking back*, *reflection*, and *more and more self-awareness*. A response in one of the surveys pointed out that his superintendent was, “beginning to understand his weaknesses,” while another respondent stated that his superintendent was learning from past mistakes and continuing to make better
decisions. Over one-third of the respondents discussed the importance of communication skills and relationship building between superintendents, their staff and their community. One of the respondents stated that her superintendent was listening to staff more (after participating in OSLI), which helped in communications. Another stated that her superintendent interacted more with students and staff as a result of participation in OSLI. In addition, another survey response noted that the superintendent was now meeting with more people in the district to listen to concerns and to make decisions for the betterment of the district.

**Research Question 2** To what extent do participants of OSLI gain professional growth through exemplary best practices in leadership training experiences and modeling?

While the first question for this study focused on the individual superintendent and his/her personal growth while participating in the OSLI, the second research question sought to find answers on how the superintendent grew professionally due to participation in the OSLI. First and foremost in regard to professionalism is the ability of a superintendent to move a district forward utilizing best practices from leadership training. Thus, Table 20 recounts how superintendents rated the importance of developing leadership skills.

**Table 20**

Pre- and Post-OSLI Superintendent Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre 82 Post 100</td>
<td>Pre 18 Post 18</td>
<td>Pre 18 Post 18</td>
<td>Pre 18 Post 18</td>
<td>Pre 18 Post 18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Notes.* All numbers are shown as percentages with 28 participants in pre survey and 26 participants in post survey. There were a total 28 participants in the OSLI program.
100% percent of the superintendents surveyed strongly agreed at the end of the OSLI that it is critical for them to take time to develop leadership skills. This number rose from 82% who strongly agreed in first survey.

Table 21

*Pre- and Post-OSLI Superintendent Survey*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I am a resourceful leader who uses tax monies for my district efficiently.</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Notes.* All numbers are shown as percentages with 28 participants in pre survey and 26 participants in post survey. There were a total 28 participants in the OSLI program.

The finances of a district are critical for all superintendents. At the end of the OSLI program 100% of the superintendents agreed or strongly agreed that they were resourceful leaders using tax money in the district efficiently.

Table 22

*Pre- and Post-OSLI Superintendent Survey*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My staff is comfortable with me as a leader.</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Notes.* All numbers are shown as percentages with 28 participants in pre survey and 26 participants in post survey. There were a total 28 participants in the OSLI program.
By the last survey of the institute, the superintendents agreed or strongly agreed at a rate of 92% that their staff was comfortable with them as a leader. This was an increase from 79% in the initial survey on the same question.

Table 23

Pre- and Post-OSLI Superintendent Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. All numbers are shown as percentages with 28 participants in pre survey and 26 participants in post survey. There were a total 28 participants in the OSLI program.

As Table 23 indicates, the OSLI program proved relevant to the learning of the superintendents as leaders, with over 92% in both surveys agreeing or strongly agreeing that the “ideas and concepts presented at OSLI” held meaning for them.

Table 24

Pre- and Post-OSLI Superintendent Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. All numbers are shown as percentages with 28 participants in pre survey and 26 participants in post survey. There were a total 28 participants in the OSLI program.
As shown in Table 24, the superintendents who were agreeing or strongly agreeing that they made relationship-building among community members a priority increased from 64% in the first survey to 81% in the final survey.

**Open-Ended Responses**

**Session One**

According to the open-ended responses provided, two main reasons spurred superintendents to sign up for the OSLI program. The first was to grow professionally as a leader; almost 50% of the superintendents stated this as the main reason they chose to attend the OSLI. The other half of the superintendents responded on the survey that they participated in the OSLI program due to hearing positive comments from other past participants about the value of the program to their career professionally. At the end of the program, 90% of the superintendents, in responding to the question of what they gained from the OSLI program, stated that improved self-awareness as a leader and the ability to reflect on that leadership in their interactions with others was the biggest benefit. When superintendents were asked at the end of the program; “Has the OSLI program made you a better leader? Please explain,” the comments stayed consistent with this theme of increased self-awareness as a leader and how leadership affects others. Respondents also commented that they were better leaders through increased collaboration with the administrative staff of the district.

**Session Two**

During the second session of the OSLI program, an open-ended survey was, again, given to the superintendents. They were queried as to the ways in which they were gaining professionally from the OSLI in session two. 75% of the respondents commented on the 360 evaluation and how beneficial it was to them as a leader. Statements included that the 360
pointed out individual superintendent strengths and weaknesses as perceived by each superintendent’s board members and staff. Superintendents stated, too, that the 360 gave them more insight into their leadership skills and was a helpful way to find out how they were perceived by staff and board members. The theme of increased self-awareness of the leadership style and its impact on a district continued to emerge in session two. In addition, when superintendents were asked to relate the most interesting points they gleaned from session two, they returned to the 360 feedback and also listed Tuckman’s model of forming, storming, norming, and performing. Tuckman’s model proved valuable to the superintendents as they perceived it as a way to figure out how to handle each of these stages in their daily work. The last theme that emerged from session two was to manage energy level, not time.

**Session Three**

Two major themes developed from the surveys taken by superintendents during the third OSLI session. First was the theme of change style, and, in particular, how some superintendents change their style of leadership depending on the situation. Included in this theme is the impact of change in leadership style on others in the superintendent’s district. Along with change style, conflict style was the other theme that emerged. Participants noted the importance of realizing one’s own conflict style and how to deal with others who might have different conflict styles. Perception is also tied to one’s conflict style, so that awareness was relevant in the superintendents’ responses. Since conflict is on-going in the job of superintendent, understanding of conflict style and its implications is crucial for school district leaders. Similar responses were given when the superintendents were asked how the third session improved their skills as leaders. Survey results focused on the importance of understanding both change and conflict style, while keeping in mind the styles of others in the organization.
Follow-up interview following the third session revealed that participants grew in self-awareness of their respective leadership styles and how each style impacts others in the organization. Participants also gained insight into how they were perceived as leaders to others. The final theme that emerged from the interviews dealt with the conflict model and the realization that conflict will always be around to some degree as part of the role of superintendent.

Survey Results from Principals and Administrative Assistants

The following tables delineate responses from principals and administrative assistants regarding elements pertinent to research question number two.

Table 25

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I believe it is critical for superintendents to take time to develop leadership skills.</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe it is critical for superintendents to take time to develop leadership skills.</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. All numbers are shown as percentages with 39 participants in pre survey and 29 participants in post survey.

In response to the statement: “I believe it is critical for superintendents to take time to develop leadership skills,” 90% of the principals and administrative assistants strongly agreed, compared to only 66% who strongly agreed in the last survey. The agree category on the Table 25 went up from 8% in the initial survey to 24% in the final survey. In addition, there was a slight increase in the strongly disagree category regarding the necessity of a superintendent
development skills from 2% strongly disagreeing in the pre survey to 7% disagreeing in the last survey.

Table 26

Pre- and Post-OSLI Principal and Administrative Assistant Survey about their superintendent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My superintendent has strong leadership skills.</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. All numbers are shown as percentages with 39 participants in pre survey and 29 participants in post survey.

The principals and administrative assistants who took the survey were consistent in that over 92% in both the pre and post surveys believed that their superintendent had strong leadership skills.

Table 27

Pre- and Post-OSLI Principal and Administrative Assistant Survey about their superintendent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My superintendent is a decisive leader.</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. All numbers are shown as percentages with 39 participants in pre survey and 29 participants in post survey.

As Table 27 shows, 90% or more of principals and administrative assistants agreed or strongly agreed in both the pre and post-surveys that their superintendent was decisive as a leader both. The numbers in the strongly agree category increased from 46% in the initial survey 59% in the final survey.
Table 28

Pre- and Post-OSLI Principal and Administrative Assistant Survey about their superintendent

My superintendent is a resourceful leader when it comes to using tax dollars efficiently.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. All numbers are shown as percentages with 39 participants in pre survey and 29 participants in post survey.

The survey respondents in both surveys believed that their superintendent is resourceful when using tax dollars efficiently with 90% or more in both surveys agree or strongly agree that their superintendent is efficient with money in their district. However, in the neither agree or disagree category on Table 28 question on a resourceful leader financially, the pre survey was at 2% neither while the final survey had a 10% in the neither agree or disagree category.

Table 29

Pre- and Post-OSLI Principal and Administrative Assistant Survey about their superintendent

My superintendent has no problem with confronting problem employees.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. All numbers are shown as percentages with 39 participants in pre survey and 29 participants in post survey.

The principals and the administrative assistants surveyed were asked to comment on their respective superintendent’s ability to confront problem employees. This was measured at both
the beginning of the program and at the end. Percentages increased from 74% agreeing or strongly agreeing in the first survey to 83% in the same two categories in the final survey.

Table 30

Pre- and Post-OSLI Principal and Administrative Assistant Survey about their superintendent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. All numbers are shown as percentages with 39 participants in pre survey and 29 participants in post survey.

When asked if their superintendent are straightforward, no-nonsense leaders, the respondents agreed or strongly agreed at a rate of 76% in the initial survey to 90% in the last survey on the same question in the same categories.

Table 31

Pre- and Post-OSLI Principal and Administrative Assistant Survey about their superintendent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. All numbers are shown as percentages with 39 participants in pre survey and 29 participants in post survey.
The survey results were up 13% in the last survey to 90% agreeing or strongly agreeing that staff members were comfortable with their superintendent as a leader. Implied in this response is that staff are comfortable with the leadership style of their respective superintendent.

Table 32

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre</strong></td>
<td>51</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post</strong></td>
<td>62</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Notes.* All numbers are shown as percentages with 39 participants in pre survey and 29 participants in post survey.

In both surveys, participants considered their superintendents to be strong financial leaders in the district, with 94% agreeing or strongly agreeing across both surveys.

Table 33

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre</strong></td>
<td>59</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post</strong></td>
<td>50</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Notes.* All numbers are shown as percentages with 39 participants in pre survey and 29 participants in post survey.

As Table 33 indicates, exactly 90% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed in both surveys that their respective superintendent “maintains strong positive relationships with the vast majority of their board” members.
Table 34

Pre- and Post-OSLI Principal and Administrative Assistant Survey about their superintendent

My superintendent spends a lot of time building relationships with their staff.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. All numbers are shown as percentages with 39 participants in pre survey and 29 participants in post survey.

Table 34 demonstrates that, among the principals and administrative assistants surveyed, 62% or more agreed or strongly agreed in both surveys that their superintendent spends much time building relationships with their staff members.

In response to the question: “Did you believe that over the course of this school year your superintendent has become a better leader? Please explain,” the principals and administrative assistants surveyed stated that their superintendent had become a better leader throughout the year with a myriad of reasons for the improvement. The themes of communication, leadership, and reflection all rose to the top in reference to the aforementioned question. The codes used for communication included listening, telling, interaction, feedback, and meetings. Some of the reasons given for communication improvement were that the principals and administrative assistants observed their respective superintendents doing an improved job of listening to and interacting with staff, students, and community members.

The leadership theme codes in these same responses included the terms leader, leadership, positive change, and moving forward. One of the respondents noted observing her superintendent to have a stronger desire to be better personally, professionally, and as an organizational leader. Another respondent stated that his superintendent had become more
assertive, demonstrating better confidence in decision making. Yet another respondent stated that his superintendent was paying closer attention to the input of principals.

In terms of reflection, codes of *mindful of self, reflection, and growth* provided a means for coding data. One individual responded that his superintendent had become more mindful and had discussed weaknesses from 360 feedback. Another respondent saw continued self-reflection in her superintendent as a result of OSLI participation. In addition, when respondents were asked: “Did you notice a difference in leadership style or characteristics over the course of the school year from your superintendent? Please explain,” 16 of 22 said “yes”; the other six saw no change in leadership style over the superintendent’s tenure in the OSLI. For those who responded, “yes,” their explanations revolved around the following themes: superintendent is more confident in decision making; superintendent has better communication with school employees and community in particular; superintendent has become a better listener, and the superintendent has developed the ability to give up some of the control and now includes other administrators in the decision making process.

**Research Question 3** In what ways, if any, has the OSLI program supported superintendents in developing a leadership team designed to integrate continuous improvement of the organization and in student achievement?

The purpose of research question three was to try to determine if the superintendent participating in the OSLI program was able to bring the information back to the leadership team of the district in order to help the district improve student achievement.
According to Table 35, the superintendents in each survey agreed or strongly agreed at over 95% that participation in the OSLI program would have a positive benefit to their school district.

At the end of their participation in the OSLI program, 31% of the superintendents strongly agreed that there is a gap between their leadership skills and the demands of their job. This is compared to 0% that strongly agreed with the same statement in the initial survey. In addition, in the pre-survey, 36% of superintendents disagreed that there was a gap and 4%
strongly disagreed that there was a gap between their leadership skills and the demands of the job. In the final survey, 0% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.

Table 37

Pre- and Post-OSLI Superintendent Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall, I have strong leadership skills as a superintendent.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strongly Agree</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. All numbers are shown as percentages with 28 participants in pre survey and 26 participants in post survey. There were a total 28 participants in the OSLI program.

As Table 37 indicates, in the post survey to the statement, “Overall I have strong leadership skills as a superintendent,” 89% of the superintendents agreed or strongly agreed compared to only 75% agreeing and none strongly agreeing in the initial survey.

Table 38

Pre- and Post-OSLI Superintendent Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I have no problem confronting problem employees.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strongly Agree</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. All numbers are shown as percentages with 28 participants in pre survey and 26 participants in post survey. There were a total 28 participants in the OSLI program.

According to findings represented in Table 38, superintendents surveyed in the final OSLI session strongly agreed or agreed at a rate of 77% that they had no problem in confronting
problem employees, compared to only 43% responding in the same categories on the same question in the initial survey during the first session of the OSLI program.

Table 39

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am a straightforward no-nonsense leader.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. All numbers are shown as percentages with 28 participants in pre survey and 26 participants in post survey. There were a total 28 participants in the OSLI program.

Table 39 demonstrates that, by the end of the OSLI program, 77% of superintendents agreed or strongly agreed that they were straightforward no-nonsense leaders. This percentage was up considerably from the 58% who saw themselves as “straightforward no-nonsense leaders” at the start of the OSLI program.

Included in the surveys of superintendents were questions designed to get at the ways in which the OSLI might help superintendents develop leadership teams in order to move the district forward in terms of student achievement and continuous improvement. For example, in session one, superintendents were queried as to “what will you implement in your district from session 1?” The major theme that emerged from responses to this question was the idea that superintendents must be “leaders” rather than “managers” to their staff members. The coding for response included terms such as leadership, management, leader, manager and managerial. One of the respondents noted that he wanted to move from a managerial tendency to a leadership tendency. In addition, another superintendent responded that he wanted to know his leadership style better in order to understand how that style impacts others in the district.
In session two, the same question was asked, “what will you implement in your district from session 2?” The overwhelming response to that question was to implement the 360 feedback as a means for improving the organization. The coding for the 360 feedback included 360, feedback, self-awareness, and team building. One superintendent stated, “360 changed things that I do,” while another respondent noted that the 360 feedback led to important discussion in his district. The third session response to the implementation question was heavily themed in the area of conflict style and how that impacts the district. The coding for the conflict style theme came from key words including conflict, implementation, change, and transition. One response from a superintendent on this theme was he would be better equipped to implement change and deal with conflict by knowing the conflict style of his school team. Others suggested that they would implement how to assess and manage conflict styles appropriately. Change and transition, which are important to continuous improvement in student achievement were also cited in several other superintendent responses.

In the final survey in regard to implementation, about one-half of superintendent respondents stated that they had become better leaders. These responses fell under the following codes: changing the way administrator meetings are run, leadership activities with board members, better able to confront problem employees, better interaction with administrator teams, activities with those administrators, and better interaction with others on a personal level.

Questions regarding developing the leadership team to improve student achievement were asked after each of the four sessions by phone interview with the researcher. Superintendents stated that improvement of leadership skills and student achievement in their district were their main reasons for participating in the OSLI program. Several superintendents implemented 360 tool in their districts in order to gain feedback for the principals as leaders.
Three of the superintendents stated that they used some of the activities from the OSLI program and incorporated the activities for staff development. One superintendent looked at the way his district administrators dealt with conflict and tried to help them manage that in a constructive way. Yet another superintendent shared that she had discussed, with staff, the different conflict styles and how this impacts staff members depending how they look at conflict themselves.

**Responses from Principals and Administrative Assistants**

Table 40

*Pre- and Post-OSLI Principal and Administrative Assistant Survey about their superintendent*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My superintendent spends a lot of time building relationships with his/her community.</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Notes.* All numbers are shown as percentages with 39 participants in pre survey and 29 participants in post survey.

As shown in Table 40, the principals and administrative assistants who took this survey believed at over 80% that their superintendent spends much time building relationships with his/her community. This number remained consistent in pre and post-surveys.

Table 41

*Pre- and Post-OSLI Principal and Administrative Assistant Survey about their superintendent*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My superintendent is a strong leader when it comes to guiding curriculum in my district.</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Notes.* All numbers are shown as percentages with 39 participants in pre survey and 29 participants in post survey.
Table 41 demonstrates that there was an increase from 69% to 82% in the final survey among principals and administrative assistants who agreed or strongly agreed that their superintendent is a strong leader in guiding curriculum.

In addition, like the superintendents, the principals and the administrative assistants were asked questions regarding implementation. Specifically, they were asked: “Were there any new measures implemented this year in your school district? If ‘yes’, please explain.” 17 responses were gathered to this open-ended question with 15 respondents stating that new measures had been implemented. These included strategic planning, curriculum, and storming-norming-conforming. When asked if their superintendents had discussed what they learned at OSLI with the principals and administrative assistants, 16 of 18 respondents indicated that their respective superintendents had discussed OSLI topics with them. Responses included discussions on personalities of different people, discussions about developing leadership skills, sharing of activities learned at OSLI, sharing of teamwork exercises, sharing of superintendent’s personal leadership style, explanation of the process used in decision-making (as sparked by the OSLI program), and discussions on how superintendent leadership-style impacts a school/district.

**Research Question 4** In what ways, if any, has the OSLI program as a cohort contributed to the building of relationships and professional networking opportunities among participants?
Table 42

Pre- and Post-OSLI Superintendent Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre</th>
<th>Post</th>
<th>Pre</th>
<th>Post</th>
<th>Pre</th>
<th>Post</th>
<th>Pre</th>
<th>Post</th>
<th>Pre</th>
<th>Post</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel strongly connected to this cohort.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. All numbers are shown as percentages with 28 participants in pre survey and 26 participants in post survey. There were a total 28 participants in the OSLI program.

Table 42 indicates that in the initial survey of superintendents during the first OSLI session only 64% agreed or strongly agreed that they felt a strong connection to the cohort. When the same question was asked at the end of the OSLI, that percentage increased to 92%.

Table 43

Pre- and Post-OSLI Superintendent Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre</th>
<th>Post</th>
<th>Pre</th>
<th>Post</th>
<th>Pre</th>
<th>Post</th>
<th>Pre</th>
<th>Post</th>
<th>Pre</th>
<th>Post</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My prior experiences in a cohort setting have been positive.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. All numbers are shown as percentages with 28 participants in pre survey and 26 participants in post survey. There were a total 28 participants in the OSLI program.

Data from Table 43 indicates that the experience of being part of a cohort stayed strong over the course of the OSLI program with over 85% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that their experiences as part of a cohort were positive.
Table 44

Pre- and Post-OSLI Superintendent Survey

My experience thus far in this cohort has been beneficial to my learning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre</th>
<th>Post</th>
<th>Pre</th>
<th>Post</th>
<th>Pre</th>
<th>Post</th>
<th>Pre</th>
<th>Post</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. All numbers are shown as percentages with 28 participants in pre survey and 26 participants in post survey. There were a total 28 participants in the OSLI program.

As demonstrated in Table 44, at a rate of 96% in both surveys, superintendents agreed that the cohort experience was beneficial to their learning throughout the OSLI program.

Table 45

Pre- and Post-OSLI Superintendent Survey

The ideas and concepts presented at OSLI stimulated conversation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre</th>
<th>Post</th>
<th>Pre</th>
<th>Post</th>
<th>Pre</th>
<th>Post</th>
<th>Pre</th>
<th>Post</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. All numbers are shown as percentages with 28 participants in pre survey and 26 participants in post survey. There were a total 28 participants in the OSLI program.

96% of the responding superintendents agreed or strongly agreed on both surveys that the ideas and the concepts presented at the OSLI program stimulated conversation.
Pre- and Post-OSLI Superintendent Survey

OSLI exercises and discussions were well prepared.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. All numbers are shown as percentages with 28 participants in pre survey and 26 participants in post survey. There were a total 28 participants in the OSLI program.

To the statement of whether or not the OSLI exercises and discussions were well prepared, the superintendents agreed or strongly agreed at 96% in both surveys that the OSLI programming was well prepared.

Table 46

Pre- and Post-OSLI Superintendent Survey

OSLI exercises and discussions were effective.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. All numbers are shown as percentages with 28 participants in pre survey and 26 participants in post survey. There were a total 28 participants in the OSLI program.

As Table 47 above delineates, 92% or more of the superintendents in both surveys agreed or strongly agreed that OSLI exercises and discussion were effective.

In regard to Research Question 4, superintendents provided open-ended responses to how the cohort aspect of the OSLI program contributed to their abilities to build relationships among participants and to network with other like-minded professionals. Overwhelmingly, the
superintendents stated that the number one benefit of the OSLI program was the connections they made within their cohort. Likewise, networking within the cohort and sharing ideas with others who faced similar challenges were cited as major benefits of OSLI. When asked, “Has the cohort program been beneficial to you as a learner? If yes, please explain,” a strong theme emerged that the superintendents’ shared experiences as well as the wealth of strategies the superintendents brought to each discussion also topped participants’ lists in regard to the benefits of participating in an OSLI cohort. Yet another theme that emerged was gratitude among superintendents for the opportunity to be among like-minded individuals who could relate to their personal and professional pressures. Other praise for the cohort model included responses lauding the opportunity to build relationships and friendships with superintendents from districts across the state; participants noted that these interactions with one another extended outside the program. One superintendent stated that the cohort model of OSLI provided a space in which he could spend time “Building relationships and learning from others on what I might implement into my district.”

Five of the six superintendents interviewed in the follow-up portion, commented OSLI’s chief strength as being its cohort model. Because of that cohort, they were able to collaborate with others and exchange ideas in what they considered to be a “safe” environment. Additional comments on this point included that conversations within the cohort were thought-provoking, and there was an appreciation for the opportunity to get to know the backgrounds of other superintendents. All these exchanges led the superintendents in cohort 29 to feel like they were not alone in the professional and personal struggles that go along with leading a district.

No questions were asked of the principals and administrative assistants regarding the cohort model. However, when these groups were asked to add any comments that they would
like to express about their superintendent’s participation in the OSLI program, four respondents’ comments fell under the theme that their superintendent was helped by being able to share problems with other superintendents.

**Summary**

The data collected over the course of the OSLI cohort 29 program was positive overall, with the main strength of the program being its cohort model, which enabled relationship-building and the exchange of ideas. In the final, open-ended survey response regarding what was the greatest strength of the OSLI program, almost 50% of the superintendents’ responses could be coded under the theme of the cohort; these codes included *cohort, relationships, networking, discussions with one another, and collaboration*. In response to Research Question 1, which probed for significant gains in self-understanding for personal growth, the data was relatively strong with over 33% of the superintendents responding that they improved and increased reflection of their leadership style and its impact on the school district thanks to their involvement in OSLI. A theme of personal growth also emerged with many superintendents looking for ways to become healthier through diet and exercise in order to achieve better balance between their work and personal lives. In addition, a third major theme was the strong emphasis superintendents placed on building relationships with family, staff members, and board members.

Research Question 2 measured participants’ perceived professional growth in regard to best practices in leadership training experiences and modeling. The facilitators from the Center for Creative Leadership and the BASA representatives who presented on leadership development received high marks for the training and modeling experiences they provided throughout the OSLI. 96% of the superintendents agreed or strongly agreed that the CCL provided relevant
topics for leadership development; furthermore, the learning goals of the program were clear and straight forward. The 360 assessment emerged as the most relevant theme in regard to perceived professional growth as a result of participation in the OSLI. Almost all of the superintendents responded that the 360 assessment was a valuable experience for insight into confirming or discovering strengths and weaknesses. Another theme derived from Research Question 2 was the superintendents’ appreciation for gaining self-awareness regarding their own personal change and conflict styles. Equally important was the awareness that others in their school district may have conflict styles different from that of the superintendent. The last major theme to emerge from Research Question 2 was that the superintendents found activities of value in the OSLI that they could take back and use with their administrative and/or teaching staff.

Research Question 3 asked how the OSLI program supported the superintendent in developing a leadership team designed to integrate continuous improvement of the organization and in student achievement. A major theme which emerged from this question was the difference between managing and leading a staff in a district. As was evident in responses to Research Question 2, superintendents brought back to their districts a number of strategies from the OSLI such as the 360 feedback activity, suggestions for how to be a better leader, and information regarding conflict styles. Over 75% of the superintendents stated that they brought something new back to their district to implement from ideas gained at the OSLI program. Many superintendents stated they brought back many different activities to use for their administrative and/or teaching staff. In interviews with some of the superintendents, it was noted that the 360 assessment was being implemented for principals, and conflict style discussions were being utilized among administrative and teaching staff.
The final research question dealt with the ways in which the OSLI program cohort contributed to the building of relationships among participants and to what extent being enrolled into a network of professionals committed to building stronger learning communities impacted the superintendents. The majority of superintendents (90%) agreed or strongly agreed that they felt connected to the cohort, and over 95% agreed or strongly agreed that the cohort was beneficial for their learning in the program. Over 95% of superintendents believed the cohort stimulated ideas and discussion. When asked about the most significant strength of the program, over 90% of the responses cited the cohort with its opportunities for building relationships and sharing ideas. When asked if they would recommend the OSLI program to other superintendents, 100% responded they would recommend it citing the main reasons for participating as building better leadership skills and networking with fellow superintendents.

The data, along with the open ended responses of surveys and interviews, demonstrated that the OSLI program is effectively achieving its goals of building and supporting leadership among superintendent participants. However, it must be noted that the OSLI program is a voluntary leadership cohort. Therefore, results of the OSLI program may have been skewed in a positive direction due to the fact that particular characteristics—that are in keeping with the goals of OSLI—may drive a specific group of superintendents to participate in the program. The final chapter of this survey strives to answer this question of the overall effectiveness of the program.
CHAPTER V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The goal of this study was to determine the effectiveness of the Ohio School Leadership Institute. The study took place over the course of the 2014-2015 school year and included 28 superintendents from across Ohio. The participants met in Columbus on four different occasions for two and one-half day sessions. The Institute is sponsored by the Buckeye Association of School Administrators and has been in operation since February 1994. Since the inception of the OSLI program, nearly 800 Ohio School leaders have completed the program. The OSLI was originally funded by the Ohio Legislature (from 1993-2009) and continues to be free-of-charge to participants due to the previous support from the state legislature and additional support from BASA. As noted in Chapter One, Orr (2007) states: “Superintendents are interested in their professional growth and development, but resources available seem to be insufficient” (p.328). Thanks to the OSLI, neither the financial nor the professional development resources are lacking for superintendents in the state of Ohio; however, Orr’s point is well taken in that a dearth of such programs exists, nationwide, for active superintendents. This study of the OSLI, and its potential benefits, could conceivable spur other states to replicate the OSLI model and fill the need for professional development among superintendents as noted in Orr’s research.

What follows is a review of the study along with recommendations for future research in this area.

Review of the Study

As Orr (2007) points out, the leadership pressures of public superintendents in the United States are growing. Likewise, the push for better leadership in schools is not only integral to the U.S. but to other countries as well. The goal of the OSLI program, then, in simple terms, is to help superintendents to become better leaders in each of their districts. More specifically, the
Institute looks to improve the superintendent’s qualities and skills in the following areas: 1) gain by personal growth through a better understanding of self; 2) grow professionally through exposure to exemplary leadership training experiences and modeling; 3) develop a leadership team in each school district to integrate continuous improvement and student achievement; 4) network through a cohort setting with like-minded professionals who are committed to building stronger learning communities. The longevity of the OSLI, along with the number of participants in the program over the past 21 years bodes well for the Institute; still, until this point, there has never been a study to gauge the effectiveness of the program as a whole. This study gained a significant amount of data as seen in the previous chapter on the reactions to the OSLI program from both the superintendents as participants, as well as principals and administrative assistants who were able to give their feedback as to whether or not they changes in their superintendents’ approaches to leadership as a result of being a part of the OSLI program.

As the previous chapters indicate, 28 superintendents participated in the 2014-15 OSLI in the program. The Institute can take up to 30 superintendents per its yearly programming; however, for various reasons, some superintendents may withdraw over the course of the year. This was not the case in the 2014-15 program. At the start of the study 28 participants began the program, with 26 superintendents finishing, two superintendents were forced to leave OSLI due to unforeseen circumstances in each of their districts. The professional experience of the superintendents participating in the program ranged from 1 year to 32 years. However, 26 of the superintendents had five or fewer years in the role as superintendent. The number of years in education for the cohort was much higher with 25 of the superintendents having 16 or more years in education, while the highest number of years’ experience was 43, see Table 1. Still, the
majority of superintendents (13) fell within the 16-20 year range for experience in education. The size of the school district of each superintendent ranged from 400 students to 8,000. The student enrollment range of 1001-1500 is where the majority of the superintendents (11) fell (as shown in Table 2).

As previously noted, the OSLI is coordinated and financed by the Buckeye Association of School Administrators, which contracts with the Center for Creative Leadership, based out of Greensboro, North Carolina. The CCL provides two facilitators for each of the four sessions of the OSLI program; these facilitators lead the presentation of information, the discussions, and the activities. In addition, the CCL administers the 360 assessment for each superintendent, which is given to board members and staff members of each superintendent.

The study, itself, included four surveys of superintendents, during each of the OSLI sessions (October 2014-April 2015); four follow-up interviews with six superintendents who were chosen through a stratified random sampling of the 28 superintendent participants; and two surveys (one pre and one post) of administrative assistants and principals who serve under the superintendents in the program. Each of the 28 superintendents at the four OSLI program sessions returned every survey, with 39 and 29 surveys, respectively returned from the pre and post surveys distributed to administrative assistants and principals.

**Discussion**

**Research Question 1** To what extent do participants of OSLI obtain personal growth by gaining significant self-understanding?

Over one-third of the superintendents responded in an open ended survey that they gained personally by achieving better self-awareness and reflective habits per their participation in the OSLI. One of the superintendents in the final survey commented that the process of looking at
oneself through self-evaluation helped with at-home and with work relationships. In the survey from the first OSLI session, an overwhelming majority of the superintendents stated they had learned more about themselves as a leader personally—including their own leadership traits and styles—which enabled them to better see how these traits and styles impacted people in their district. In the final survey, another superintendent responded that this increased self-awareness had led him to become a more effective team-builder within his district.

Ironically, though, these comments on improved self-awareness did not translate into increased focus on reflection, at least on a weekly basis among superintendents. As demonstrated in Table 11, when asked if they took time each week to reflect on leadership style and skills, the number of superintendents who agreed or strongly agreed with this statement went down from 39% to 27% over the course of the Institute. One could conclude from this table that there was very little to negative impact from the OSLI program in promoting self-reflection among superintendents on a weekly basis. However, one must be cautious in reading too much into this result, since the survey was completed during the end of the year, which is one of the busiest times for superintendents, possibly leaving less time for reflection. Still, this drop in reflective habits is worth some note and suggests that further research may be warranted.

An awareness of the need for improved work-life balanced emerged as a significant theme in this study with over 25% of superintendents responding that they would strive to achieve better stability across these areas. Some of the superintendents responded that they set personal goals at the end of each session to help better achieve that balance between the personal and professional. In comparing first session and last session responses on work/life balance (as depicted in Table 12), a decrease from 46% to 33% was noted. In other words, at the beginning of the OSLI, 46% agreed or strongly agreed that they had a good work/life balance; however,
that percentage dropped by 13% at the end of the program. At the same time, the open ended surveys reveal that the superintendents may actually have increased their awareness of the importance between personal and professional life, which may have resulted in their perception that their respective work/life balance was less desirable than previously thought.

When it came to an outside perspective on the work/life balance, 69% the administrative assistants and principals (across both surveys) agreed or strongly agreed that their superintendent had achieved a good personal/professional life balance (as seen in Table 19). Superintendents also noted that the OSLI program helped them set personal goals of getting in shape, taking care of their own health, focusing more on self. This may be an unintended consequence of the OSLI program, but the health of the leader of a district should not be overlooked. One of the superintendents interviewed stated he trying to run more and get in shape. He also spoke of his personal motivation to set goals to work with his administrative team in order to help them set up personal and professional goals so that the entire group might work together and hold one another accountable. This notion of accountability is a hallmark of the OSLI program, as, from the first session, each participant is paired up with an accountability partner so that each might check in with the other on personal and professional goals between each session. Thus, another unintended result of the OSLI program could be a trickle down of strategies, such as accountability partners, (for personal or professional means) within a district.

Beyond the work/life balance, superintendents were also surveyed about the balance that they had to achieve between their workload and their responsibilities within the OSLI cohort. Table 9 shows survey results regarding the balance between workload and OSLI. In the final survey 61% agreed or strongly agreed that their current workload as superintendents distracted them from the OSLI program. This represented a considerable jump from the 35% who agreed
or strongly agreed at the start of the program that professional workload distracted them from the
OSLI. Participants might have registered such a dramatic increase because of the awareness
gained regarding the burden of their workloads and the personal/professional balance. Another
possible reason for this increase could be the timing of the survey since it was given in April as
superintendents were facing the final month of the school year—typically a very hectic time.
Furthermore, the strong response as to the distraction from the program due to workload is
unavoidable in the position of being superintendent, since superintendents consistently must
manage diverse and competing needs, leaving little time for professional development (see Orr,
2007). Still this response is worth note, because of the insight it provides. Superintendents must
prioritize available professional development opportunities, and their school boards, staff, and
community constituents should support and encourage superintendents to participate in
professional development. Without this chorus of support, superintendents are likely to skew the
workload/professional development balance far in the favor of workload. In the end, that might
not be best for the district.

Along with balance, the personal relationships superintendents build with staff and board
members is a critical component of being a successful school leader. To this point, one of the
superintendents responded during the interview portion of the study that he was more reflective
of his behaviors and worked harder to see other views thanks to his time in the OSLI program.
The building of relationships is a personal growth issue, one that the OSLI stresses to its
participants. In response to whether or not they found it easy to build and mend relationships,
81% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed the end of the Institute that they possessed
these qualities (see Table 13), compared to 72% in the initial survey. While this is only an
increase of 9%, it potentially demonstrates superintendents’ response to the facilitators’ focus on
the importance of relationships throughout the entire Institute. In addition, as Table 15 shows, the participants recorded an increase from 35% in the initial survey to 54% in the final survey who agreed or strongly agreed that maintaining strong, positive relationships with board members was an integral part of being a successful school district superintendent. The 19% increase in this area might be due to the 360 assessment that the board members completed for their respective superintendent. As evidence, in the follow-up interviews with superintendents, one superintendent commented that the 360 assessment gave him a new perspective of how board and staff members perceived him. His comments included that he was unaware that at times he was perceived as being stand-offish and disengaged. Likewise, the 360 assessment was mentioned as a valuable learning tool by over half of the superintendents in the open-ended surveys.

On the topic of building relationships with staff members, little change was seen across surveys from the beginning to the end of the Institute. As Table 16 delineates, survey results indicated that 75% of superintendents agree or strongly agree that building relationships with staff members is a priority. These results remained consistent from the beginning to the end of the OSLI program. Administrative assistants and principals also responded to this particular survey item on a consistent basis with 82% in the initial survey and 74% in the final survey agreeing or strongly agreeing that their superintendent can build and mend relationships easily (as seen in Table 17). Therefore, it seems the OSLI program had little impact on the perceived importance of relationships with staff due to the high agreement rate on both surveys. Participants came into the Institute highly valuing the need to build relationships with staff members and exited with that same high value attached to attribute.
One aspect of building relationships with others comes from being compassionate and sensitive, since, as the OSLI teaches, staff members feel that compassionate and sensitive leaders help shape positive working and learning environments for staff and students. When superintendents were asked if each were a compassionate and sensitive leader, (as seen in Table 10), a sizable jump was noted from 60% agreeing or strongly agreeing that they were compassionate and sensitive leaders (according to the first survey) to 73% agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement in the last survey. When the administrative assistants and principals responded to the statement on compassion and sensitivity, 85% agreed or strongly agreed in the first survey and that agreement rate stayed high in the last survey as well with 79% agreeing or strongly agreeing that their respective superintendent was compassionate and sensitive. Despite the slight decrease between the two surveys, over one-half of the principals and administrative assistants surveyed noticed improvements in their superintendent’s responsiveness to staff, citing increased attributes of self-awareness, reflection, conflict management, and communication skills. In addition, Table 34 points out that 64% of the administrative assistants and principals in the first survey and 62% in second survey agreed or strongly agreed that their superintendent spent much time building relationships with staff members. Bredeson, Klar and Johannson (2011), pointed out the importance of building relationships in the role of being a superintendent.

When the superintendents were asked in an open-ended question what they gained personally from the OSLI program, over 50% responded that being part of the cohort was the most valuable aspect of the program. Some of the respondents stated that the personal relationships with other superintendents were priceless, and others noted that they felt comfortable and safe to call a peer in the program for advice on a personal level or with an issue they might have in their district. That feeling of comfort and safety mirrors the results of Orr’s
(2007) study, in which participants underscored the importance of a cohort in providing a safe place where a superintendent can express frustrations regarding the job. Yet another superintendent in this study stated she had made many friendships in the cohort. As noted in chapter two, being a superintendent can be a lonely position, with few people understanding the dynamics of the role; Kamrath and Brunner (2014) point out the loneliness of superintendents who feel they have no peers to talk with and few outlets, other than legal counsel, in which to find input on issues in their districts. However, fellow superintendents who have been in similar situations can provide support that is integral to those in the profession; thus, was the findings from the OSLI study. When the superintendents were given the final survey and asked what they had gained the most out of the OSLI program, the number one response was the connection with other superintendents and the friendships formed. While this response may be construed as “professional growth” per Research Question 2, it actually is also a part of personal growth and self-awareness, since the cohort was not limited to providing just professional advice or support.

Research Question 2 To what extent do participants of OSLI gain professional growth through exemplary best practices in leadership training experiences and modeling?

This research question focuses on what professional gains the superintendents made as leaders by participating in the Institute. In the survey given to the superintendents at the end of the program, 100% responded that they strongly agreed it is critical for superintendents to take time to develop leadership skills. As noted in chapter two, Bredeson and Kose (2007) pointed out the importance for leadership development among superintendents due to external policy forces and the responsibilities of policy implementation. In regard to the leadership and training experiences provided by the Institute, superintendents were asked specific questions about the efficacy of the CCL as facilitators of the program. The results of each of the survey questions
came back extremely positive for the Center for Creative Leadership. In both the initial survey and the last survey of the program, over 95% of the superintendents agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements: OSLI facilitators were effective in connecting with participants; superintendents understood the goals of the OSLI program; the learning goals of the OSLI program were clear and straightforward; the OSLI facilitators were well prepared; and each session was purposeful (See Tables 3-7).

When superintendents were asked what the number one weakness of the OSLI program was they noted that time away from the district was a drawback. However, this should not be seen as an indictment of the Institute. Instead, it speaks more directly to the time-constraints under which the typical superintendent works. For example, many superintendents followed the time weakness comment by stating that they believed that the time spent away from the district to attend the Institute was unavoidable due to the Institute’s cohort model. Furthermore, despite the time away, they still believed the program was worthwhile. The importance of taking time for leadership development of a superintendent was corroborated by the survey responses of the principals and administrative assistants as seen in Table 25: 90% or more of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that it was critical for superintendents to take the time to develop leadership skills.

When asked if they would recommend the OSLI program to other superintendents, 100% stated they would recommend the program to others as seen in Table 20. This is an important statistic to note. In chapter two, a longitudinal study of ten years done by Bredeson and Kose (2007) concluded that superintendents ranked professional development low on their list of priorities. Two possible reasons could account for this finding. One is that superintendents in the study had not been exposed to quality professional development and therefore saw little value
in professional development. Second, the time needed to get away from a district for quality professional development opportunities can be difficult to fit into a superintendent schedule; therefore, the “time away” factor may have led participants in the Bredeson and Kose study to deem professional development as unnecessary. Conversely, the OSLI program presented ideas and concepts which the superintendents found to be relevant to the superintendents with 96% of the participants agreeing or strongly agreeing to the relevant quality of the professional development (see Table 23). In addition, the OSLI program received very high marks across the board in the presentation of materials and program facilitation as is noted above. If those in the Bredeson and Kose study had been exposed to similar programming, perhaps the study results would have differed. A longitudinal study of the OSLI would provide a better indication as to this point and to the comparison in results with that of Bredeson and Kose.

When the superintendents were asked why they chose to participate in the OSLI program, almost 50% stated that their goal in participating was to become a better leader. In response to the open ended survey at the close of the OSLI program, 90% of the superintendents suggested they were better leaders due to an increased self-awareness and knowledge of how their leadership style impacts others in their district. In the survey from the second OSLI session, 75% of participants cited the benefits of the 360 assessment in increasing this self-awareness as leaders.

Another valuable learning experience to the superintendents in the program occurred during the third session that focused on change and conflict style. Many superintendents stated they were unaware how their conflict style was impacting others in their district until this session and they returned to their districts with increased awareness following session three. In one open-ended response, a superintendent noted the gains what he gained as a result of session
three: “The reflection on change and conflict styles was an incredible experience—getting to
know the other styles…we are in conflict mode a lot, it is a huge part of our jobs.”

While the results show some important professional leadership development for
superintendents, the survey from the principals and administrative assistants reveals a perception
that the leadership skills were there all along. Over 94% of the principals and administrative
assistants surveyed (as seen in Table 26) agreed or strongly agreed that their superintendent had
strong leadership skills—both at the beginning and the end of the OSLI program. An idea to
ponder from these results is this: do only superintendents with strong leadership skills apply to
the OSLI program? While this could be the case, a superintendent can only be a part of the OSLI
program one time in his or her career, and with around 800 superintendents having completed the
program since 1994, it is unlikely that almost all had strong leadership skills. Obviously, this
particular study was not designed to reveal that; however, the fact that the principals and
administrative assistants of all 28 superintendents viewed their respective superintendents as
solid leaders before and after the institute is interesting. One possibility would be: does merely
having the position of superintendent suggest strong leadership skills to a subordinate?

When the principals and administrative assistants were questioned if their superintendent
exhibited strong leadership when it comes to guiding curriculum in their district, there was an
increase from 69% agreeing or strongly agreeing with this notion at the beginning of the OSLI
program to 82% at the end of the OSLI program as can be seen in Table 41. Schechter (2011)
points out the importance of curricular leadership among superintendents, and responses from
this study indicate the influence of the OSLI in preparing superintendents to take leadership in of
guiding new curricular decisions.
In the final survey of principals and administrative assistants, they were asked if they believed over the course of this school year that their superintendent had become a better leader. Of the 23 open-ended responses, 21 stated that “yes,” their superintendent had become a better leader. There were many reasons given, but the top themes included improved communication with staff, better overall leadership, and increased attention to reflection. One of the respondents discussed the impact the 360 assessment had had on their superintendent and how that superintendent had shared the impact with his office staff and administrators. Principals and administrative assistants were also asked whether or not they saw a difference in leadership style or characteristics in their superintendent over the course of the Institute. 16 of the 22 respondents stated that “yes,” they had seen a difference in leadership style and characteristics in their respective superintendent. The main differences they noted were better communication, more confidence in decision making, and increased ability to give up some control in order to gain better input in the decision-making process.

**Research Questions 3** In what ways, if any, has the OSLI program supported superintendents in developing a leadership team designed to integrate continuous improvement of the organization and in student achievement?

As Table 35 indicates, the superintendents believed their participation in the OSLI program had a positive benefit to their school, with over 95% in both surveys agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement. At the beginning of the OSLI program 0% of the superintendents strongly agreed that they had strong leadership skills. However, in the final survey, as seen in Table 37, 12% of the superintendents strongly agreed they had strong leadership skills by the end of the program. Thus, increased confidence in leadership ability may have been one of the results of participation in the program. Superintendents need confidence
when leading others, and participation in the OSLI program may improve the confidence to lead. As is noted in chapter two, the work of Bredeson, Klar, and Johansson (2011) demonstrates that the U.S. accountability systems indicate superintendent leadership as a major factor in how a district responds to changes and increased demands for academic achievement. The way a superintendent delivers the message of change to a district can impact if that change is embraced for the good of the students or if it is fought against in order to maintain the status quo. Messages such as these must be delivered with confidence.

When superintendents were asked if they were believed there was a gap between their leadership skills and the demands of their job, 36% of the superintendents disagreed with this statement in the initial survey, while 31% agreed with this statement in the final survey. These results might be interpreted in two different ways. First, the OSLI program may have increased the perceived gap between leadership skills and the demands of the superintendency. However, a second interpretation might be that the superintendents were exposed to many different leadership skills and styles that they were not totally aware of at the start of the program; therefore, the gap was the result of this new knowledge. The second scenario is more likely to be true due to the positive responses given by superintendents regarding the OSLI program in its entirety.

One aspect of the role of leader is to support and initiate professional development among one’s own constituents. Thus, during the first session of the OSLI program, when the initial survey was given to superintendents, a question was posed as to what the superintendents would implement (if anything) from session one into their own districts. Here participants responded that they would share the notion of leadership versus management. In response to implementation ideas from session two, nearly all respondents indicated that they would utilize
some form of the 360 assessment in order to improve principal leadership in their district. In addition, one superintendent stated that the 360 evaluation was a “highlight” and that the 18 people who filled it out from his district gave him “great information . . . to plan for the future in the district.” Another superintendent responded about the value of the 360 in bringing to light that she is a perfectionist and that she needs to keep that in perspective and work on trying to mitigate its effects. In regard to the final session, 16 of the 23 superintendents who responded indicated that they would be implementing concepts, activities, or exercises from the OSLI program into their district in the future. The superintendent, who had already implemented elements from the OSLI program into his district, explained that OSLI caused him to change the way he ran administrative meetings; he now looked for more input. In addition, he had incorporated leadership activities for board members, felt better able to confront problem employees and was increasingly confident in interacting with administrative teams. He also had implemented activities with administrative teams built around leadership skills and felt better equipped to interact with staff members on personal level. Furthermore, two other superintendents stated they were using a 360 assessment for their principals, and three of the superintendents responded that they utilized some of the leadership activities from the OSLI program with staff. Additionally, one of the superintendents shared with his principals best practices in dealing with conflict, and yet another superintendent stated she used the conflict model with principals to show how the different styles impact one another in a school district.

In the final survey, administrative assistants and principals were asked if they had seen anything new implemented in their district as a result of their superintendent’s participation in the OSLI program. There were 17 responses to this question, and 15 noted new activities, ideas, or initiative that had been implemented in the district including strategic planning, new
curriculum, storming-norming-conforming, and discussion with staff on what superintendent at learned during his/her time at the OSLI program. Other responses to what was implemented included discussions on how to be a better superintendent, discussion of staff personalities, activity sharing, teamwork exercises, and inquiry into the different leadership styles of constituents within the district. One superintendent stated that he had a better perspective as to how to find ways to manage five different board members with different agendas. The strategies he gained came from talking with others in the cohort as well as using some of the ideas pointed out by the OSLI about how to deal more effectively with board members.

**Research Question 4** In what ways, if any, has the OSLI program as a cohort contributed to the building of relationships and professional networking opportunities among participants?

The cohort model is integral to the OSLI program. A superintendent since 2007, this researcher has witnessed anecdotal evidence from a variety of superintendents around the state of Ohio who have revealed that their connections to other superintendents can be traced back to their OSLI cohort experiences. The cohort becomes almost like a fraternity/sorority in many ways for the OSLI participants. In a study by Tucker (2005), addressed in chapter two, an unexpected outcome of a cohort includes the development of a caring environment that builds positive relationships. This strong connection among superintendents in the OSLI cohort is evident in the fact that 64% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing in the initial survey that they felt a strong connection to their cohort. This was followed by 92% agreeing or strongly agreeing at the end of the program that they felt connected as a cohort (see Table 42). The 28% jump from the first survey to the final survey represents a dramatic increase and is a testament to the team-building and relationships formed among members in the program. Likewise, as Table 43 demonstrates, when superintendents were asked if their experience in cohort settings has been
positive, 95% agreed or strongly agreed in the final survey. This marked a 10% increase on the same statement in the first survey regarding the cohort setting in session one. In addition, Table 44 shows that superintendents believed that the cohort was beneficial to aiding learning with 96% agreeing or strongly agreeing in both surveys. While this percentage regarding learning remained consistent over the two surveys, the difference came in the agree versus strongly agree categories; these numbers reversed with lower numbers in strongly agree during the first survey (46%) and higher numbers in strongly agree (69%) in the final survey at the program’s close. The strong connection to learning in the cohort corroborates the study by Evans and Couts (2011), mentioned in chapter two, where a group of graduate students believed, at a 98% rate, that being a part of a cohort helped their learning process (p.59). Furthermore, as pointed out by Laub (2010-11), contemporary superintendents can no longer function as autocrats; instead cooperative/participatory leadership should be the focus for superintendents.

As with the Likert-scale surveys, the open-ended response portions of all four surveys demonstrated very strong responses among participants in regard to the importance of the cohort model as provided through the OSLI. When queried about the strength of the OSLI program, superintendents cited the connections made with fellow superintendents in the OSLI network as the number one benefit of participation. Additional responses were coded under the cohort theme as the program’s chief strength. In particular, participants noted that the relationships that were formed helped them cope with the stress of the job, and hearing that others faced similar challenges helped to lessen the anxiety of their leadership roles. According to Shields (2010), superintendents need to work together, not in isolation. The OSLI program fosters this type of collaboration and support. Furthermore, the six in-depth follow-up interviews revealed that five of the six superintendents thought that the OSLI cohort and the relationships that they developed
within that cohort stood as the major strength of the program. One of the superintendents interviewed stated that the cohort always provided a positive venue in which to learn from others through feedback and the sharing of different perspectives on various topics. In 2005, Barnett, in a study of cohorts among graduate students, pointed out that it was difficult to transfer ideas from leadership cohort programs into practice in the workplace. However, most, if not all of the students in a leadership cohort at the college level would not be practicing superintendents; therefore, the OSLI program with its cohort of active superintendent participants provides a new lens at which to look at the potentialities of the learning and support that can be fostered in a cohort setting.

In a final note as to feedback on the OSLI cohort model, four additional responses from the principals and administrative assistants in the final survey corroborated the model’s benefits even further in that these respondents perceived that their respective superintendent “felt good about being able to share ideas with others in the cohort.” These comments, in particular, are interesting as they were unsolicited and showed up in the portion of the survey that allowed participants to add any other comments of their choosing. Thus, according to the survey and interview results from this study, the cohort setting of the OSLI is effective in helping superintendents work together, share ideas, and provide counsel to one another on a variety of professional topics. These findings also back up Orr’s 2007 study of six superintendents in a cohort leadership program. According to Orr’s findings, the cohort setting was beneficial—both personally and professionally—to participants. The same can be said for the OSLI cohort 29.

The role the Center for Creative Leadership plays in the OSLI program may be a key factor in why the cohort setting received such high marks as recorded in this study. In both surveys of superintendents, 94% or of them agreed or strongly agreed that the concepts presented
by the CCL facilitators stimulated conversation (see Table 45). In addition, when
superintendents were asked if the OSLI exercises and discussions were well prepared, once
again, 94% or more in both surveys responded that they agreed or strongly agreed with this
statement (see Table 46). In addition, as is noted earlier, 92% of superintendents in both surveys
agreed or strongly agreed that the OSLI exercises and discussions were effective (see Table 47).
All of these elements of the OSLI are under the purview of the CCL; thus, the CCL should be
given credit for its part in the effectiveness of these deliverables as part of the OSLI.

Conclusion

Overall, the data gathered in this research demonstrates that, at least for cohort 29, the
OSLI met its goals of providing effective leadership development among Ohio superintendents.
Participants gave credit to The Center for Creative Leadership for its role in providing and
facilitating programming (as seen in Tables 3-7). Furthermore, participants see cohort model as
being the number one strength and benefit of the program (see Table 43). Specifically, the
cohort model of the OSLI program provides a conduit for advice and discussion among
superintendents across the state. The strong cohort bonds cited by OSLI participants corroborate
the research of Evans and Couts (2011), who demonstrated more durable connections among
graduate students in cohort settings versus those in traditional learning environments. Likewise,
the findings regarding the benefits of the OSLI cohort model give further validity to the work of
Augustine-Shaw (2013) who cited face-to-face meetings of new superintendents in Kansas (with
mentor leadership) as a beneficial strategy in building networks within a professional
organization. Unlike these other studies, though, this study suggests the OSLI model with its
sustained professional development and goal setting (both personal and professional) over the
course of the year may be the best avenue for solidifying and sustaining these cohort relationships.

The personal growth of participants in the OSLI program revolved around two major components. First was growth in self-awareness of leadership style and skills. For example, one superintendent stated that the OSLI program helped him to refocus and to take a step back to look at himself professionally and personally. Second was the superintendents’ growth in self-awareness of the importance of personal health in achieving balance between work and family life. Here, one superintendents responded that he learned that he needed to refocus on taking care of himself and his family just as he takes care of his school district. In other words, superintendents can get so caught up in the dealing with board members, staff, students, and/or community members, that they lose focus in regard to the importance of their own families and wellbeing.

As with personal growth, this study demonstrated that this particular cohort grew professionally while participating in the OSLI. One superintendent stated that he would highly recommend OSLI to others due to fact that the organization helps participants identify professional strengths and weaknesses and then counsels participants on how to utilize that knowledge in moving a school district forward. The biggest professional benefits of the OSLI as cited by its participants are the 360 assessment and the cohort model. The 360 assessment enlightened participants into how they were perceived by their staff and board members. Likewise, the one-on-one coaching that accompanies the 360 assessment proved valuable to participants due to its confidentiality, personalized message, accountability measures, and its sustainability; participants knew they had someone to call on in the future if they needed help with a particular weakness. One superintendent explained that reviewing the 360 assessment
was a huge reinforcement in knowing which leadership skills he needed to develop. He also stated that the one-to-one coaching allowed him to tie strategies back to his local school district, “which was extremely beneficial.” As mentioned earlier, the cohort setting was also cited as beneficial for networking and the sharing of ideas.

Finally, in regard to the potential implementation of ideas and strategies learned during the Institute, the majority of superintendents responded positively. Specifically, the 360 assessment was implemented at the district-level by some superintendents as a means for helping principals build self-awareness of their leadership skills. Other superintendents indicated that they had changed the manner in which administrative meetings were run and had implemented OSLI-inspired leadership activities with other board members. Several superintendents also stated that they had better interaction with administrative teams thanks to strategies learned at OSLI and had even led their administrative teams in some of the OSLI leadership activities. Yet another superintendent added that the benefits of OSLI program were difficult to put into words, and that superintendents needed to experience the value of the program for themselves due to all of the intangibles that could not be captured in a study.

**Recommendations**

The first recommendation derived from this study would be to continue the OSLI program in the future due to the success of the program as suggested by data gathered from cohort 29. In addition, the OSLI (and others striving to replicate quality professional development for superintendents) should continue to utilize the cohort model, since, as Schechter (2011) explains, “The expertise of educational practitioners is a rich, barely tapped resource” (p.483). The cohort model adopted by the OSLI provides a space in which superintendent practitioners across the state of Ohio can share and gain information from one another as they
each are active in the profession. As one of the superintendents stated, the cohort experience is “absolutely priceless, priceless, I have liked other conferences I have gone to…. But [they were] nothing like this in spending the quality time with other superintendents.” And while this networking with other superintendents on professional and personal levels is key, the OSLI program is also beneficial to practicing superintendents by increasing their self-awareness, identifying their strengths and weaknesses, and aiding them in their implementation leadership development in their own district.

The success of the OSLI suggests that the Institute can serve as a model to other states that are contemplating developing professional development support programs for active superintendents. The dearth of programs in this area, the stress of the superintendent’s role, and the importance of education to society all point to the need for increased, quality professional development opportunities for leaders of school districts. In addition, board members, staff, and community constituents should support superintendents in their endeavors to engage in such opportunities. As this study indicates, superintendents feel a strong pull to devote much energy to their districts—at the expense of their own personal health and the stability of their work/family life. If superintendents are encouraged to participate in these endeavors, they may be more likely to do so. In the short term, this may mean time away from the district; however, in the long-run, the result may be a superintendent who has better personal/professional-life balance, improved self-awareness, additional leadership strategies, and a network of like-minded professionals who can help solve problems and move the district forward.

In addition, if entities beyond the OSLI look to implement such programming, it would behoove them to consider the funding issue. Thanks, in the past, to the Ohio State Legislature and currently to the Buckeye School Administrators Association, the OSLI is free to participants.
Lodging, meals, and programming are all covered. In other words, over the past two decades, these two entities have made superintendent leadership development a priority in the state of Ohio. In effect, they have carved out a space and the means within which this professional development can take place. Other states and entities interested in supporting professional development of superintendents would be wise to follow suit. The result is superintendents who are better informed, better connected, and, presumably, better able to lead.

**Future Research Opportunities**

A longitudinal study of the OSLI is warranted to determine if the findings here might be replicated among future participants in the program. Likewise, a longitudinal study of participants of cohort 29 or a case study of a select group of OSLI participants would provide interesting and relevant data pertinent to professional development among superintendents. For example, what might be the future career trajectory of OSLI participants? What might be the results within a district regarding the implementation of OSLI program elements? Another question might inquire into whether the impact of the OSLI the superintendent lasted over an extended period of time or if the program’s effects were limited. Still another question worth study is whether or not the cohort contact initiated during the OSLI program persisted throughout the superintendents’ careers. In addition, a question which could be explored would be to gauge how the culture or climate changed in a district where the superintendent attended OSLI.

Until further research is conducted into the OSLI that proves otherwise, the program now has empirical as well as anecdotal evidence that supports its effectiveness. BASA and the CCL have struck the appropriate balance in leadership training for superintendents via the OSLI by providing quality programming that promotes personal and professional reflection and growth within a supportive cohort environment.
References


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APPENDIX A

Institutional Review Board

Date: September 30, 2014

To: Dr. John Cindric

CC: Greg Denecker

RE: The Effectiveness of the Ohio School Leadership Institute

Project Expiration date: September 30, 2015

The University of Findlay Institutional Review Board (IRB) has completed its review of your project utilizing human subjects and has granted authorization. This study has been approved for a period of one year only. The project has been assigned the number 825.

In order to comply with UF policy and federal regulations, human subject research must be reviewed by the IRB on at least a yearly basis. If you have not completed your research within the year, it is the investigator’s responsibility to ensure that the Progress Report is completed and sent to the IRB in a timely fashion. The IRB needs to process the re-approval before the expiration date, which is printed above.

Understand that any proposed changes may not be implemented before IRB approval, in which case you must complete an Amendment/Modification Report.

Following the completion of the use of human subjects, the primary investigator must complete a Certificate of Compliance form indicating when and how many subjects were recruited for the study.

Please refer to the IRB guidelines for additional information. This packet can be obtained within blackboard under community section. Please note that if any changes are made to the present study, you must notify the IRB immediately. Please include that number on any other documentation or correspondence regarding the study.

Thank you very much for your cooperation. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (419) 434-5442 or email irb@findlay.edu.

Sincerely,

Susan W. Stevens, EdD., AT
Chair, Institutional Review Board
Cc: IRB Office
INTRODUCTION: The focus of this particular study is to discern whether or not the Ohio School Leadership Institute cohort leadership model presented by the Buckeye Association of School Administrators is effectively meeting its intended goals of supporting superintendents in becoming better leaders. The OSLI believes school districts can also benefit when superintendents are supported in both in their professional lives and personal lives, since participation in the program often leads to self-reflection of a participant’s current leadership style and traits. While much anecdotal evidence exists to support the notion that OSLI meets its goals, no data exists to corroborate this belief. Thus, this study sets out to answer the following questions:

- Do participants put research knowledge of becoming a better leader into practice?
- Has the cohort model helped participants to implement their new leadership knowledge into practice?
- How has OSLI contributed to the building of relationships among participants?
- And to what extent is the building of these cohort relationships crucial to a district’s success under a particular superintendent?

The main objective of the OSLI program is for the participants to gain a better understanding of themselves as leaders: participants should ultimately know the leadership style and leadership traits they possess upon completing the institute. In addition, participants are exposed to research based on current leadership practices and then are given a chance to reflect and incorporate those practices into their own district. The institute operates on the premise that the success of a superintendency is a precursor to the success of a school district. Buck (1991) argues that “Whatever the future holds for education in America in the 21st century, the superintendency is the position that will make it happen” (p. 311). As a result, “much has been written on the importance of increasing leadership capacity in schools and managed systems for leadership development; however, little focus has been given to creating conditions to facilitate the emergence of leadership” (Dickerson, 2012, p. 55).
PURPOSE OF THE STUDY: To determine the effectiveness of the OSLI program. If the program is deemed successful, the implications would be for more states to follow Ohio into an active leadership cohort for practicing superintendents and solidifies the importance of the program in Ohio.

DESCRIPTION OF STUDY PROCEDURES: The study will be conducted from October 2014 to June 2015. Surveys will be distributed to the superintendents at the start of the OSLI cohort during the first session and a follow-up survey will be distributed at the end of the cohort program. There will be a short survey during the 2nd and 3rd cohort meetings which will be open ended. Follow up interviews will occur with the six superintendents during each of the 4 OSLI cohort sessions which last 2.5 days each. In April or May (2015) each of the principals and secretaries would be sent a survey via email to complete to try and ascertain if the leadership institute led to learning transfer back to the home district. In addition, the six districts selected for the case study would have an interview take place in May or June (2015) with between 2-5 principals and the superintendent secretary interviewed to see what has changed over the year and what may change in the coming year, from ideas gained from the OSLI program.

TIME ASSOCIATED WITH STUDY: Superintendents: 1 hour for those completing the surveys only (15 minutes per survey X 4 surveys= 1 hour total); those who are participating in both the survey and the interview will have a maximum time commitment of three hours: 1 hour for survey completion and 2 hours for the interviews.

Total Estimated time for principals and administrative assistants: 30 minutes to complete the survey with a maximum time commitment of 1 hour to complete the survey.

POTENTIAL RISKS: Participants will be surveyed or interviewed for responses. Many of these responses may occur during the participant normal work day, which might precipitate a slight economic risk to each school district due time lost at work. Most participants, however, will be surveyed and interviewed during their time at the Institute during breaks or in the evening hours when there are no formal meetings being conducted. Principals and administrative assistants could feel stress or worry about job security due to taking a survey pertaining to the leadership of their superintendent.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS: The study will provide specific information on cohort professional development models for active superintendents. In particular, the data from this study will inform educators on best practices for developing leadership skills for superintendents. This information, in turn, has the potential to improve the quality of school leadership in Ohio and across the nation. The benefit to the school district to improve the leadership role for their superintendent. In addition, administrative assistants and principals benefit from having the superintendent reflect on their leadership skills and become a better leader to work with on a daily basis.

PROJECT ALTERNATIVES TO PARTICIPATION IN THE STUDY: Individuals may decline to participate. Individuals who consent to participate will be asked to sign consent and release forms.
CONFIDENTIALITY OF DATA: Only Greg Denecker will have the access to raw data. In addition, only aggregate data will be used in the study. Interviewee and survey details will be kept on a confidential list and given a number to help ensure confidentiality.

COSTS AND/OR COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATION: Participants will not be compensated.

CIRCUMSTANCES FOR DISMISSAL FROM THE STUDY: If one of the OSLI program participants were no longer in the OSLI cohort or no longer serving as a superintendent, then that person would be excluded from the study.

COMPENSATION FOR INJURY: Study should pose no threat to physical injury from completing a survey or an interview.

CONTACT PERSONS: For more information concerning this research, please contact PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR Dr. John Cindric at OFFICE TELEPHONE NUMBER 419-434-4682. If you believe that you may have suffered a research related injury, contact PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR Dr. John Cindric at OFFICE TELEPHONE NUMBER 419-434-4682 or email Cindric@findlay.edu. If you have further questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact:

Sue Stevens
IRB Chairperson
The University of Findlay
Findlay, OH 45840
419 434-5442
stevenss@findlay.edu
VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION: Participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to participate or to withdraw at any time, for whatever reason. In the event that you do withdraw from this study, the information you have already provided will be kept in a confidential manner. Your decision whether or not to participate will not prejudice any future relationships with The University of Findlay. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without prejudice.

CONSENT: Federal regulations require precautionary measures to be taken to insure the protection of human subjects on physical, psychological, social, and other issues. This includes the use of “informed consent” procedures.

I, _______________________________ (PRINTED NAME OF SUBJECT) have been adequately informed regarding the risks and benefits of participating in this study. My signature also indicates that I can change my mind and withdraw my consent to participate at any time without penalty. Any and all questions I had about my participation in this study have been fully answered. I understand I will receive a copy of this consent form for my records.

SUBJECT SIGNATURE: ___________________________________________ DATE

I have witnessed the consent process and believe the subject has been fully informed, understands the research study, and has agreed to participate in the study.

WITNESS PRINTED NAME: _________________________________________

WITNESS SIGNATURE: ____________________________________________ DATE
August 11, 2014

Dear OSLI Participant,

You are invited to participate in a study of The Effectiveness of the Ohio School Leadership Institute (OSLI). I hope to learn without prejudice the effectiveness of the OSLI program in helping superintendents become better leaders and to apply this leadership knowledge into practice back in their own school district. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you have chosen to participate in the 29th OSLI cohort program for the 2014-2015 school year. In addition, 2-5 (depending on size of your district) of your principals and your administrative assistant will be emailed surveys about your leadership in your district. If you decide to participate, please complete the enclosed survey. Your return of this survey is implied consent. The survey is designed to determine the effectiveness of the OSLI program. If the program is deemed successful, the implications would be for more states to follow Ohio into an active leadership cohort for practicing superintendents and solidifies the importance of the program in Ohio. It will take about one hour for you to complete all of the surveys over the course of the cohort program in 2014-2015. If you are selected to be one of the six superintendents to be randomly selected for a more in depth case study with interviews. No benefits accrue to you for answering the survey, but your responses will be used to determine the effectiveness of the OSLI leadership cohort program. Any discomfort or inconvenience to you derives only from the amount of time taken to complete the survey or possible interviews.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will not be disclosed. Your decision whether or not to participate will not prejudice any future relationships with The University of Findlay. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without prejudice.

If you have any questions, please ask. If you have any additional questions later, contact Dr. John Cindric, 419-434-4682 or email cindric@findlay.edu.

Thank you for your time.
Sincerely,
Greg Denecker
Doctoral Student at The University of Findlay
419-358-5901
Deneckerg@blufftonschools.org
August 11, 2014

Dear Principal or Administrative Assistant,

You are invited to participate in a study of The Effectiveness of the Ohio School Leadership Institute (OSLI). I hope to learn without prejudice the effectiveness of the OSLI program in helping superintendents become better leaders and to apply this leadership knowledge into practice back in their own school district. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because your superintendent has chosen to participate in the 29th OSLI cohort program for the 2014-2015 school year. If you decide to participate, please complete the enclosed survey. Your return of this survey is implied consent. The survey is designed to determine the effectiveness of the OSLI program. If the program is deemed successful, the implications would be for more states to follow Ohio into an active leadership cohort for practicing superintendents and solidifies the importance of the program in Ohio. It will take less than one hour for you to complete all of the surveys over the course of the OSLI cohort program in 2014-2015. If you are selected to be one of the six school districts to be randomly selected for a more in depth case study with interviews and the time could be no more than 3 hours. No benefits accrue to you for answering the survey, but your responses will be used to determine the effectiveness of the OSLI leadership cohort program. Any discomfort or inconvenience to you derives only from the amount of time taken to complete the survey or possible interviews.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will not be disclosed. Your decision whether or not to participate will not prejudice any future relationships with The University of Findlay. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without prejudice.

If you have any questions, please ask. If you have any additional questions later, contact Dr. John Cindric, 419-434-4682 or email cindric@findlay.edu.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Greg Denecker
Doctoral Student at The University of Findlay
419-358-5901
Deneckerg @blufftionschools.org
School district name: ______________________________
How long have you served as a superintendent in your current district? ______________
Total years as a superintendent: ________________________________________________
Total number of years employed in education: ___________________________________
How many principals are in your district? _______________________________________

Please rate the following statements on a Likert scale with 5 strongly agree to 1 strongly disagree.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree/disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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<td>3</td>
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</table>

1. I believe my participation in the OSLI program will have a positive benefit to my school district._____
2. I am concerned that my workload may distract me from the OSLI program._____
3. It is critical for superintendents to take time to develop leadership skills._____
4. I understand the goals of the OSLI program._____
5. I believe there is a gap between my leadership skills and the demands of my job._____
6. Overall, I have strong leadership skills as a superintendent._____
7. I take time each week to reflect on my leadership style and skills. _____
8. I am a decisive leader. _____
9. I am a resourceful leader who uses tax monies for my district efficiently. _____
10. My prior experiences in a cohort setting has been positive. _____
11. My experience thus far in this cohort has been beneficial to my learning. _____
12. I feel strongly connected to this cohort. _____
Please rate the following statements on a Likert scale with 5 strongly agree to 1 strongly disagree.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree/disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
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13. I have no problem confronting problem employees. _____

14. I find it easy to build and mend relationships. _____

15. I am a compassionate and sensitive leader. _____

16. I have a good balance between work and personal life. _____

17. I am a straightforward no nonsense leader. _____

18. My staff is comfortable with me as a leader. _____

19. The learning goals of the OSLI program are clear and straightforward. _____

20. The ideas and concepts presented at OSLI stimulated conversation. _____

21. The ideas and concepts presented at OSLI encouraged independent thinking. _____

22. OSLI facilitators were well prepared. _____

23. The OSLI facilitators were effective in connecting with the participants. _____

24. OSLI exercises and discussions were well prepared. _____

25. OSLI exercises and discussions were effective. _____

26. The subject matter covered at OSLI was presented in a stimulating way. _____

27. Each OSLI session was purposeful. _____

28. Ideas and concepts presented at OSLI were relevant to my learning as a superintendent leader. _____

29. I maintain strong positive relationships with the majority of my board members. _____

30. I make building relationships with my staff a priority. _____

31. I make building relationships with my community members a priority. _____

32. I provide strong leadership in curriculum for my district. _____
Open Ended Responses

1. What is the main reason you signed up for the OSLI cohort program?

2. What do you hope to gain professionally from the OSLI program?

3. What do you hope to gain personally from the OSLI program?

4. From the first session what were the 3 most interesting things that you learned?

5. What will you implement in your district from what you learned in session 1?

6. What have you liked about the program the most so far?

7. What have you liked the least about the program thus far?

8. Has this session improved you as a leader in your district? If yes, please explain how?

9. What was the strength of the OSLI program that you have seen thus far?

10. What was the weaknesses of the OSLI program thus far?

11. Has the cohort setting help in your leadership learning? If yes, please explain how?

12. Please add any comments that you may want to express about the OSLI cohort program that has not been asked in this survey.
APPENDIX D

Superintendent Survey #2 and #3 of the 29th OSLI Cohort 2014-2015

School district name: ______________________________

Open Ended Responses

1. Did you gain professionally from this session of the OSLI program? If yes, please explain.

2. Did you gain personally from the OSLI program in this session? If yes, please explain.

3. From this session what were the 3 most interesting things that you learned?

4. Will you implement anything in your district from what you learned in this session? If yes, please explain.

5. Did you or will you implement anything from the previous OSLI session into your district? If yes, please explain further.

6. What have you liked the most about the program the most so far?

7. What have you liked the least about the program thus far?

8. Might this session improve your skills as a leader? If “yes,” please explain.
9. What are the strengths of the OSLI program that you have seen thus far?

10. What are the weaknesses of the OSLI program thus far?

11. Has the cohort program been beneficial to you as a learner? If yes, please explain.
APPENDIX E

Superintendent Survey #4 of the 29th OSLI Cohort 2014-2015

School district name: ______________________________

Please rate the following statements on a Likert scale with 5 strongly agree to 1 strongly disagree.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree/disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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<td>1</td>
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</table>

1. I believe that my participation in the OSLI program had a positive benefit to my school district.____

2. My workload did not distract me from the OSLI program. _____

3. It is critical for superintendents to take time to develop leadership skills. _____

4. I understand the goals of the OSLI program. _____

5. The OSLI program narrowed the gap between my leadership skills and the demands of my job. _____

6. I have overall strong leadership skills as a superintendent. _____

7. I take time each week to reflect on my leadership style and skills. _____

8. I am a decisive leader. _____

9. I am a resourceful leader by using the taxes for my district efficiently. _____

10. I am comfortable confronting problem with employees. _____

11. I find it easy to build and mend relationships. _____

12. My experience in this cohort setting has been positive. _____

13. My experience the cohort setting has been beneficial to my learning. _____

14. I feel strongly connected to this cohort. _____

15. I am a compassionate and sensitive leader. _____
Please rate the following statements on a Likert scale with 5 strongly agree to 1 strongly disagree.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neither agree/disagree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16. I have a good balance between work and personal life. _____

17. I am a straightforward, no-nonsense leader. _____

18. My staff is comfortable with me as a leader. _____

19. The ideas and concepts presented at OSLI stimulated conversation. _____

20. The ideas and concepts presented at OSLI encouraged independent thinking_____

21. OSLI facilitators were well prepared. _____

22. The OSLI facilitators were effective in connecting with the participants. _____

23. OSLI exercises and discussions were well prepared. _____

24. OSLI exercises and discussions were effective. _____

25. The subject matter at OSLI was presented in a stimulating way. _____

26. Each OSLI session was purposeful. _____

27. OSLI ideas and concepts presented were relevant to my learning as a superintendent leader. _____

28. I maintain strong positive relationships with the majority of my board members. _____

29. I make building relationships with my staff a priority. _____

30. I make building relationships with my community members a priority. _____

31. I am a strong leader when it comes to guiding curriculum in my district. _____

Open Ended Responses

13. What is the main reason you signed up for the OSLI cohort program?

14. Did you gain professionally from the OSLI program? If yes, please explain.
15. Did you gain personally from the OSLI program? If yes, please explain.

16. Out of all the OSLI sessions, what were the 3 most interesting things that you learned?

17. Did you implement anything in your district from the OSLI program or will you implement anything in the future from the program? If yes, please explain.

18. What did you like most about the OSLI program?

19. What did you least like about the OSLI program?

20. Has the OSLI program made you a better leader? Please explain.

21. What are the greatest strengths of the OSLI program?

22. What are the greatest weaknesses of the OSLI program?

23. Has the cohort program been beneficial to you as a learner? Please explain.

24. Would you recommend this program to other superintendents? Why or why not?

25. Please add any comments that you may want to express about the OSLI cohort program that has not been asked in this survey.
APPENDIX F

Superintendent Interviews #1-3 for the 29th OSLI Cohort 2014-2015

School district name: ______________________________

Interview Questions

1. Did you gain from professionally from the OSLI program thus far? If yes, please explain.

2. Did you gain personally from the OSLI program thus far? If yes, please explain.

3. Did you learn anything about yourself from this session? If yes, please explain.

4. Do you plan to implement anything in your district from what you learned in this session? If yes, please explain.

5. Has the cohort setting been positive for your learning? If yes, please explain.

6. Do you feel connected with cohort? If yes, please explain.

7. Has this session improved you as a leader in your district? If yes, please explain how?

8. What was the strength of the OSLI program that you have seen thus far?

9. What was the weaknesses of the OSLI program thus far?

10. Please add any comments that you may want to express about the OSLI cohort program that has not been asked in this survey.
APPENDIX G

Superintendent Interview #4 for the 29th OSLI Cohort 2014-2015

School district name: ______________________________

Interview Questions
1. Do you feel you gained professionally from the OSLI program? If yes, please explain.
2. Did you gain personally from the OSLI program? If yes, please explain.
3. Did you learn anything about yourself from this program? If yes, please explain.
4. Have you implemented anything from the OSLI program this year? If yes, please explain.
5. Will you implement something you learned in OSLI program in the future for your district? If yes, please explain.
6. Was the cohort setting positive for your learning? If yes, please explain.
7. Do you feel connected with the OSLI cohort participants? If yes, please explain.
8. What was the biggest strength of the OSLI program?
9. What was the biggest weakness of the OSLI program?
10. Please add any comments that you may want to express about the OSLI cohort program that has not been asked in this interview.
APPENDIX H

Survey #1 for Principals and Administrative Assistants of Superintendents participating in the OSLI Cohort #29 2014-2015

School district name: ____________________________________
What is your position in this district?_______________________________________
What grade levels do you serve?__________________________________________
How long have you served in this position in your current district?_____________
Total number of years employed in education?______________________________

Please rate the following statements on a Likert scale with 5 strongly agree to 1 strongly disagree.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree/disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I believe it is critical for superintendents to take time to develop leadership skills.______</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. My superintendent has strong leadership skills.______</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. My superintendent is a decisive leader.______</td>
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<td>4. My superintendent is a resourceful leader when it comes to using tax dollars efficiently.______</td>
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<td>5. My superintendent has no problem with confronting problem employees.______</td>
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<td>6. My superintendent seems to build and mend relationships easily.______</td>
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<td>7. My superintendent is a compassionate and sensitive leader.______</td>
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<td>8. My superintendent has a good balance between work and personal life.______</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. My superintendent is a straightforward no nonsense leader.______</td>
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<td>10. The staff is comfortable with my superintendent as a leader.______</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. My superintendent is a strong financial leader in my district.______</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. My superintendent maintains strong positive relationships with the vast majority of their board.______</td>
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<td>13. My superintendent spends a lot of time building relationships with their staff.______</td>
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<td>14. My superintendent spends a lot of time building relationships with his/her community.______</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. My superintendent is a strong leader when it comes to guiding curriculum in my district.______</td>
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</table>

Open Ended Responses

1. What is the greatest strength of your superintendent as a leader?

2. What is the greatest weakness of your superintendent as a leader?
3. What areas do you believe your superintendent could improve upon as a leader?

4. Please include here any information you would like to add regarding your superintendent’s leadership of the district.
APPENDIX I

Survey #2 for Principals and Administrative Assistants of Superintendents participating in the OSLI Cohort #29 2014-2015

School district name: ____________________________________

What is your position in this district?___________________________________________

What grade levels do you serve?___________________________________________

Please rate the following statements on a Likert scale with 5 strongly agree to 1 strongly disagree.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<th>Neither agree/disagree</th>
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<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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<tr>
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<td>2. My superintendent’s leadership skills have improved over this school year. _____</td>
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<td>3. My superintendent is a decisive leader. _____</td>
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<td>4. My superintendent is a resourceful leader when it comes to using tax dollars efficiently. _____</td>
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<td>11. My superintendent is a strong financial leader in my district. _____</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. My superintendent maintains strong positive relationships with the majority of his/her school board members. _____</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. My superintendent makes building relationships with staff a priority. _____</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. My superintendent makes building relationships with his/her community a priority. _____</td>
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</table>
Open Ended Responses

5. What is the greatest strength of your superintendent as a leader?

6. Do you believe that over the course of this school year your superintendent has become a better leader? Please explain.

7. What areas do you believe your superintendent could improve upon as a leader?

8. Did you notice a difference in leadership style or characteristics over the course of this school year from your superintendent? Please explain.

9. Were there any new measures implemented this year in your school district? If “yes,” please explain.

10. Did your superintendent discuss with you things that he/she learned at the OSLI cohort program? If yes, did these discussions lead to improvements in the district? Please explain.

11. Please add any comments that you may want to express about your superintendent’s participation in the OSLI cohort program.